

## **The missing voices: students as a catalyst for promoting inclusive education**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the progress that has been made over the 25 years since the Salamanca Statement, there is still room for improvements in order that schools can be developed that include all students. Drawing on a programme of research carried out over a period of 20 years in various European countries, this paper argues that children and young people themselves should have a central role in informing thinking, policies and practices in education. Although this is in line with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, their views continue to be largely absent from important discussions that directly affect them. Using examples from two interconnected studies, this paper illustrates how students can be a catalyst for inclusive development, provided their views are heard and acted upon. In so doing, it describes the evolution of the author's thinking, as the research moved beyond an initial focus on students' voices as relating to conversations with students, towards a much more radical approach that seeks to promote dialogue about learning and teaching amongst students and teachers. This move is seen to involve a cultural change which, in itself, is a manifestation of a commitment to inclusion as a principled approach to education.

Key words: dialogue, students' voices, inclusive education

## **Introduction**

In 1994 the Salamanca Statement highlighted that “Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights” (p. 11). In the document, there is no explicit reference made to the idea of student voice, a term that was highlighted earlier in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, particularly articles 12 and 13. Since then, the idea of engaging with children’s and young people’s voices has been on the agenda, with all countries that have ratified the Convention having to produce national plans to indicate how they will listen to children’s voices. However, even within the Convention there are contradictions. For example, as referred in the Convention:

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child.” (p.5)

Consequently, even though the importance of children’s voices has been highlighted, it seems that age and maturity are also important factors, according to the Convention. In other words, some children’s views may matter more than others, depending on age and maturity. Whilst the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly articulates the importance of children’s voices, the Salamanca Statement did not do so. Both documents, however, do give prominence to children’s rights to education. In this paper, I argue that the involvement of children can be a significant factor in promoting inclusive developments, using examples from my research to illustrate what this involves.

## **Student voice and inclusion**

The term student voice is a contested one, with varying meanings in the literature. Cook-Sather (2006) argues that “‘voice’ signals having a legitimate perspective and opinion, being present and taking part, and/or having an active role’ (p.362). Others draw attention to the notion of voice beyond verbal expressions, such as emotional components and other non-verbal means of expressing views (Thomson, 2008). However, Reay (2006) draws attention to the dangers of the collectiveness of the term voice and argues that “instead of a common pupil voice there is often a cacophony of competing voices” (p. 179).

For the purposes of this paper, building on my work over the last 20 years, ‘voice’ refers to students’ thoughts and emotions, as well as their actions for bringing about change. Particular emphasis throughout my work has been given to the multiplicity of students’ views, as opposed to the collectiveness of voice, and how this diversity of voices can be accommodated within school settings. Hence the term that I am using is students’ voices, as opposed to student voice.

Even though the Salamanca Statement did not make reference to the importance of student voice, it did refer to the challenge of child-centred pedagogy. It states, “The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities.” (p.6). There is no explanation however, what this child-centred pedagogy would involve, nor does it highlight the role that students’ voices could play in this process.

Since the publication of the Salamanca Statement a number of other important documents have developed further the ideas presented in the original document, such as the Incheon Declaration (2015) which makes a commitment to equitable education, particularly UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. However, the concept students' voices does not appear in any of these documents. Therefore, it can be argued that the idea of engaging with the views of students is still missing from many important international policies. Hence, the first part of the title of this paper: 'the missing voices'.

For me, inclusion and student voice are interconnected ideas, inclusion referring to the presence, participation and achievement of all learners (Ainscow, 2007). Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, listening to children's voices is a manifestation of being inclusive (Messiou, 2006). In other words, in order to ensure participation of all, schools first need to offer opportunities to their students to express their views and, more importantly, to act on those in some way. This might simply mean having discussions with students about their suggestions and explaining to them why certain ideas that they might have made are not possible to be implemented.

My earlier review of published studies in the International Journal of Inclusive Education between 2005 and 2015 (Messiou, 2017), has highlighted that most research in the field of inclusive education focuses on those defined as having special educational needs, or other categories, instead of focusing on all students, which would be in line with broader definitions of inclusion (see Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). At the same time it found that very few studies employed collaborative participatory approaches. I argued that such approaches are more likely to facilitate the development of inclusive contexts, on the one hand, and empower participants who take active roles in research studies, on the other hand.

