

STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS (SAR) IN ONE LEBANESE SCHOOL:

A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL TO ENGAGE VOICES AND CULTIVATE AGENCY

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Connecting the personal to the intellectual...

Student Participation...Now.

Student Voice: Having a presence, and active role that influences the status and role of students (Cook-Sather, 2006; Rudduck, 2007).

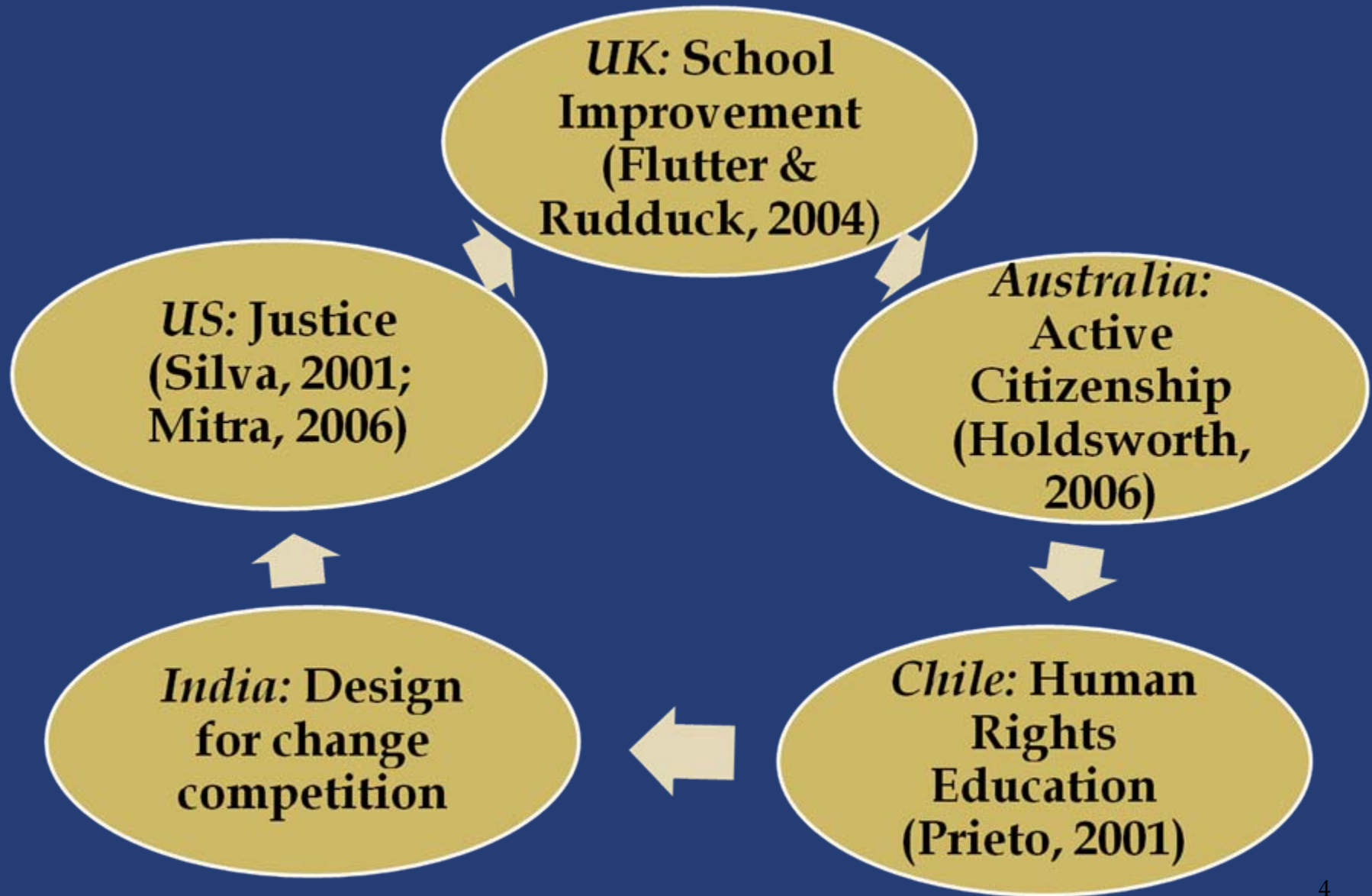
In its most conservative form, voice means having a say when asked without a necessary response...

