

WERA IRN “Student Voice for Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Schools” Final Third Year Report (July 2025 – June 2026)

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Membership



Members of the "Student Voice for Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Schools" IRN across universities in UK, USA, Portugal and Spain

Conveners Members since 2023-24 New members joined in 2024-25

Country	Name	Organisation
UK	Kyriaki (Kiki) Messiou (co-convenor and founding member)	University of Southampton
USA	Elizabeth Kozleski (co-convenor and founding member)	Stanford University
Portugal	Luís Tinoca (founding member)	University of Lisbon
Spain	Cecilia Simón (founding member)	Autónoma University of Madrid
Spain	Núria Simó Gil (founding member)	University of Vic- Central University of Catalonia
Spain	Laura Farré Riera (founding member)	University of Vic- Central University of Catalonia
UK	Elizer Jay de los Reyes (founding member)	University of Southampton
UK	Vivienne Kachollom Rwang (founding member)	University of Southampton
UK	Chinmaya Potnis (joined 2023-2024)	University of Southampton
Spain	Jesús Soldevila Perez (joined 2023-2024)	University of Vic- Central University of Catalonia
Spain	Angela Barrios Fernandez (joined 2023-2024)	Autónoma University of Madrid

Spain	Lucia Sanchez Gonzalez (joined 2023-2024)	Autónoma University of Madrid
Australia	Foteini Pasenidou (joined 2024-2025)	Adelaide University
Australia	Debbie Price (joined 2024-2025)	Adelaide University
Austria	Edvina Bešić (joined 2024-2025)	University of Vienna
Indonesia	Elga Andriana (joined 2024-2025)	Gadjah Mada University
Italy	Federica Festa (joined 2024-2025)	University of Torino
Italy	Rosa Bellacicco (joined 2024-2025)	University of Torino
Italy	Francesca Capone (joined 2024-2025)	University of Torino
Italy	Anna Frizzarin (joined 2024-2025)	Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
Netherlands	Renske de Leeuw (joined 2024-2025)	Saxion University
Netherlands	Marieke Tjallema (joined 2024-2025)	Marnix Academy of Applied Sciences
Netherlands	Bert van Velthooven (joined 2024-2025)	Marnix Academy of Applied Sciences
New Zealand	Fiona Ells (joined 2024-2025)	University of Auckland
New Zealand	Missy Morton (joined 2024-2025)	University of Auckland
New Zealand	Lisa Darragh (joined 2024-2025)	University of Auckland
New Zealand	Jude MacArthur (joined 2024-2025)	University of Auckland
New Zealand	Badhoora Naseer (joined 2024-2025)	University of Auckland
Portugal	Ana Paola Caetano (joined 2024-2025)	University of Lisbon
Portugal	Ana Sofia Freire Raposo (joined 2024-2025)	University of Lisbon

Portugal	Ana Souza (joined 2024-2025)	University of Lisbon
Portugal	Márcia Kamp (joined 2025 – 2026)	University of Lisbon
Portugal	Nadine Correia (joined 2025 – 2026)	University of Lisbon
Spain	Yolanda Muñoz (joined 2024-2025)	Universidad de Alcalá
Spain	Inma Orozco (joined 2024-2025)	University of Seville
Spain	Hector Gutierrez Rodriguez (joined 2024-2025)	Autonoma University of Madrid
Sweden	Lotta Björkman (joined 2024-2025)	Södertörn University
Sweden	Helena Roos (joined 2024-2025)	Malmö University
Sweden	Anette Bagger (joined 2024-2025)	Orebro University
UK	Ping Dong (joined 2024-2025)	University of Southampton
UK	Patricia (Tricia) Shaw (joined 2024-2025)	University of Hull

Summary

The movement of student voice has gained prominence over the last two decades, especially after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (United Nations, 1989). The term "student voice" ranges from simple expression of views either through verbal or non-verbal means, while at the same time refers to the idea of participation and having an active role in decision-making processes (Cook-Sather, 2006). Despite the reported benefits of student voice approaches there are also challenges when employing such approaches in research in schools.

This network brings together experienced and emerging scholars, whose research has focused on ideas of student voice in schools, in different parts of the world (Australia, Austria, China, Cyprus, England, India, Indonesia, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, USA) and explore how such approaches have been used in different cultural contexts, as well as map out the state of the art in research in this field.

Research topic and plan

The research topic of this IRN is student voice in relation to inclusion. Students' voices and inclusive education are interconnected ideas (Messiou, 2012; 2019). Following, broad definitions of inclusion, such as inclusion being a process that focuses on the presence, participation and achievement of all learners (Ainscow, 2007), that "honors divergent perspectives, capacities, and approaches to learning" (Kozleski, 2020, p. 340), we see students' voices as a way of enabling all students to be included in schools. Such efforts relate directly to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 by promoting quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The goals of the IRN

- Develop a community of scholars focusing on these ideas and learning from one another's work.
- Prepare a report on the state of the art in current research in this field and identify gaps in the literature.
- Map out cultural differences in employing such approaches in different parts of the world.
- Develop future research collaborations based on the identified gaps in the literature.

This report

In this report we offer an overview of studies that have been identified in each country as relating to students' voices, inclusion and equity in schools. We start by explaining by how we conceptualised student voice at the start of the IRN, followed by the studies identified in each country. Based on the analysis of studies in each of the countries, we then identified collectively further areas of research and future directions in the field.

We used the following criteria for our scoping reviews:

Timeline: 2020-2025
Search terms: student voice/s/student participation + inclusion and equity +schools
Inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed journal articles, studies carried out in schools
Exclusion criteria: not in peer-reviewed journals, studies carried out in higher education

The full list of identified studies in each country can be found in the APPENDIX.

The second part of this report focuses on activities carried out by the IRN members collectively and individually over the final year of the IRN (2025-2026).

Part 1: Student Voice and Inclusion and Equity in Schools Research

Conceptualisations of student voice

The following conceptualisations were prepared by the founding members of the IRN during the first stages of the IRN:

Kiki Messiou (University of Southampton, UK) and Elizabeth Kozleski (Stanford University, USA)

Student voice involves a range of approaches ranging from expression of views either through verbal or non-verbal means, to the idea of active participation and having an active role in decision-making processes (Cook-Sather, 2006).

We, therefore, see student voice encompassing what is said, either verbally or nonverbally in schools by students, as well the actions that follow as a result of what has been expressed and the ways in which such actions have been developed.

We also see voice being contextually located. In other words, what is expressed verbally or non-verbally, or actions within schools that follow these expressions, are always the product of certain interactions, situated and understood within specific contexts. Therefore, the term student voice is complex, going beyond the stated words or behaviours of individual students. We also concur with the position that voice can never be fully captured in research (Mazzei, 2009). Voices are not stable; rather they are constantly changing and emerging and affected through interactions with others (Messiou, 2023).

References:

Cook-Sather, A., 2006. Sound, presence, and power: "student voice" in educational research and reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*. 36 (4), 359–390.

Mazzei, L.A., 2009. An impossibly full voice. In: Jackson, A.Y., Mazzei, L.A. (Eds.), *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research*. Routledge, London and New York, pp. 45–62.

Messiou, K., 2023. The role of students' voices in promoting inclusive education. In: Tierney, R.J., Rizvi, F., Erkican, K. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education*, vol. 9. Elsevier. https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.12074-3.

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The following are some of the main axes that make up the understanding of "student voices". These ideas are also shared by the research team of which we are part (Equity, Diversity and Inclusive Education -EQUIDEI)

Student participation as a right

Student participation constitutes a right that also contributes to turn schools into a space for democracy. We assume that being heard is a "right for all children" (Art. 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child), inherent to the right to inclusive education and, therefore, there are no restrictions to it. The "problem" of greater or lesser participation of some students is not an individual issue, but a collective task.

Student voices as a tool for school improvement

Student voices as a tool for the construction of a more democratic and participatory school (Susinos et al., 2019). From this framework it would be understood:

- That students are active subjects of their own lives and of the society around them. Students become agents with the capacity to promote improvements in their center, as well as to become a key tool for professional training and for the improvement of teaching.
- Having a voice is more than just being consulted or invited to a meeting. We talk about agency, it means being able to participate in the decision-making process, in the planning and review of the school. In short,

having an active role. Involvement in relevant aspects of the school. In this sense, we could incorporate the framework proposed by Lundy (2007), consisting of four factors: space, voice, audience and influence.
- As a prior step, it implies valuing and recognising the student body as a strength, as a resource for the school.
- Participation must be an inclusive process in which all students, without exception, have a voice, which implies establishing mechanisms to listen to the "voices silenced at school". But it is also necessary to rescue the deep and useful meaning that "silences" can have.
- It is a process that must be based on the principles of dialogue, listening and shared responsibility between teachers and students.
- Students as researchers as leaders for improvement.
- It should be a means of legitimising student interest.