The examples I provide in this paper refer to two studies that employed collaborative participatory approaches. They are presented in order to address the following question:

- How can students' voices facilitate inclusive developments in schools?

Using the two contested terms, 'inclusion' and 'students' voices', and the ideals that were promoted since the appearance of the Salamanca Statement, I illustrate how the idea of engaging with the views of all students, can become a reality in facilitating inclusive developments in schools.

### **The studies**

Both the studies that are used here were funded by the European Union. The first study "Responding to diversity: a strategy for teacher development" (2011-2014), involved secondary schools in three European countries (England, Portugal, Spain). The second study, "Reaching the 'hard to reach': inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue"<sup>1</sup> (2017-2020), is still ongoing and involves primary schools in five European countries (Austria, Denmark, England, Portugal, Spain).

The studies employed collaborative action research processes, where different stakeholders function as co-researchers (Mitchell, Reilly, and Logue, 2009) and are concerned with

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/>

educational improvement (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Hadfield and Haw (2001) have argued that such studies less often involve collaboration between teachers and students in schools. Usually the collaboration is between teachers, or between teachers and researchers (e.g. Butler and Schnellert, 2012; Feldman, 1999; Fernandez-Díaz, Calvo and Rodríguez-Hoyos, 2014; Jaipal and Figg, 2011; Levin and Rock, 2003; Vaino, Holbrook and Rannikmae, 2013). In the two studies that are mentioned here, teachers, other practitioners in schools and students took the role of co-researchers with the support of university researchers. For more information about the methodology employed in the studies, see Messiou and Ainscow (2015) and Messiou et al. (2016).

The two studies are distinct phases of a body of work, with ideas from the first influencing the design of the second. Therefore, I present them in the order they occurred. As I will explain, the process of these studies moved my thinking beyond a concern with listening to students, towards a process that involves dialogue between students and teachers. In what follows, examples from schools in two of the countries are used to illustrate the power that an engagement with students' voices can have in developing inclusive practices in schools. The second of these examples illustrates the move towards an approach that emphasises the potential of student/teacher dialogue as a means of fostering greater involvement in learning.

**Study 1.** This study took place in eight secondary schools in three European countries (2011-2014) and led to the development of a new model for the development of learning and teaching that we refer to as 'Inclusive inquiry' (Messiou and Ainscow, 2017; Messiou and Ainscow, 2015). The model involves four interconnected processes: talking about diversity; learning from experiences; developing inclusive practices; and engaging with students' views. The idea of engaging with the views of students was the most important element in the whole process.

The initial version of the model developed from combining a form of the lesson study approach and a framework for engaging with the views of students. The lesson study approach focuses on the development of teaching, and is well established in Japan and several other Asian countries (Hiebert, Gallimore and Stigler, 2002; Lewis, Perry and Murata, 2006). Teachers form groups, usually trios where they design a lesson together, then one of the teachers teaches it, whilst the others observe. The process is repeated three times with the aim being that of refining the lesson. The other framework was from my earlier work (Messiou, 2011; Messiou, 2012) and focused on an engagement with students' voices as a way of understanding marginalisation and promoting inclusion (Messiou, 2012). It was the merging of these two approaches that led to the Inclusive Inquiry approach.

In essence, through the use of Inclusive Inquiry, teachers were required to form trios in order to design what was called a research lesson that aimed to reach out to all learners in the class. Before doing this, teachers collected the views of students in classes about learning and teaching, followed by a discussion about diversity in their classes and how it affects their lessons. Taking into account students' views about learning and teaching and their thoughts on student diversity, they then planned a lesson together, taking account of the students' ideas, with the aim being that all children actively would participate in the lesson. For example, one of the ideas that emerged from the views of students in some schools was working in pairs.