In its most "radical form, calls for a cultural shift that opens up spaces and minds not only to the sound but also to the presence and power of students"
(Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 363).

Key Issues in Student Voice

- ▣ Who says what to whom? Who benefits?
(Fielding, 2004; Bragg, 2007)
- ❖ *Authenticity*
- ❖ *Inclusion*
- ❖ *Power*
- ▣ 'The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself.'
(bell hooks, 1994, p11)

Why now internationally?



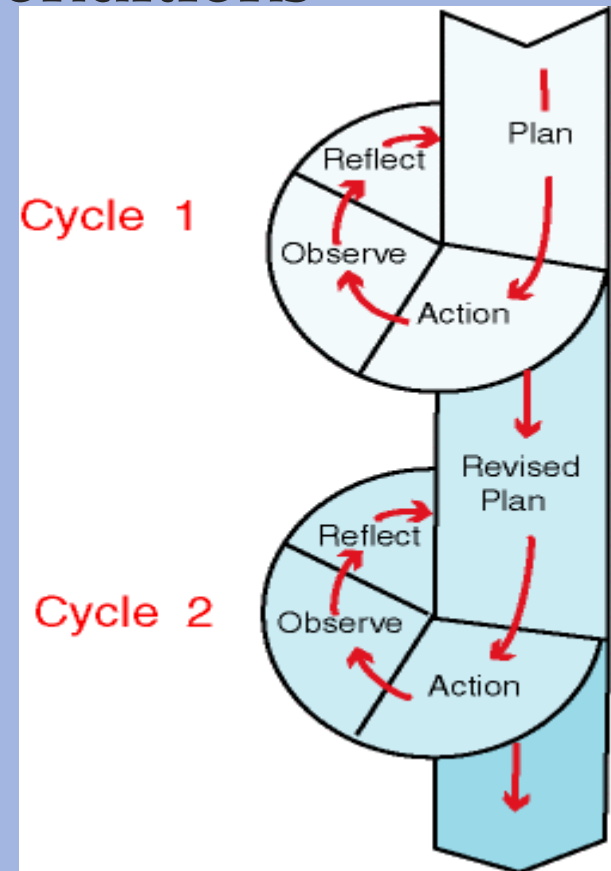
Action Research (AR)

Definition: (Kemmis, 2007)

- ▣ Improve what we do & think, conditions
- ▣ Involve...researching 'with'
- ▣ Proceed through spiral steps
- ▣ Critical and self-critical process

3 Cycles of AR: 16 school days

- Planting seeds of SAR
- Students learning to research
- Students researching to learn



Why Engage Students in Research for Action?

How can voice and action be bridged?

What kind of educational opportunities would enable students to develop the kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can equip them for a life of active involvement now?

Fielding & Bragg, (2003)
Bland & Atweh (2007)
Frost (2007)
Nash & Roberts (2009)

Lebanese
Population
4.2 million

+ 350,000
Palestinian
refugees

+ 80,000
Iraqi
refugees

Slightly
larger than
Cyprus and
25 times
smaller
than the
UK



Cycle I: Planting Seeds of SAR

Teacher and student interviews on:

- ▣ learning and teaching: Lessons they enjoyed and didn't, and why?
- ▣ Student Voice: To what extent are students heard?
- ▣ Agency: Can students make a difference in their school?

Cycle II: Students Learning to Research

Methods:

- ▣ Interview
- ▣ Observations
- ▣ Photo-voice
- ▣ Questionnaires

Kellett's Principles:

Sceptical

Ethical

Systematic

- ▣ Challenge: Teachers' Role...

Cycle III: Students' Research Presentations

- ▣ 1. Improving the library
- ▣ 2. Girls caring about their weight
- ▣ 3. Treatment of orphaned children
- ▣ 4. Playground activities during break
- ▣ 5. Relationships between teachers and students
- ▣ 6. Favourite subjects and teacher qualities
- ▣ 7. Cleaning up the garbage

Example Topic 1: Favourite subjects and teacher qualities

Karim & James

We chose this topic for grades 4 & 6 :

- ▣ To let teachers know what students think about their subjects.
- ▣ To make lessons more enjoyable.