Voices as competences development.
Student voice has a central role in teaching and learning processes. Learning through the socio-construction of knowledge. A means to empower learners.

Students' voices as a necessary source of information to understand the educational reality.
Their voices as a fundamental part of understanding the educational reality whose interpretation varies according to the agent involved in it, with its construction or narrative, with its objectives and concerns. There is no single "correct" reading of educational events; in these processes, different narratives coexist in tension, converging or diverging, but which in any case coexist in the social space analysed. Therefore, this multi-voiced analysis, in which the voices of the students are indispensable, allows us to appreciate the complexity of educational change and the inequalities of power among the participants. This avoids the researchers' perspective (e.g. when talking about research) being seen as unique and imposed on others.

Student voice as a sub-dimension of the participation dimension that defines inclusive education (Barrios et al., 2022; Simón et al., 2019).

References
Barrios Á, Cañadas M, Fernández ML, Simón C. (2022). It Is Never Too Early: Social Participation of Early Childhood Education Students from the Perspective of Families, Teachers and Students. *Education Sciences, 12*(9):588. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12090588

Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(6), 927-942. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033

Messiou, K. (2019) The missing voices: students as a catalyst for promoting inclusive education, *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23* (7-8), 768-781, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326

Simón, C., Barrios, A., Gutiérrez, H. & Muñoz, Y. (2019). Equidad, educación inclusiva y educación para la justicia social. ¿Llevan todos los caminos a la misma meta? (Equity, inclusive education and education for social justice. Do they all lead to the same goal? *International Journal of Social Justice, 8*(2), 17-32. https://doi.org/10.15366/riejs2019.8.2.001

Susinos-Rada, T., Calvo-Salvador, A., Rodríguez-Hoyos, C., Saiz-Linares, A. (2019). *ICT for Inclusion*. A Student Voice Research Project in Spain. *Magis. Revista Internacional de Investigación en Educación, 11* (23), 1-16.

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Democratic schools are those that provide greater opportunities for all students to participate, so it is essential to include all students' voices in the processes of decision-making (Simó et al., 2016). Students must have the same rights and opportunities than adults to get involved and become protagonist of their own learning. Although engaging with students' voices in schools is challenging, participate on equal conditions is a right for social justice and a right in democratic societies (Cook-Sather, 2020).

This participatory and democratic context will allow students to move towards a scenario of greater co-responsibility and to assume a proactive role as learners to become protagonist of their own learning (Fielding, 2018). Engaging with students' voices can be seen as a way of valuing all members' views to develop an inclusive and democratic culture in schools (Messiou et al., 2022). Therefore, we relate students' voices to their agency capacity to improve and to transform teaching and learning contexts. Although the consideration of "student voice" can refer to a wide range of activities and decision-making possibilities, we agree with the perspective of students' voices as agents of change within schools. We adopt the term *voices*, in plural, since it recognizes the diversity of opinions, trajectories and points of view present in a group of students.

Finally, we consider that students' voices not only include oral communication but also encompass the possibilities and the right of children and youth to express their experiences on all matters affecting them in schools, even if it is not through speech (Soldevila-Pérez et al., 2023).

Cook-Sather, A. (2020). Student voice across contexts: Fostering student agency in today's schools, *Theory Into Practice*, *59*(2), 182-191. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1705091

Fielding, M. (2018). Democracia radical y la voz del alumnado en escuelas de secundaria. *Voces de la educación*, *número especial*, 28-42.

Messiou, K., Simó-Gil, N., Tort-Bardolet, A. & Farré-Riera, L. (2022). Students' voices and inclusive education for a democratic education. In J. Collet, M. Naranjo, & J. Soldevila-Pérez (eds.), *Global Inclusive Education: lessons from Spain*. (p. 141-154).

Simó, N., Parareda, A. & Domingo, L. (2016). Towards a democratic school: The experience of secondary school pupils. *Improving Schools, 19*(3) 181–196. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480216631080

Soldevila-Pérez, J. Muntaner, J.J., & Naranjo, M. (2023). Collaboration between ethnographers and the educational community of a school in the development of inclusive education. *Ethnography and Education*, *18*(1), 94-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2023.2180323

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Student Voice, in educational research and practice, is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the active participation, expression, and influence of students in shaping their own educational experiences and the broader school community. It refers to the inclusion of students' perspectives, opinions, and agency in various aspects of education, from decision-making processes to the development of teaching and learning environments. The concept of Student Voice is informed by a range of approaches and perspectives:

- Expression of Views: Student Voice involves the expression of students' thoughts, opinions, and perspectives, which can be conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal means. This initial stage allows students to communicate their ideas and feelings regarding their educational experiences (Cook-Sather, 2006).
- Active Participation: Beyond mere expression, Student Voice also encompasses active participation in educational processes and decision-making. This participation can occur alongside peers as well as adults, allowing students to have a role in shaping their own education (Cook-Sather, 2006).
- Impact on Actions: Student Voice is not limited to what is said but also includes the actions that follow as a result of students' expressions and input. It highlights the potential for student feedback to lead to meaningful changes in educational practices and policies (Mazzei, 2009).

- Rights of Children: It acknowledges the right of children to have a say in decisions that affect them, aligning with principles of children's rights and emphasizing their agency in the educational context. This connection with students' rights underscores the importance of Student Voice (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).
- Education for Citizenship and Student Leadership: Student Voice is closely connected to education for citizenship and the development of student leadership. It recognizes that active student participation contributes to their development as responsible citizens and leaders (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).
- Improving School Experiences: Student Voice is seen as a valuable source of information for enhancing school experiences and promoting educational engagement. The insights provided by students can be used to make informed decisions for improving the overall quality of education (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).
- Facilitating Dialogue and Transformation: Student Voice has the transformative power to facilitate dialogue among individuals and cultures, allowing for the exchange and reconstruction of values, intentions, conceptions, and worldviews. It can impact relationships, knowledge production, empowerment, and the development of more equitable, inclusive, and democratic communities (Caetano et al., 2020).
- Challenges and Tokenism: Student Voice is not without challenges. Simply trying to hear students' voices does not guarantee that they will be genuinely heard, or that their views will be incorporated into decision-making processes. There is a risk of tokenism if school leaders and teachers are not genuinely committed to involving students in meaningful ways (Fielding, 2004; Mager & Nowak, 2012; Fielding, 2010; Pereira, Mouraz & Figueiredo, 2014; Quinn & Owen, 2014).
- Need for Broadened Understanding: To effectively implement Student Voice programs, it is crucial to expand the current understanding of how it can impact primary school children and the broader school community. This includes considering its effects on teachers, the community, and the learning environment (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

In summary, Student Voice encompasses the active involvement of students in shaping their educational experiences, from expressing their views to influencing actions and decisions in the school community. It aligns with principles of children's rights, education for citizenship, and the potential to transform educational practices and foster more inclusive and democratic communities. However, it also acknowledges the challenges associated with genuinely incorporating students' voices into educational processes.

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Analytic Framework for Student Voice Research

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This analytic framework for student voice draws on cultural-historical, sociocultural, and activity theoretical traditions that conceptualize learning and development as culturally mediated, historically situated, and socially organized. Within this perspective, students, educators, and systems are not independent actors. Rather, they are linked through dynamic processes of participation, interpretation, contradiction, and transformation, all operating within fields of power shaped by race, capacities, languages, cultures, and histories. Influenced by cultural-historical, sociocultural, and activity-theoretical traditions, here student voice is conceptualized as a generative force within educational systems rather than a discrete input or intervention. Foundational work in cultural psychology and activity theory positions learning and development as culturally mediated, historically situated, and socially organized processes (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2001). Individuals, practices, and institutions are mutually constituted through participation in shared activity systems that evolve over time. Sociocultural accounts of development further emphasize that learning occurs through participation in culturally organized practices, where identity, agency, and knowledge are co-constructed in interaction with others (Rogoff, 2003). Importantly, culture is not treated as a fixed attribute but as a dynamic repertoire of practices that individuals draw upon and reshape across contexts (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Within education, these traditions have been extended to examine how equity, race, language, disability, and power are historically sedimented within institutional practices and policy regimes, shaping how student performance and participation are interpreted and acted upon (Artiles, 2011; Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Kozleski, Proffitt, & Stepaniuk, 2023). From a cultural-historical perspective, equity is not a static condition but a field that mediates (a) whose knowledge is recognized and interpreted, and (b) how systems respond. Education is a dynamic process in which systems, practices, and identities are continuously reconfigured through interaction and contemporary as well as historical contexts (Kozleski, Artiles, & Waitoller, 2014).