One of the teachers then used the lesson plan, whilst the other two teachers observed, with a focus on student participation. At the end of the lesson the trio of teachers met to discuss and

analyse the lesson, and to identify any changes needed before the refined lesson was taught again by another member of the trio. This process was repeated three times. At the end of the process, implications for the development of inclusive practices were identified. The example below comes from a secondary school in Portugal which took part in the first study.

### **Making learning meaningful**

This example took place in a secondary school in Portugal which is part of a cluster of six schools that serves students from diverse social economic and cultural backgrounds, including a large number of families facing poverty. The trio of teachers was from two different curricular areas and was teaching different age groups. They, therefore, decided to focus on a common issue, that of bullying in schools.

In preparation for this work, students were asked to reflect about a bullying situation they had heard about or experienced, and to share it in small groups within their class. They then designed a script according to a bullying situation consensually chosen, and each group prepared and performed a sketch. The teachers filmed the sketches, in collaboration with their students. In this way, students' views about this issue were explored.

Drawing on ideas that emerged from these activities, the teachers went on to plan a lesson collaboratively. The research lessons that followed each included five steps. First, in small groups, the students read and analysed a text, emphasising the victim's feelings. The speaker of each group wrote a summary on the board, expressing the group's feelings. These ideas were the basis for brainstorming. After that, the whole class started the reflection upon the issue and defined the concept of bullying. Then, the students watched their sketches and made a comparison between what they had performed and the topic of the text. Finally, students listened to a relevant song which encouraged them to think about its lyrics and different ways about how to overcome such problems.

At the end of each lesson, the teachers got together and made some changes before the lesson was taught in the different year group by the next teacher. In making those changes they paid particular attention to how they would increase levels of participation for each class. As one of the teachers said, they felt that having in the trio one of the teachers whose class was quite challenging, proved to be helpful in terms of thinking about ways to make learning meaningful for all learners. One teacher explained:

*“Her class is extremely difficult with regard to behaviour, demotivation and diverse participation. So, she started our joint reflection by helping us to think about how to deal with this situation, preparing better lessons that could bring up more participation and learning to all students.”*

There was also evidence of the impact regarding all students' participation and respect for diversity and inclusion. For example, some students commented at the end of these lessons:

*“It was a different kind of learning: life learning.”*

*“I have learned to see that I am able to help myself to overcome a bullying situation.”*

*“Some students are shy and feel difficulties with talking to the whole class. But they were participating in the small group and talking to the peer next to him.”*

*“There was nothing in this lesson that made me feel apart. Since the very beginning the participation of all the students was encouraged.”*

(Example adopted from Messiou, 2014)

In this example, we see how an engagement with the views of students led to the development of lessons that encouraged greater participation and engagement. It was examples such as this that led us to place greater emphasis on student/teacher dialogue.

**Study 2.** As I have explained, the first study focused exclusively on the idea of engaging with students’ voices through the use of a range of methods and techniques. An analysis of data gathered in the eight secondary schools involved in this first study suggested that it was the views of students, more than anything else, that made the difference as far as responding to learner diversity was concerned (Messiou et al., 2016). In particular, we found that it was this that brought a critical edge to the process that had the potential to challenge teachers to go beyond the sharing of existing practices in order to invent new possibilities for engaging students in their lessons. The second study, which involves 30 primary schools in five European countries, has led to further refinements in the Inclusive Inquiry model. Specifically, the idea of students as co-researchers is introduced as a stronger form of student voice. This second study is still ongoing.

Fielding (2001) suggests “a four-fold model which distinguishes between students as sources of data, students as active respondents, students as co-researchers, and students as researchers” (p. 135). Those are different levels of student involvement that can be used for school improvement, or school self-review. So, in the first study, students were active respondents by offering their views on learning and teaching in their schools; whereas, in the second study, students are seen as co-researchers working collaboratively with their teachers, other classmates and researchers in order to develop learning practices to ensure that all students take part in lessons. More importantly, we have found that this new way of involvement can lead to meaningful dialogues between teachers and students that promote the development of more inclusive practices. Importantly, such approaches resonate with child-centred pedagogies, as advocated by the Salamanca Statement.