Example Topic 1: Results

- ▣ *62.5% of the students say that not all of the teachers are good towards them.*
- ▣ *50% of the students said they do not participate in class because teachers shout at them.*
- ▣ *87.5% of the students enjoy the lesson when they have activities.*
- ▣ *75% of the students said that sometimes teachers yell at them.*

Example Topic 2: Relationship Between Teachers and Students

- We chose this topic because we noticed some teachers were getting angry in class and in the playground whereas students responded badly to their teachers.
- In this research ,we wanted to find out more about teacher student relationships and see how we can improve it .
- We decided to interview 4 teachers and give grades 5 and 9 a questionnaire.

Example Topic 2: Recommendations

- ▣ After talking and listening to teachers, grade 9 and grade 5 students , we concluded that teacher - student relationships could be improved in the classroom if teachers :
 1. Listen to students about their learning problems.
 2. Balance between being strict and friendly
 3. Activities + Picnics.
- ▣ Teachers and students should spend time together to understand each other more , they should hang out to talk and play together.

Thank you..!!

Initial Teacher Response to Example 1&2

- ❑ *Angrily, Teacher-Valery challenges the presenters, “And why do teachers shout? What are the students doing for the teachers to be shouting? You are misbehaving that’s what...and what are we supposed to do?”*
- ❑ *With total composure and unrepentant student-Karim responds, “The teacher should be calm and talk to the students and show them how they feel so that students understand.”*
- ❑ *A silence envelops the staff room for a minute as the teachers smile and nod in agreement; teacher-Valery softens her posture.*
- ❑ *Breaking the silence, teacher-Julia asks, “Do you think you should be carrying out such a research when students are antagonizing teachers?”*
- ❑ *Student-Karim, calmly and confidently responds (with a smirk), “Who is the adult?”*

Example Topic 3: Throwing Garbage

What did we do? (Hala & Isabella)

1. We did several playground observations of the students during break-time and we took pictures of students throwing garbage and at the end of break.
2. We developed the pictures and designed cardboards.
3. We gave a questionnaire first to grade 9 students to test out our questions. Then we gave the questionnaire to grades 1 to 6.
4. Then we used our pictures to have a discussion with each grade to find a solution.

Post-SAR Interviews with Teachers

“ It has given me a chance to revisit what we’re doing. Are we ignoring students? Are we shouting? Why did they like my subject or not like? Teachers must start with herself and then when she changes, the students will change.” Michelle

“It was very impressive but what about art? Why didn’t students talk about art so that I know what I can improve? I want to know what I am doing well and what I can improve on.” Nisrine

*“I am proud of them.... I can use the points they raised to think about my methods. I am one of the teachers who shouts and so I know I need to control myself more and find other ways to deal with my students.”
Salma*

Post-SAR Interviews with Students

- ▣ *“Normally teachers tell us what to do but in our project, we were telling teachers... They want to change how they work with students.” (James)*
- ▣ *“Before I was shy and didn’t like to talk in front of anyone but now I want to try to and never give up” (Angelo)*
- ▣ *“If you fail at something, redo it until you get what you want” (Hala)*
- ▣ *“Don’t wait for someone to tell you what to do and not do” (Isabella)*

Post-SAR Interviews with Director

- *I underestimated these kids and they all did a fabulous job...this goes to show that we should never downgrade students, always hold the highest bar and work towards that...this is an eye-opener.*
- *SAR.....brought me thinking how can we get teachers more involved with each other and because of our collaboration I thought of peer-observation. So now the next project is to get teachers to help each other by attending each other's classes and looking at how the learning process is going on in these lessons...because at the end of the day they know more than the person from the outside coming in.*

Lingering Questions

- ▣ What kind of SAR activates students' agency?
- ▣ What conditions established and optimized SAR?
- ▣ Through what processes can an intervention such as SAR improve the lives of students and teachers?
- ▣ What type of SAR would allow teachers to be learners and examine the cultural norms around teaching?

THANK YOU

Please feel free to ask questions!

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