This analytic framework positions student voice as a central mechanism through which dynamic interactions occur transforming individuals and systems. Scholarship on student voice conceptualizes students as active participants in knowledge production whose perspectives can reshape pedagogy, relationships, and institutional structures when taken up by educators (Cook-Sather, 2020). When integrated with cultural-historical theory, student voice can be understood not merely as expression, but as a form of culturally mediated participation through which students and adults engage in joint sensemaking. From this perspective, students generate their own interpretation of learning grounded in their lived experiences. Educators interpret and respond to those perspectives through historically shaped professional practices. In turn, systems stabilize or transform in response to emergent outcomes. Thus, individuals and systems learn and change through recursive processes of interpretation, responsiveness, and recalibration within culturally and historically constituted fields of power.

The conceptual framework translates cultural-historical and sociocultural perspectives into a student voice model that is a generative, system-organizing process. Consistent with this framing, students are centered in the framework to reflect their active participation in knowledge production in which student experiences, identities, and perspectives constitute the primary purpose of educational systems. Surrounding the core, educators are represented as mediators of learning who interpret and respond to student perspectives through pedagogical practice, thereby shaping how student voice is taken up within instructional contexts. Systems—including policy, governance structures, and accountability mechanisms—form the outer ring, providing the historically developed conditions that both constrain and adapt in response to interactions between students and educators. Rather than functioning as a linear hierarchy, these layers are connected through ongoing

processes of culturally mediated sensemaking, in which meaning is continuously interpreted, negotiated, and recalibrated across participants and contexts. Equity, intersectionality, and cultural-historical context are represented as a field encompassing all levels of the model, shaping whose knowledge is recognized, how it is interpreted, and how responses are enacted. Outcomes are depicted as emergent and recursive, reflecting the ways in which patterns of participation, learning, and inclusion feed back into system-level adaptation over time. In this way, student voice is not one of many inputs to existing structures but acts as a central mechanism through which educational systems are continually reorganized and transformed.

Conceptualization of student voice as a dynamic, recursive process vibrating throughout educational systems situates students, educators, and systems in dialogue through culturally mediated sensemaking. Students at the center are actively engaged in knowledge production. Educators mediate the interpretation and uptake of student perspectives through pedagogical practice, while systems provide structures that both constrain and adapt to these interactions. Equity, intersectionality, and cultural-historical context function as field shaping participation, interpretation, and response across all levels. Outcomes such as engagement, agency, and inclusion are emergent and recursive, feeding back into ongoing processes of system adaptation.

References

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Summaries of review of studies in various countries

Scoping reviews were carried out in each of the countries. Below are the summaries of each scoping review from various countries. The longer versions of the scoping reviews will be included in an edited open access book that is currently under preparation.

Australia

Foteini Pasenidou and Deborah Price

As outlined in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australia's education goals advocate the provision of excellence and equity and to "ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential" (Education Council, 2019, p. 5). Yet, student voice remains absent in national attempts of decision-making to include diverse student cohorts in Australian schools (Price & Howard, 2022). This has impacted on the inclusion of "students' thoughts and emotions, as well as their actions for bringing about change" in inclusive education (Messiou, 2019, p. 769). It was such concerns that also inspired this current review of peer-reviewed articles and studies published between 2020 and 2025 aiming to explore how student voice and engagement have been evidenced in school-based education research and curriculum development in Australia to promote inclusion and equity.

Informit A+ Education was chosen because of its focus on globally relevant education research designed for the Australian teaching and research profession context. The key search terms were student AND voice AND inclu* AND equity. For the review to be manageable, rather than searching the full text, these keywords were first searched in the title and abstract of the records. Out of 58 studies screened against title and abstract, 35 studies were excluded leaving 23 studies. In total 23 full-text articles were screened in June 2025, out of which eight met the criteria and were included in the review.

Findings emerging in this review included continued prevalence of students being recruited in research primarily in the role of respondents. Six records engaged students as respondents and only two articles reported engaging students as co-researchers (refer Table 1).

Group 1	**Group 2**
Students in the role of respondents	Students in the role of co-researchers
Students seen as data source	Students seen as active researchers
Importance of further encouraging students to voice their thoughts and opinions	Technology and arts-based methods of data collection enabling student voice
Teachers and researchers may need additional support and/or training in proactively and authentically including student voice	Student-driven research promoted when researchers relinquish control inviting students' participation across data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings
Responsibility to include a researcher positionality or statement on how students were involved (as active participants and/or leaders) in the research design	Responsibility for students' voice to be acted upon and key actors of the education system to act upon students' lived experiences.

Table 1: Emerging themes from the review

This review evidenced the continued prevalence of students being seen as a data source. In the first group of records reviewed, students' voice was prioritised and captured, yet students were solely recruited in the role of discussants and active respondents. In the second group, comprising two records, student-driven research was promoted with researchers relinquishing control and inviting students to act as co-researchers. Students were involved across data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings and in doing so, actively participated in research, trained as researchers and contributed to enactment of changes. This review provides evidence of student voice being acknowledged and included in national research, yet marginal within much of the literature.

Austria

Edvina Bešić

In the Austrian educational landscape, "student voice" is an emerging conceptual framework that remains relatively new compared to established traditions such as student participation and "Mitbestimmung" (co-determination) (Messiou et al., 2022). While these traditional terms are anchored in Austrian school law—specifically the School Education Act (Schulunterrichtsgesetz §§ 57-60) and the Student Representation Act (Schülervertretungsgesetz, SchVG)—they often prioritize institutionalized representation through formal bodies such as student councils (Schülervertretung) rather than the agentic, transformative dialogue associated with the international student voice movement.

To investigate how these theoretical tensions manifest in current scholarship, this scoping review examines the conceptualization and application of 'student voice' within Austrian primary and secondary educational research between 2020 and 2025, specifically focusing on its relationship to inclusion and equity. Following the framework by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) and PRISMA-ScR guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018), 18 studies were analyzed.

The review reveals that, despite recognition of student voice as a transformative element in inclusive education (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015; Sandoval & Messiou, 2022), its implementation in Austria remains fragmented, inconsistently theorized, and often limited to tokenistic consultation. Out of 18 studies reviewed, only seven explicitly employed the term "student voice" or articulated clear theoretical foundations. A recurring theme across the reviewed literature is the discrepancy between de jure rights and de facto influence, with research highlighting that Austrian students often experience their voice as structurally constrained. Consistent with this, the identified research characterizes student involvement primarily as a consultative process; most studies focus on gathering perspectives through traditional qualitative interviews rather than employing innovative participatory or student-led designs. This reliance on traditional, adult-led methodologies further complicates equity, as the review identifies a significant lack of intersectionality where the underexplored perspectives of marginalized groups risk being silenced by research designs that inherently center the most "confident" voices.

To move toward an inclusive system where "every learner matters" (Messiou, 2023; UNESCO, 2017), the paper argues for a paradigm shift toward "transgressive" and "intergenerational" research approaches (Pearce & Wood, 2019) that empower students as co-creators of knowledge. The review concludes by recommending future research that addresses power dynamics and systemic constraints to genuinely enact student voice in the Austrian context, aligning local practice with international commitments such as SDG 4.

Indonesia

Elga Andriana and Ardiana Meilinawati

This narrative review synthesises evidence from seven empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 that examined student voice in inclusive education within the Indonesian school context. The review explores how student voice is conceptualised, the mechanisms used to elicit students’ perspectives, students’ views on inclusion, the barriers and facilitators influencing student voice, and the outcomes associated with its implementation.

Across the reviewed studies, student voice was conceptualised through three dimensions: experiential (focusing on identity and transitions), relational (emphasising friendship and belonging), and participatory (concerning active decision-making). Student voice was understood as students’ lived experiences of schooling, identity, and educational transitions; their experiences of friendship, belonging, and social acceptance; and their participation in shaping inclusive educational practices. Theoretical frameworks such as

Hart's Ladder of Participation and Lundy's model (space, voice, audience, influence) reveal that while students are often given opportunities to express views, their influence on decision-making remains limited, particularly within hierarchical cultural contexts like Indonesia.

The studies employed a range of mechanisms to gather student voice, including interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, observations, and participatory approaches such as Photovoice. A notable trend was the use of art-informed and visual methodologies that enabled students, particularly students with disabilities, to communicate experiences that are often overlooked by adults. In several studies, students acted not only as participants but also as co-researchers.

The review indicates that students' views on inclusion are multifaceted. On the positive side, teacher mediation, peer support, and academic help are highly valued. Friendship and peer acceptance are identified as the most critical indicators of successful inclusion. Conversely, negative experiences such as social isolation, academic anxiety, and bullying remain significant challenges that impede the inclusive experience. The review identifies several structural and cultural barriers, most notably the hierarchical norms in Indonesian schools that prioritise teacher authority. A lack of specialised teacher training further restricts the capacity to create environments that enable student voice. Meanwhile, facilitators include supportive school leadership, responsive teachers, positive peer relationships, and classroom practices that recognise diversity and participation.