Specifically, in the participating primary schools, groups of children were trained to become researchers who collected their classmates’ views, analysed the information and then designed the lesson collaboratively with their teachers. When the lesson was taught by the first teacher in the trio, it was observed by the other two teachers, as well as by the student researchers from the other classes. This was followed by discussion about the lesson involving the student researchers and teachers, leading to further refinements the next time the lesson plan was used. The example below comes from a primary school in England to illustrate how the process was used in practice.

### **Dialogues for developing inclusive practices**

This example took place in a primary school in England that serves a diverse population, with about two thirds of the pupils being White British and the remainder from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well above the national average, as is the proportion of those eligible for free school meals (an indication of family poverty).

A trio of teachers from Year 4, 5 and 6 used the refined Inclusive Inquiry process with their classes, before expanding its use across the whole school. In addition to the three teachers, another member of staff acted as the facilitator of the process and led the training of the student researchers. The teachers decided to focus on a general topic, internet safety, since the lesson would be taught in three different year groups.

Nine student researchers were chosen, three from each of the classes. These were seen by the teachers as being hard to reach at some point of their learning. The teachers explained that some of these children were not very engaged with learning at times, whilst some were difficult to engage most of the time. The teachers therefore wanted to give them this opportunity to take the role of researcher.

Student researchers were trained about how to carry out research and to think about learning and teaching more widely. Since one of their tasks was to observe lessons, special emphasis was placed on practising observation during the training. In addition, they explored various methods to collect and analyse the views of their classmates. At the same time, a lot of discussion centred around the issue of children having constructive dialogues with teachers.

Following these training sessions, the three researchers from each year group collected their own classmates' views about learning and teaching, that would later inform the lesson planning. Each trio of student researchers, decided to collect their classmates' views in different ways. For example, in year 6, the student researchers prepared a list of statements of what they thought helped with their learning (such as "I learn best when I work in a group", "I learn best when I can choose where to sit", etc.) and presented these on a flip chart to the whole class. At the same time they had written each of these statements on pieces of paper and placed them around the classroom and asked their classmates to go around the classroom, indicating their thoughts about the ways that they feel they learn best by placing a colourful maths cube on the statements that they were in agreement with.

After that, the children discussed in groups, talking about why they chose those statements. One of the statements that had the most votes was: "I learn best when we have music on", with an extra comment (added on a post-it note) "*I love music because it helps me concentrate more, especially the calm ones*".

At the end of each of the sessions of collecting classmates' views, the nine student researchers got together with the teachers and discussed what had emerged from the three classes. One suggestion that was made in all three classes, for example, was children being able to choose their own partners when asked to work in partners. Another idea suggested was that of having a snack half-way through the lesson.

The student researchers and teachers then worked together to plan the activities for the lesson, making sure that the ideas suggested by children in the three classes were incorporated. They agreed that they would give the class a range of activities to choose from: role play, making an advert, an acrostic poem, or a song. At the end they came up with a step-by-step lesson plan, including all these ideas.

As required by the Inclusive Inquiry process, the lesson was taught in one class first, on this occasion in year 4, observed by the other teachers and by three of the student researchers. This was followed by a discussion. For example, at the end of the first lesson the following discussion took place:

*Frank (Year 6, boy, student researcher): I found the snacks not proper because some people just came back from the breaks and already had snacks. It makes some people keep eating snacks.*

*Martin (Year 5, boy, student researcher): There was some distracting, some people were just eating their snacks while...*

*Teacher facilitator: So maybe snacks should be in between lessons rather than as part of the lesson. A break before the next lesson, so it's a short lesson isn't it? Half an hour, so if we have a break and then a snack in just half an hour I think that would cut quite a lot of time in a lesson, didn't it?*

*Year 4 teacher: Yeah, coz I think when I looked at the clock I think it was nearly 20 past when we just finished the snacks then we gave them 10 minutes to come up with their ideas which isn't maybe long enough for the brains to get working.*

*Teacher facilitator: And I think you are right, Martin, when they're trying to talk with their partners whilst they're eating that's actually distracting a little bit from what they're talking.*