While incorporating student voice has been associated with enhanced confidence, agency, and more responsive educational practices, student voice alone is insufficient to address broader structural barriers. Future research should move beyond consultation towards transformative and democratic forms of participation, while broadening attention to diverse forms of inclusion and contexts beyond the current concentration of studies in disability-related inclusion and the Yogyakarta region.

Italy

Rosa Bellacicco, Francesca Capone, Anna Frizzarin, Federica Festa, and Cristina Beoletto

While research explicitly framed as Student Voice is still under-represented in Italy (Grion, 2017), the national landscape is rooted in established traditions of participatory research and democratic education, often in connection with action research approaches and research conducted with and for children (Mortari, 2009). In order to reflect this specific research landscape, we decided to adopt a broad perspective on the conceptualisation of student voice in our scoping review, encompassing studies that position students as meaningful contributors to educational processes, promote co-construction of knowledge, and acknowledge the transformative potential of their voices in fostering participation, inclusion, and social justice.
In total, eight empirical studies (2020–2025) in Italian school contexts were identified as aligning with the defined framework and were subsequently analysed for the present review. The analysis of the studies was guided by five key analytical dimensions: (1) study contexts and participants; (2) research objectives and focal themes; (3) research designs and methodological approaches; (4) stages and forms of student involvement across the research process; and (5) the transformative potential of student voice.

Firstly, the results reveal a predominant focus on secondary education, with comparatively less attention given to primary and preschool contexts. Regarding the research objectives and foci, four partially overlapping thematic orientations emerge: social justice, inclusion, and equity (Cotza, 2022; Frizzarin et al., 2023); participation as democratic education (Pastori et al., 2020); transitions and educational "fragilities" (Zecca et al., 2020; Zecca & Cotza, 2020); and inclusion extending beyond school into civic spaces (Montanari, 2024).

From a methodological perspective, the reviewed studies are predominantly qualitative: three explicitly draw on Grounded Theory, while two are grounded in a phenomenological approach. Data collection is largely

based on interviews, supplemented by participatory methods such as Photovoice-inspired protocols, student co-construction of questionnaires, and practical activities. However, the review shows uneven student involvement, which often begins after researchers have defined study aims. While some studies engage students primarily as informants, fewer extend participation to proposal-making or engagement with institutional audiences (Frizzarin et al., 2023). Crucially, no study involves school-age students in defining research objectives or designing the research itself.

The review also highlights how Italy's school autonomy within multi-level governance shapes the potential of student voice: influence is primarily observed in pedagogical practices and extends to territorial or policy arenas only when explicit relationships with decision-makers are established. Further research should therefore expand attention to preschool and primary contexts and strengthen participatory pathways that allow students' perspectives to travel from consultation to shared decision-making.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Badhoora Naseer, Missy Morton, Fiona Ell, Jude MacArthur and Lisa Darragh

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to upholding children's rights, including their right to express their views and be]heard. Aotearoa New Zealand is a highly diverse society, with over 160 ethnic groups and more than 150 languages represented across its population. This diversity is increasingly reflected in schools, where it is estimated that more than one in four learners in the country will be from an ethnic community by 2043 (Education Review Office, 2018). Within this context, inclusive education and student voice are not only essential but a priority in the country. For almost 20 years the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) has signalled clear aspirations for a more inclusive school system, with inclusive pedagogies and practices that also honour and listen to students' cultures and perspectives. Within a highly devolved school system, the interpretation and enactment of these aspirations have been, at best, mixed.

Using a scoping review methodology, this study examined seven peer reviewed sources published between 2020 and 2025 to explore how student voice and engagement are represented in New Zealand research in relation to inclusion and equity in schools.

Despite the historically limited recognition of children and young people's perspectives in New Zealand policy and practice (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018), the studies reviewed suggest a growing emphasis on listening to student voice in the country. The research explored a range of issues, including learning and belonging (Alesech & Nayar, 2020; Highfield et al., 2025; Rutherford, 2024), wellbeing (Hill & Hunter, 2024; Major et al., 2025; Bonne & Roucau, 2025), and reasons for truancy (Baskerville, 2021; Baskerville at al. (2023). However, across these studies, student voice was primarily positioned at a consultative level, with students viewed mainly as sources of information about their experiences. Most of these studies focused on secondary students. Another key finding relates to whose voices are included and which forms of expression are privileged in research. All studies relied on interviews and surveys, privileging spoken and written communication, with the exception of Rutherford (2024) adopting communication approaches that were responsive to Jack, a student with complex learning needs. These included the use of pictures, symbols, written words, yes/no signing, vocalisations, gestures, and a touch-screen communication device. Overall, the reviewed studies indicate that student voice research remains limited in New Zealan and highlight the need to move beyond consultative approaches towards more participatory and collaborative forms of student involvement in such research.

Philippines

de los Reyes, E. J., Cacatian, S., Baddu, V., Agbayani, J., Bautista, R., and Umangay, P.

This paper presents initial findings from a review of research on inclusive education and student voice in the Philippines since 2000. Ten records were identified from journal articles (7), a conference paper, an institutional report, and a working paper, using the first author's university online library database and Google Scholar with "student voice" and "Philippines" as keywords. Basic steps to support rigour were applied, including predefined inclusion criteria, a transparent screening trail, and a structured narrative synthesis. Titles, abstracts, and full texts were screened using two criteria: (a) Philippine setting and (b) explicit focus on K–12 inclusion or SV. Studies on non-Philippine contexts, or community-level initiatives outside schools were excluded, yielding two eligible peer-reviewed K-12 studies: Reginio (2025) and Miranda et al. (2021).

Across the two K–12 studies, inclusion is framed not only as providing accommodations but as enabling learners' ongoing participation in meaning-making. An online/critical ethnography with Deaf students in a public high school during the pandemic shows how hearing-centric instruction, inconsistent accessibility, and discriminatory behaviours constrained participation. At the same time, students asserted agency through visual meaning-making grounded in Filipino Sign Language (FSL) and Deaf cultural practices. This study reframes the Filipino Deaf as a linguistic minority whose inclusion depends on linguistic justice rather than technical adjustments alone (Reginio, 2025). A second strand positions student voice (SV) as co-creation that can reshape pedagogy. In a newly established Senior High School, 85 students acted as co-creators and co-interpreters of evidence about classroom learning. The grounded-theory analysis demonstrates that when students examine their learning experiences with teachers, they generate contextualised insights that re-shape routines, roles, and spaces toward inclusion. The authors also link this participatory practice to teaching standards (PPST) discourse on epistemic diversity, suggesting that student partnership can be embedded in school improvement and professional-learning cycles rather than remaining a one-off consultative activity (Miranda et al., 2021). A third strand highlights how SV can support school-level monitoring and improvement. Although few K–12 studies develop or validate tools, existing work shows the value of structured SV mechanisms—such as participatory feedback processes and co-analysis of learning evidence—in strengthening inclusive decision-making at school and division levels. These approaches demonstrate how learner perspectives can be systematically integrated to deepen schools' understanding of inclusion and guide more responsive action.

Portugal

Luís Tinoca and Marcia Kamp

This scoping review examines the emergence of student voice as a vehicle for educational policy and practice transformation in Portugal between 2019 and 2024. The review maps a growing body of Portuguese and Portugal-related scholarship that positions students not merely as recipients of schooling, but as agents whose perspectives, experiences and decisions can contribute to more inclusive, intercultural and democratic educational environments. The review is situated against a significant policy shift, particularly the publication of Recommendation No. 2/2021, A voz das crianças e dos jovens na educação escolar, and the subsequent development of national initiatives such as Voz dos Alunos within the Citizenship Education strategy.

Drawing on seven core studies, the article identifies four main thematic clusters in the Portuguese student voice landscape: intercultural and inclusive pedagogy; participatory school improvement, particularly in priority education contexts; governance, rights and student autonomy; and comparative European conceptualisations of student voice and diversity. Across these clusters, the literature shows that student voice can support belonging, engagement, mutual recognition and school improvement when it is embedded in

sustained pedagogical and organisational practices. However, the review also highlights persistent tensions between listening and acting, consultation and co-decision, and formal rights and lived participation. In many schools, students continue to be positioned within adult-defined spaces of participation, with limited influence over curriculum, assessment or institutional decision-making.

Methodologically, the field is diverse but still emergent, combining ethnographic research, participatory action research, life-history approaches, mixed-methods designs, document analysis and comparative studies. The existing evidence is strongest in lower and upper secondary education, while early childhood, primary, vocational and special education remain under-researched. The review also identifies the need for more longitudinal, large-scale and impact-oriented studies capable of assessing the conditions under which student voice initiatives become sustainable and transformative.