Here we see how the student researchers were able to highlight the challenges of having a snack half way through the lesson. In addition, other issues were brought up based on the observations that the children made. For example, the issue of choosing who to work with was reconsidered, as can be seen in the following dialogue:

*Petra (Year 5, student researcher, girl): Yeah most of them were positive but there were two girls they weren't really talking and yeah.*

*Teacher facilitator: So do you think we could have done anything to help them to communicate more?*

*Martin: Maybe they could have done the partner work, if they wanted to choose the partner but some people just wanted to do work on their own, not having anybody else that might be distracting.*

*Year 4 teacher: Do you think maybe we need to think about saying you can go and choose who you like to work with but maybe not making it a partner thing so they can either choose to work on their own, or they can choose to work in a pair, or maybe a 3 so 1,2,3 possibly.*

*Martin: 2 to 4 because again maybe if you want to help out a bit.*

*Year 4 Teacher: Some people might want to work on their own, mightn't they?*

*Martin: So, we need to give them choices not just limited to partners. Because they might not have any friends in the past, which I doubt but it is the possibility.*

At the end of each of the lessons, children who took part in the lessons were interviewed. All of them explained what was different. For example:

*Mike: Getting to choose your partners, because we have never get to choose our partner.*



*Sheila: No, Miss always tells us to stand in a circle and she chooses.*

*Fay: She chooses the partners.*

Similarly, Clarissa, a girl from another year class said:

*We normally don't get to choose who we normally work with coz Ms doesn't normally trust us, coz we're normally silly. So, then, she normally picks it for us but then today we got to pick one we like and that's what I like.*

So, although the children explained that they do work with partners, it was choosing their own partner that was different. At the same time, children could see the dangers of some children ending up on their own if nobody chose to work with them.

At the end of the whole process, in collaboration with the student researchers, the teachers agreed three main themes that had emerged through their work together. These were:

- Provide students more choice of activities;
- Allow students to make their choices about who to work with; and
- Use the no hands up approach to allow for more participation from the children.

These ideas are once again an illustration of the sorts of child-centred pedagogies that allow for greater participation recommended in the Salamanca Statement.

The teachers involved in this school were interviewed about what they learnt as part of this process. They highlighted a number of other issues, apart from making their lessons more inclusive. For example, they talked about how they had come to see their students in a different way as a result of this process:

*Year 4 teacher: I guess for me it was the role of the researchers... What I really liked was how, afterwards, the student researchers were able to come up with some really fantastic points, some of which that we never even thought of that really made a difference and they were able to articulate those really well. They really felt that they were part of the team that were developing it, it wasn't playing lip service to the fact that the children were there, we did it fully with them.*

*Year 5 teacher: And it was very interesting for the children, and for us to see the children notice that something that they suggested wasn't quite working. I think that was quite valuable as well and obviously for the things that did work. And for them to be able to see the little tweaks that needed to be made to their suggestions as well. And I wasn't sure if they were going to do that as well as they did but they impressed me.*

*Teacher facilitator: It is hard for them to change their minds sometimes even when they are confronted with evidence. So, I wondered beforehand that when they watched they would still say it is brilliant even if they see quite clearly that it wasn't. Because they want to say it is brilliant. But it was not quite like that at all. And just how much they want to be involved in this was also amazing. Because we do not do this enough, we do not ask them enough and they really want to talk about their learning and to be involved in it. And the last two days,*

*your class in particular, every time they see me “When is our next meeting? When is our next meeting?”. They are so keen in keep it going. And they were able to be critical.*

Finally, in relation to their own learning they highlighted how the process of the project enabled them to pay attention to student learning when observing a lesson:

*Teacher facilitator: I think, when observing, I was really focusing on the learning and I have observed in the past where I was focusing on the teacher. And I was focusing on the things that we put in place for the lesson obviously but also generally focusing on the children rather than the teacher.*

More importantly, the whole process had a significant impact on students, especially those who took on the role of researchers. As one ten-year old boy explained, his confidence grew “*massively because I could not even talk in front of two people, unless they were like my close friends or family that I knew well and now I can talk in front of a lot of people, I can just talk in front of a million strangers like it was my best friends.*”.