The review argues that Portuguese educational policy now provides an enabling framework for strengthening student voice, but that implementation remains uneven and often vulnerable to tokenism. To move from episodic consultation to structural participation, schools require time, resources, teacher professional learning, leadership support and accountability mechanisms that recognise students as legitimate contributors to educational change. The article concludes that student voice has become a credible framework for rethinking schooling in Portugal, provided it is understood not as a symbolic gesture, but as a democratic, pedagogical and equity-oriented principle for transforming educational practice.

Spain

Núria Simó-Gil, Laura Farré-Riera, Jesús Soldevila-Pérez, Cecilia Simón, Angela Barrios, Hector Gutierrez, Yolanda Muñoz, and Inmaculada Orozco

The state-of-the-art review of Student Voice Research conducted in Spain over the past five years (2020-2025), with a particular focus on its contribution to educational inclusion and equity is shown here. Drawing on a conceptualisation of student voice rooted in participatory democratic principles, the study understands student participation as extending far beyond consultation or the mere expression of opinions. Instead, it highlights students as active agents engaged in shared dialogue, critical deliberation, and joint decision-making alongside adults throughout all stages of school life.

Thirteen peer-reviewed articles meeting defined inclusion criteria were analysed. These studies address two overarching aims: (1) advancing towards more inclusive and equitable schools (Duque et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Evagorou et al., 2023; Messiou et al., 2022; Mojtar-Mendieta et al., 2025; Rayón et al., 2023; Soldevila-Pérez et al., 2023), and (2) improving teaching and learning through collaborative reflection on educational practice (Bou & Sales, 2022; Moliner et al., 2024; Sanahuja et al., 2020; Sandoval et al., 2020; Simón et al., 2021; Soldevila-Pérez et al., 2025). Across these two aims, several methodological and theoretical perspectives are identified, including ethnography, participatory action research (PAR), collaborative qualitative approaches, and critical models of student voice. These perspectives shape the extent and nature of student involvement, which varies widely among the studies reviewed.

Findings reveal significant diversity in how student voice is understood and enacted. While some studies restrict participation to opinion-gathering on pre-determined issues, others engage students in more substantive processes of inquiry, reflection, and school transformation. The depth of participation correlates strongly with the research approach adopted: participatory and democratic methodologies tend to foster more meaningful and transformative engagement. Three cross-cutting dimensions emerge as central to effective student voice work: the need for teacher professional development; a rethinking of power relations within schools; and the use of diverse participatory methods that facilitate genuine dialogue and shared decision-making.

Despite notable progress in Spain, the review identifies ongoing challenges. Key among these is ensuring that student participation translates into real impact, clarifying conceptual understandings of student voice, promoting responsive and context-sensitive educational approaches, and addressing sustainability once external researchers withdraw. The paper concludes that developing inclusive and democratic school cultures requires deliberate, long-term commitment, supported by strong leadership and continuous professional learning. Ultimately, authentic student voice processes benefit the entire educational community by fostering more equitable, participatory, and responsive environments for all learners.

Sweden

Björkman Lotta, Bagger Anette, and Roos Helena

Sweden has long promoted the ideal of "a school for all" (Gadler, 2011), foregrounding student influence, participation, and rights. Swedish research on student voice and inclusion reflects this orientation across fields such as language and literacy education, inclusive and special education, mathematics education, digital learning, early childhood education, and educational practice. Rather than focusing primarily on policy or structures, this body of research emphasizes students' experiences of participation, belonging, engagement, and agency. The selection process for this review focused on research (2020-2025) addressing student voice and inclusion within an educational context within the field of educational sciences and closely related disciplines, such as sociology, cognitive sciences and psychology. Following the steps and criteria outlined above, 26 papers were analysed for the purposes of this review.

Student voice is conceptualized in diverse but interconnected ways. In language and literacy education, it is examined through linguistic and dialogic practices such as evaluative language, metaphors, and role-taking. Across disciplines, inclusion is framed as a relational and participatory process grounded in equity and belonging (Roos, 2023; Gardesten & Palmér, 2025). Theoretical frameworks are interdisciplinary, drawing on dialogic theory, systemic functional linguistics, genre theory, democratic and political theory, discourse theory, phenomenology, and participation-oriented models. Methodologically, studies employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, often using participatory approaches that position students as co-constructors of knowledge (Gardesten & Palmér, 2025).

Key findings show that dialogic, creative, and multimodal practices enhance students' participation, agency, and engagement in learning (Söderberg et al., 2024). In mathematics and inclusive classrooms, participation is shaped by ideological, structural, and subject-specific conditions, highlighting the importance of teachers' relational and didactic competence (Roos, 2023; Gardesten & Palmér, 2025). In early childhood education, tools such as cameras and photo documentation make children's perspectives visible and support belonging and social inclusion (Elvstrand et al., 2025).

Overall, Swedish research demonstrates that inclusion is not merely a structural or policy-driven goal but is continuously produced through students' experiences. Attending to student voice is essential for identifying barriers, fostering equitable participation, and sustaining democratic educational practices. The review calls for transdisciplinary research approaches (Allan et al., 2025) and warns that political and administrative trends risk marginalizing children's voices.

UK

Kiki Messiou, Jay de los Reyes, Vivienne Kachollom Rwang, Chinmaya Potnis, Ping Dong, and Tricia Shaw

In the UK, particularly in England, there is a long tradition in student voice research. The movement gained prominence through the important work about pupil voice, funded by the ESRC, led by Jean Rudduck in the study "Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning" (2000-2003) where students' views in primary and secondary schools were explored in relation to learning and teaching. Since then, several studies have been

conducted with a focus on students' voices. Following the steps and criteria outlined above, 15 papers were analysed for the purposes of this review.

Many of the studies involved students as active participants, seeing voice as both a product and a process (Gripton and Vincent, 2020) and used a range of methodologies, predominantly qualitative approaches such as case studies (Aquarone, 2021; Hill, S. 2020), participatory action research (PAR) (Messiou et al., 2024), complexity informed – PAR (Crook, 2021).

Some innovative and creative methods were used in some of the studies. For example, in Gripton and Vincent (2020) study small toys (Playmobil figures) were used to facilitate understanding young children's experiences. Furthermore, photo-elicitation and photovoice were also used in the study of Shaw (2020). Both studies were carried out with young children and highlight the need for the use of innovative and creative approaches to enable young children's voices to be heard. However, it was surprising to see that most of the identified studies still carry on with traditional methods, predominantly using individual interviews, focus group and group discussions. Some studies also involved students in data collection and analysis (McPartlan 2024, Messiou and Ainscow, 2020). Only one study identified was focusing on digital tools as a way of democratising school processes (Cook and Warwick, 2021). Given the use of technology by young people, it is surprising this is an aspect that has not been explored in more depth, not least with the dominance of AI.

Finally, despite a focus on dialogues in students' voice research aiming to promote inclusion, only one study highlighted intergenerational aspects explicitly. Crook's (2021) study employed 'cooperative intergenerational inquiry' involving children, parents, siblings, grandparents and a school councillor. Through our findings we argue for the need for more transformative research approaches, where power dynamics are addressed through the processes employed, enabling all participants to be genuinely included.

USA

Elizabeth B.Kozleski

This research review examines peer-reviewed studies on student voice in U.S. K–12 settings published between January 2020 and March 2025. The 19 studies included span qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and conceptual approaches. The review focused on student voice in relation to instructional practice, school leadership, policy, and special education.

The central finding is that student voice research has evolved from a normative, advocacy-oriented concept into an empirically grounded and organizationally embedded practice. While early scholarship framed student voice primarily as a democratic and ethical imperative, recent research has begun linking it to measurable outcomes including student engagement, academic achievement, and school improvement. This shift signals growing methodological rigor and the potential for cumulative knowledge-building in the field. Nevertheless, the transition remains incomplete, as persistent challenges related to power, representation, and implementation capacity continue to limit its transformative potential.

Four core themes emerged from the literature: methodological and conceptual shifts in research focus; convergences across published studies; problem spaces that resist study for theoretical and methodological reasons; and the expansion of the sites and purposes of student voice. Across these themes, responsiveness emerges as a key mechanism — student voice produces its most consequential effects on agency, engagement, and learning when educators and administrators not only elicit student perspectives but genuinely act upon them.

However, viewing student voice through a cultural-historical lens reveals that responsiveness captures only part of a broader process. Student voice operates through a sequence of expression, interpretation, and response, yet most empirical work focuses primarily on the final stage. The interpretive processes through which educators make sense of student perspectives — shaped by professional norms, institutional

expectations, and cultural-historical assumptions — remain under-theorized. Equity, too, is frequently treated as a background condition rather than a central organizing force.

The review proposes extending existing research by integrating multiple levels of analysis, specifying culturally mediated sensemaking as a core mechanism, and reconceptualizing equity as historically constituted. Recommended next steps are developing scalable models for embedding student voice into schools, integrating student voice with emerging technologies such as AI, and expanding research into underrepresented populations — all while guarding against tokenism when student voice is solicited without meaningful follow-through.

Key features emerging from the analysis of the reviews of studies

In this part of the report, we identify key features that emerge across countries in relation to the core concepts of the IRN: student voice and inclusion and equity in schools. This part is not a comparative analysis of the different reviews carried out in each of the countries. Instead, the focus is on highlighting the possibilities and tensions that we identified through these reviews of studies. The table below summarises these key possibilities and tensions, followed by an analysis of each feature, linking back to specific studies from the various reviews.

Student Voice Conceptualisations	
Possibilities	**Tensions**
Student voice is defined in multiple ways, ranging from gathering students' perspectives, student participation and involvement in decision making. Across countries, there is a growing recognition of voice as situated and relational, shaped by context, interactions, and power relations rather than a stable, "capturable" individual attribute.	Despite various conceptualisations, the predominant conceptualisation is that of perspectives or views and in many studies students are still simply responding to adults' agendas as opposed to taking more transformative roles.
Relevant policy documents in a range of countries support the introduction of student voice approaches in research and in schools, even though they may not explicitly use the phrase "student voice".	The absence of explicit reference to "student voice" across policy contexts creates conceptual ambiguity, making cross-national comparison and systematic implementation more challenging.
Student voice is often framed through democratic participation and citizenship education	Conceptual ambiguity due to indirect terminology. Although participation and student involvement are frequently mentioned in policy and research, the explicit concept of "student voice" is not always used. Instead, related notions such as participation, autonomy, citizenship education, or democratic governance appear more commonly.
Multiple conceptualisations of participation levels. Studies reflect different levels of student voice, ranging from: 1. listening to students' experiences and perceptions, 2. dialogical engagement between teachers and students, 3. co-design of projects and school activities, 4. shared leadership in participatory initiatives.	Participation often institutional rather than transformative. Despite the existence of formal participatory structures (e.g., student associations, school councils, class representatives), research indicates that student participation frequently remains procedural or symbolic, with limited influence on decision-making processes.
Student voice is often connected with intercultural education, inclusion, and democratic participation, particularly in contexts where schools address cultural	Persistent adult control over participatory processes. Even in initiatives designed to promote student voice, adults frequently maintain control over:

diversity and social inequalities. Participatory projects have demonstrated how student involvement can strengthen intercultural understanding, collaboration, and community engagement. These initiatives suggest that student voice can function as a mechanism for building inclusive school communities and fostering social recognition among diverse student groups.	● defining the agenda, ● structuring participatory processes, ● interpreting students' contributions.
Methodologies	
Possibilities	**Tensions**
All countries managed to identify some relevant studies, indicating that these topics have been the focus of research.	Studies across the various countries mostly involve older students in schools. There are less studies involving children in early years and children in primary schools. Furthermore, certain students' groups are missing from the research.
A range of methods have been used in the various studies for collecting data, from quantitative, to mixed methods and qualitative methods.	Creative methods of collecting data have been used in some studies but most studies focus on the use of interviews, suggesting limited methodological risk-taking. There is also predominance of small-scale qualitative studies.
Emerging participatory and creative methodologies position students as co-researchers rather than solely research subjects. Across countries, some studies adopt: participatory action research, arts-based approaches, visual and digital methods, youth advisory groups	Participation often remains limited to data generation rather than co-analysis or co-decision-making. Even in participatory designs, adults frequently: define research questions; control interpretation; retain authorship and dissemination power.
Research connecting micro-level classroom practices with school governance structures research frequently bridges classroom-level pedagogical practices with whole-school governance structures, analysing how student voice operates across different organisational levels. Studies explore how participation emerges in intercultural classroom projects, student councils, school improvement processes, and participatory governance mechanisms.	Findings rarely lead to documented policy or structural change, indicating limited research–policy impact. Student voice initiatives are frequently implemented as time-limited projects rather than embedded as sustainable, structural features of educational institutions. Where relationships with decision-makers are not structurally embedded, even participatory methods risk producing expressive inclusion without institutional change.

Analysis of methodological possibilities **and tensions:**

Possibilities	Tensions
All countries managed to identify some relevant studies, indicating that these topics have been the focus of research.	Studies across the various countries mostly involve older students in schools. There are less studies involving children in early years and children in primary schools. Furthermore, certain students' groups are missing from the research.

All countries identified relevant studies considering the criteria that we had set for our scoping reviews (see Appendix for a full list of studies). Colleagues are aware that there are more published studies in each of the countries, but these are either published in journals that are not peer reviewed, outside the scope of our reviews (e.g. literature reviews), or were published outside the time frame that we chose to focus on (2020 – 2025). For example, in the review of records of peer-reviewed articles and studies published between 2020 and 2025 in the Australian context, one of the excluded records was Miller and Armour's (2021) systematic literature review of empirical papers published between 2008 and 2017, which had examined ways to promote engagement and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in mathematics in Australia. Although the period covered by this systematic literature review differ from the period of the current report (2020-2025), a common theme emerges from research published across these periods. That is, Miller and Armour (2021) reported a lack of voice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, advocating for a balance of voice in future research on mathematics education. In studies from New Zealand relevant studies outside the agreed timeframe included Bourke & MacDonald, 2018; Davison et al., 2016; Holland, 2015. In Spain, a total of six articles published in 2019, and fell outside the time frame established by the network (2020–2025), were considered highly relevant contributions to the field of student voice within the Spanish context (i.e. Ceballos, Calvo & Haya, 2019, DeHaro et al, 2019; Messiou, 2019; Saiz-Linares et al., 2019a, 2019b; Susinos et al., 2019). In Portugal, the study by Szelei, Tinoca, and Pinho (2019) was also highly relevant.

Studies across the various countries mostly involve older students in schools. There are less studies involving children in early years and children in primary schools. For example, in the UK only six of the fifteen studies focused on early years and primary (Black-Hawkin et al., 2021; Crook, 2021, Gripton and Vincent, 2020, Messiou and Ainscow, 2020, Messiou et al, 2024, Shaw, 2020). In Austria, of the 18 studies, only four (Bešić et al., 2020; Ganotz et al., 2021; Garotte et al., 2023; Paleczek et al., 2022) involved primary school students. In Italy, only three of the eight studies focused on early years and primary, of which only one focuses exclusively on these stages of schooling (Pastori et al. 2020), while the other two involve them in broader projects that also include older students (Frizzarin et al., 2023; Zecca & Cotza, 2020). In New Zealand, out of the seven studies, five focused on secondary students. In Sweden four studies focused on younger children (Hillén & Johansson 2020; Magnusson, et al. 2023; Wahlgren et. al 2022; Melander Bowden 2023). The U.S. review yielded no studies that reported results from primary schools.

In many countries certain groups of students were missing from research studies. For example, in Australia Picton and Banfield (2020) included the voice of one student out of the five that had participated in the larger study. No further demographics or details about the methods of data collection were reported except that students were enrolled in one primary mainstream school in Adelaide, South Australia. Researchers reflected on learnings related to culture, structures and practices for young students of refugee experience with no insights provided into the methodology adopted, enablers and challenges encountered in capturing students' views. There was also only one record explicitly stating participation of students with disabilities (Barr & Mavropoulou, 2021), raising questions about the representation of students with disability in educational

research. In Austria, while some efforts to include diverse perspectives are evident, the conceptualization of student voice tends to remain generalized, overlooking the impact of intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, migration background, and LGBTQ+ identity. In Sweden, an explicit minority perspective is often absent. Studies tend to have a subject-specific focus, examining how students experience participation in subject-area teaching rather than inclusion in a broader sense. Some studies (Frostlund, & Nordgren 2023; Öhman 2023). address students with special educational needs (SEN) and racism (Bolander & Bredström 2021), but beyond these, the research is more generally framed, centered on participation and influence for students in general. At least half of the U.S. studies centered equity in relationship to disability, race, and gender. Some attention was given to the unit of analysis, examining the influence of student voice on practices in classrooms, schools, and/or school districts (e.g, Miller & Kurth, 2021; Nelson & Charteris, 2021; Moore, 2022).

A range of methods have been used in the various studies for collecting data, from quantitative, to mixed methods and qualitative methods.	Creative methods of collecting data have been used in some studies but most studies focus on the use of interviews, suggesting limited methodological risk-taking. There is also predominance of small-scale qualitative studies.

Most Portuguese studies rely on small-scale qualitative case studies, often focusing on individual schools or specific initiatives (e.g. Caetano et al., 2020). While these designs provide rich insights into participatory practices, they limit the ability to assess broader systemic patterns or evaluate the large-scale impact of student voice initiatives. In the UK, whilst there are some studies focusing on cross-school (Black-Hawkins, Maguire and Kershner , 2021; Clarke, 2024; Cook and Warwick, 2021; Littlefair, Jopling and Kelly; Messiou et al., 2024; Shaw, 2020) or international research (Messiou and Ainscow, 2020), the majority remained focused on small-scale, individual studies (Aquarone, 2021; Brazier et al., 2025; Crook, 2021; Dimitrellou and Male, 2020; Gripton and Vincent, 2020; Hill, 2020; Hulme et al., 2023; McPartlan, 2024). Similarly in Australia, studies predominantly focused on small-scale case studies with limited student voice. For example, although seven children were involved in the larger study, Cronin et al. (2022) reported on the experiences of two of them, first in their pre-school setting and the following first year of formal primary schooling, that is kindergarten in the state of New South Wales, Australia. Findings supported the affordances of the methods including digital stories exploring children's literacy experiences from pre-school to kindergarten. The paper published by Simpson (2020), reported on an action research project conducted by the author and classroom teacher of a Year 9 class (aged 14-15 years) as part of their professional learning in Australia. Reflections at the end of the project on the inclusion of student voice in curriculum decision making process included the need for additional ways to involve students in planning their learning and assessing their progress; and the realisation that inclusion of student voice, student agency and leadership in the Middle Years curriculum is possible. However, to inform a systemic realisation of inclusive education at the school, community, State or Federal levels, further research involving larger samples is needed. The same applies to the Swedish context, although there are some exceptions in the form of larger-scale survey studies (Ramberg 2020; Yngve & Lidström 2024). Furthermore, several of the Swedish studies (10) were interview-based and typically involved around 20–30 students.

In Austria, in nearly all studies (15 of 18), students served as consultants, resulting in limited participation. Students were typically asked to provide feedback or input on a specific topic related to their school experience; they did not co-design or influence the research framework.

Emerging participatory and creative methodologies position students as co-researchers rather than solely research subjects. Across countries, some studies adopt: participatory action research, arts-based approaches, visual and digital methods, youth advisory groups.	Participation often remains limited to data generation rather than co-analysis or co-decision-making. Even in participatory designs, adults frequently: define research questions; control interpretation; retain authorship and dissemination power.

In the UK several studies employed participatory approaches. For example, participatory action research (PAR) (Hill, 2020; Messiou et al., 2025) and complexity informed – PAR (Crook, 2021; McPartlan, 2024) were used, whereas other studies employed visual methods such as photo elicitation (e.g., Clarke, 2024), photovoice (e.g. Shaw, 2020), drawing (e.g., Brazier et al., 2025). Only one study involved students in a participatory action research process, where they contributed to both data generation and data analysis (McPartlan, 2024), indicating limited student involvement as co-researchers across the reviewed literature. In Sweden, few studies had an explicit participatory ambition, with only one study (Wahlgren et al. 2022) adopting such an approach. In Italy three of the studies adopt a participatory research approach (Langer, 2025; Montanari, 2024; Pastori et al., 2020), and some, such as Pastori et al. (2020) use a variety of methods to engage students as co-researchers, for example child-led tours in early childhood settings. Similarly in Austria, three studies used participatory methods, such as: photovoice (Pirker et al., 2023, Cerv et al., 2024) and digital storytelling (Hintermann et al., 2020). In Australia, emerging studies are engaging with participatory methodologies. For example, Shay et al. (2022) trained 12 enrolled students aged 16-18 years each year from one Aboriginal vocational school in Western Australia to interview past students (N: 22) from the same school through storytelling about their post-school experiences in remote communities in a three-year study. Students participated in a research training on ethical research protocols and procedures. A learning map was created guiding the research students around the language they were using, interviewing styles, questions, documentation including photos and transcripts and themes emerging form the data. Co-researchers were involved across data collection (students further introduced technology and arts-based methods of data collection) and analysis (students' names were added to papers including their analysis).

In the Spanish context, most of the studies analysed (13 in total) adopt a qualitative–collaborative methodological approach. Within this framework, the main aim is to explore how students' voices, as active agents, contribute to the development of more democratic and inclusive schools (Escobedo et al., 2021; Soldevila-Pérez et al., 2025). Across the studies reviewed, we have identified a range of approaches. In some cases, studies are limited to consulting and collecting students' perspectives and opinions in order to identify barriers and formulate recommendations or suggestions for change. This raises the question of whether such studies, which have no tangible impact on the context and restrict student participation to responding to pre-established questions, can truly be considered Student Voice Research. By contrast, other studies actively involve students in the different phases of the transformation process (Mojtar-Mendieta et al., 2025; Sandoval et al., 2020; Sanahuja et al., 2020). Within this latter group, several studies employ either ethnographic analysis or PAR. Ethnographic approaches are used to promote school inclusion through the participation of students and families. From this perspective, student voice is understood as the set of initiatives promoted by schools to increase students' involvement in decision-making processes related to different aspects of school life (Escobedo et al., 2021). In contrast, other studies adopt PAR approaches, which emphasise collaborative knowledge construction between researchers and participants (Bou & Sales, 2022) and foster dialogical and cooperative practices. Within this framework, students may take a leading role in collectively analysing and reconstructing their realities, forming groups of resistance and developing proposals or guides aimed at making schools more inclusive (Mojtar-Mendieta et al., 2025). PAR is also used to acknowledge and value students'voice of previously 'silenced groups', such as students with disabilities (Soldevila-Pérez et al., 2023), with the aim of promoting equity through the inclusion of all students.

Indonesian studies demonstrate the potential of creative methodologies to amplify student voice. For example, Bonati and Andriana (2021) used Photovoice to enable students with learning disabilities to document, interpret, and publicly present their experiences of inclusion, positioning students as active contributors to knowledge production rather than merely research participants. Also, in Indonesia, student voice has enabled inclusion to be understood through students' lived experiences rather than solely through policy or academic outcomes. For example, Little et al. (2022) found that students with disabilities identified friendship, peer acceptance, and social belonging as central indicators of inclusion, highlighting relational dimensions that are often overlooked in formal definitions of inclusive education. However, a tension exists between voice as

expression and voice as influence. Although students in Andriana and Evans (2020) articulated unmet learning needs and suggestions for improvement, teachers and principals sometimes misinterpreted students' concerns, and adult-centred decision-making limited students' influence on educational decisions.

Research connecting micro-level classroom practices with school governance structures research frequently bridges classroom-level pedagogical practices with whole-school governance structures, analysing how student voice operates across different organisational levels. Studies explore how participation emerges in intercultural classroom projects, student councils, school improvement processes, and participatory governance mechanisms.	Findings rarely lead to documented policy or structural change, indicating limited research–policy impact. Student voice initiatives are frequently implemented as time-limited projects rather than embedded as sustainable, structural features of educational institutions. Where relationships with decision-makers are not structurally embedded, even participatory methods risk producing expressive inclusion without institutional change

In the UK, some studies brought teachers and students together to explore new pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. Examples include, Hill (2020) who cites a school adapting its approach across departments by introducing an annual Best Practice review; Crook (2021) who describes how children can be enabled to shape spaces for participation in lesson time by recognising these spaces as dynamic intra-subjective meeting points and of intergenerational relationships for change; and Messiou et al. (2024) who identify the process of teacher-student interactions that encouraged teachers to reflect on 'interruptions' that 'stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action' (Messiou and Ainscow (2020, 671).); and Black-Hawkins et al. (2021) have used the findings on key aspects for children in developing inclusive classroom communities, to support cohorts of student teachers' preparation for teaching new classes. Additionally, Littlefair et al. (2024) reported that one of the two participating schools had acted on pupils' views and implemented change based on the findings, although the details were not specified.

Suggestions for future research

- Further research is needed that involves younger children in early years and schools, as well as studies that involve traditionally marginalized groups of students, beyond disability, such as ones representing diverse identities like LGBTQ+ or linguistic minorities.
- Develop studies that explore the point at which the degree of negotiated partnership marks the threshold at which *student voice* becomes a driver of situated change and transformation.
- Future inquiries must move beyond small-scale case studies towards longitudinal, cross sector and impact-oriented designs that trace how participatory dispositions develop from early childhood into adulthood and how they intersect with gender, disability, socio-economic status and digital mediation.
- Future studies should deploy mixed-methods impact evaluations—combining student-reported outcomes, learning analytics and administrative data
- Studies should explore the extent to which student voice impacts school culture and policies ensuring sustainable change or transformation.
- An increased presence of transdisciplinary orientations is needed to provide richer and more comprehensive understandings of student voice and its connections to inclusion, learning, well-being, and democracy.
- Exploring how digital tools, including the use of AI can be integrated with student voice approaches.
- Investigate how power dynamics can be addressed in practice through transformative student voice approaches.
- Researchers have an ethical responsibility to include a researcher positionality or statement on how students are involved (as active participants and/or leaders) in the research design of projects pertinent to students' needs on the grounds of students' fundamental human rights.
- Further studies that explore what student voice means to students and how they perceive this to be embedded in policy and practice.

Part 2: Summary of IRN Activities

Summary of activities in the first two years of the IRN (2023 – 2024 and 2024- 2025):

In the first year of the IRN, we focused on discussing the different conceptualisations of the key terms of our IRN and getting to know one another's work better. We also had an official launch of the IRN and offered a range of online seminars to ensure the visibility of the IRN. We also finalised the next steps for conducting the reviews of studies in each of the countries, for the synthesis report. In the second year, we had monthly meetings with the IRN members and continued with open online seminars. Our seminars and our launch event can be found here.

Summary of activities in the final year 2025 - 2026:

During the final year we focused on the following areas:

1. Finalising reviews of studies in each of the countries (as above).
2. Invited WERA Symposium 2025
3. Open online seminars
4. Discussing expansion of the activities of the IRN and submitting an application for expansion of the IRN. The IRN extension application has now been approved, and we will carry on collaborating for another three years (30th June 2026 – 30th June 2029)
5. Invited WERA Symposium 2026

A summary for each of the above:

1. **Various meetings discussing the findings from the reviews of studies and finalising the work in each of the countries:**
   To accommodate time zone differences each meeting took place twice (morning and afternoon) on 8th October 2025, 11th December 2025 and 3rd March 2026. In addition, various discussions via emails were carried out between the meetings to finalise the reviews. Finally, at the end of each online seminar (November, January, April and May) we had additional meetings with focused discussions around the topic of each seminar.

2. **Presentation of invited symposium at the WERA Focal Meeting 2025 WERA symposium in João Pessoa, Brazil in October 2025:**

   Title of Symposium: **"Students' voices for promoting inclusion: An insight into perspectives and practices across diverse contexts"**

Paper 1: Amplifying Disabled Students' Voices: Insights from a Systematic Literature Review
Federica Festa; *Alice Di Leva; Luca Angelone;* ***Rosa Bellacicco****; Cecilia Marchisio,* ***University of Turin, Italy***

Paper 2: Understanding Mainstream Teachers' Practices for Promoting Inclusion in Primary Classrooms in China: Listening to Students
Ping Dong, Kyriaki Messiou*, Charis Voutsina,* ***University of Southampton, UK***

Paper 3: Engaging with students as partners in schools in India: A step towards co-developing inclusive school contexts

Chinmaya Potnis, Kyriaki Messiou*, Achala Gupta,* ***University of Southampton, UK***

Discussant: **Luis Tinoca, University of Lisbon, Portugal**

3. Online Seminars:

11th November 2025 Seminar:

Speaker: ***Lotta Björkman***, Teacher Education, **Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden**

Title: **Interwoven Inclusive Teaching (IIT): From a student perspective and with a continental, didactic approach**

Abstract:
The seminar presents a study exploring how high school students experience teachers' inclusive teaching, with a focus on how inclusion is enacted in everyday classroom practice. Drawing on phenomenological research involving more than 600 high school students, the study identifies three overlapping didactic dimensions through which inclusive teaching emerges: didactic persona, didactic alliance, and didactic action. Together, these dimensions form what is described as Interwoven inclusive teaching (IIT). Teachers can though be understood as didactic subjects who, through their presence and interaction, become part of both the didactic content and method, aiming to foster inclusion. Although inclusive education is seldom connected to didactics, the study argues that didactics are needed to enable inclusion. While social prejudice and inaccessibility may restrict students in everyday life, didactics - rooted in the continental tradition - can contribute to the creation of artificial inclusive spaces within teaching, allowing students to transcend taken-for-granted assumptions and become in new ways. The findings offer new perspectives and conceptual tools for both research and practice, contributing to strategies for integrating inclusion into everyday teaching for all students.

Watch the recording here

21st January 2026 Seminar:

Speaker: **Inmaculada Orozco** (University of Seville)
Title: **Weaving the life history of a teacher committed to inclusive education through students' voices: lessons from the journey**

This seminar presents a biographical-narrative study on how life histories can theorise educational practice and contribute to the development of more inclusive schools. It focuses on the experience of a Spanish primary school teacher committed to inclusion. The participation of four of her former students, selected by the teacher herself, played a central role in the research process, providing critical perspectives that helped to construct and understand the teacher's life history.
During the study, various challenges and insights emerged, shedding light on how to make research with children more inclusive and meaningful. The seminar invites reflection on the insights gained by the author of this seminar during the construction of the teacher's life history, highlighting how to value student participation, employ participatory techniques, and bring together the perspectives of both the teacher and the students. These reflections provide guidance for transforming educational practice and conducting research with children in a more inclusive and participatory manner, continually learning from the experiences of all participants involved.

Watch the recording here

1st April 2026 Seminar:

Speaker: **Vivienne Kachollom Rwang,** University of Southampton, UK
Title: **Voice, Belonging, and Inclusion: What Displaced Children Tell Us About Schooling in Crisis Contexts**

Watch the recording here

5th May 2026 Seminar:
Speaker: Ana Souza & Sofia Freire & Ana Paula Caetano
Title: Echoes of school lived spaces by students' voices

Abstract:
This seminar is focused on students' experiences in schools' spaces. While individuals experience school life in dimensions, such as classroom participation, social interactions or academic involvement – these experiences may vary widely and can significantly shape students' feelings of inclusion/exclusion and sense of belonging. Some identify strongly with their school, whereas others feel disconnected.
The goal of my research is to investigate how school physical and social environments, influence students' feelings of inclusion and sense of belonging and what they suggest that should be changed. For that, by examining daily routines, firstly we will analyse how designed physical and social spaces accommodate students' diverse needs (conceived spaces); secondly, we will analyse how designed physical and social spaces are appropriated by each of the students (perceived spaces). Finally, we will examine how designed and appropriated physical and social spaces mutually affect each other and shape students' interactions, lived experiences, and memories (lived spaces) in ways that enact feelings of inclusion and sense of belonging. Students are implicated in this analysis by doing written registrations and discussing these issues with the teacher-researcher, who mediates their communication with the other teachers.
To collect data for this study, I utilized methods such as a student field diary, site surveys, participant observant, sketchbook drawings, formal and informal focus groups, and sociograms.
Key findings emerged:
• Students report a lack of involvement in decisions regarding physical and social environments, especially in the classroom.
• Students' and teacher's suggested adjustments to physical spaces can significantly enhance opportunities for positive interactions, inclusion, participation, belonging and learning.
• Students feel that they don't have an active voice in the school community.

4. Extension of the IRN:

An application for extending the work of the IRN was submitted and has now been approved. We will carry on the work for another three years 30th June 2026 – 30th June 2029.

5. TERA & WERA 2026 Invited Symposium:

Invited accepted symposium for the TERA 2026 & WERA 2026 Focal Meeting, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Conference theme: "Bridging Cultures, Co-Creating Knowledge: Local Innovations and Global Visions in Education"

Title of Symposium: **"Conceptions of Student Voice in Research: A Review of the Extant Research in Australia, New Zealand and the United States 2020 – 2026"**

Paper 1: Student Voice and Engagement in Australian Educational Research: insights from a Review of Literature - **Foteini Pasenidou & Deborah Price, Adelaide University, Australia**

Paper 2: Student Voice – A Scoping Review of Research into Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand - **Badhoora Naseer (presenting author), Fiona Ell, Lisa Darragh & Jude MacArthur University of Auckland, New Zealand**

Paper 3: The Emergence of Student Voice in the U.S.: A Vehicle for Educational Policy and Practice Transformation - **Elizabeth Kozleski**, **Stanford University, USA.**

Chair/Discussant: **Missy Morton**, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Members' recent publications:

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Other news from members of the IRN:

Federica Festa and Francesca Capone took part in the XXe Congrès AIFREF, Biennale Internationale de l'éducation et de la Formation et des Pratiche Professionneles (Paris, France, 22-24 April 2026) presenting a contribution entitled "Participation des élèves et dispositifs institutionnels dans l'école en
Italie: quelles conditions pour une voix reconnue?"

Federica Festa and Rosa Bellacicco gave a presentation entitled *"Multiplying Perspectives: Experiences of Inclusive Research with Students and Co-Researchers with Disabilities"* as part of the online seminar *"Practices of Emancipation in Inclusive Research"* at the University of Siena.

Kiki Messiou and Federica Festa have initiated a collaboration with the Italian comprehensive school IC Frassati to develop a School Voices RPP initiative in primary and lower secondary schools, linking to the School Voices Research-Practice Partnership at the University of Southampton, England, UK.

The School Voices Research-Practice Partnership, led by Prof Kiki Messiou, carried on working collaboratively with schools in the city of Southampton and one school in Eastleigh. Student researchers in each of the schools explored areas that the schools chose to focus on (e.g. increasing student participation in lessons, co-designing PE lessons, transforming grey spaces into green in schools etc.). Two workshops at the University of Southampton where student researchers are meeting other student researchers to prepare brief videos about their role as researchers are planned in June and July.

APPENDIX

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