In reflecting on these examples it should be recalled that they all involved children who were seen as being ‘hard to reach’.

### **Determining the lessons**

What emerges from the two examples - as well as through the work in the other schools that took part in the studies in the various countries - is that students’ voices were a determining factor in bringing about change in practices, as well as changes in the thinking of those involved. In the first example, we saw changes in the specific lesson and the impact these had on students’ feelings about how their views were used. In the second example, where the student researchers collected their classmates’ views and designed the lessons with their teachers, the impact of the approach both on teachers and students was even more powerful.

It is also important to note that the two studies took part in schools in different countries in Europe, where there is variation in resources and practices, as well as differences in policy and thinking. What is common in schools in any country, however, is that students are the biggest resource within any given context (Ainscow, 1999). Therefore, lessons for other contexts can be drawn through this approach. In addition, the examples chosen for this paper, both involved teachers working with different year groups, where they chose to focus on a particular topic, such as that of bullying or internet safety, that could be relevant to different age groups.

Overall, the process allowed teachers and student researchers to focus on details that matter that might have otherwise have gone unnoticed. Most importantly, this opened up opportunities to have detailed discussions about learning and teaching. At the same time, this impacted on teachers’ thinking about the power of engaging with the views of students. We also saw how children themselves came to understand better the complex processes of learning and teaching.

In her important work about pupil voice, Rudduck (2006) distinguishes between consultation and participation. As she explains, consultation refers to talking with students about things that matter in school, whereas participation is about involving them in a school’s work and development. She argues, “Ideally, consultations are conversations that build a habit of easy

discussion between teachers and pupils, and among pupils, about learning in school” (Rudduck, 2006, p.137).

I argue that in both of the examples presented here, we have moved away from consultation towards dialogue, especially in the second study. In the first study it could be argued that students talked about the issues that the teachers wanted to explore, which consequently led to greater student participation in the lessons. Whereas, in the second study the students were more actively involved from the start in further developing existing practices in each school.

Most importantly, teachers and students embarked on dialogues in order to develop inclusive practices. By dialogue I adopt the definition suggested by Lodge (2005): “... through talk to arrive at a point one would not get to alone” (p. 134). As we saw in the second example, teachers ‘arrived somewhere’ they would not get to alone. In addition, children arrived at certain realisations, such as when they reconsidered their original ideas about having snacks halfway through their lessons. I argue that none of this would have been possible without the process of dialogue.

At the same time, dialogue was facilitated by observation and other methods that were used to gather the views of students. Building on Rudduck’s (2006) point about consultations ideally being conversations that build a habit of easy discussion, I am arguing that participation, a much more powerful form of students’ voices, can move beyond easy discussions, into potentially challenging dialogues that can facilitate the development of inclusive practices.

What we also saw, is the impact that the approach had on students themselves. As illustrated in the two examples, the students felt part of the process of learning and were, therefore, much more engaged. In the second example, we saw, too, that involvement as student researchers had significant impact on the students’ perception of themselves.

The challenges associated with this process have been discussed elsewhere, not least the issue of finding time to use such approaches (Messiou et al, 2016). We have seen, though, that time is found when teachers and senior leaders see the benefits of using such approaches. In addition, I have also discussed the issue of some students been given more opportunities compared to others (Messiou, 2018), such as when the students get the role of student researchers. Building on this realisation, the various schools involved in the second study having been involved in more than one round of research lessons, have offered opportunities to more students to take the leading role of researchers. If a school embeds such approaches as part of their work, they can then make it a target that all children will take this opportunity, at least once whilst in school. This could then facilitate closer dialogues with all children. Such approaches can genuinely be described as child-centred, and therefore, achieve the goals as set out by the Salamanca statement.

It is worth adding that we have found that even when teachers first use the Inclusive Inquiry process, their ways of thinking about their students and their contributions in relation to learning and teaching, often change. Furthermore, we have seen how teachers who did not believe in this approach to start with, or had mixed feelings about it, saw the benefits. At the same time, teachers and children’s relationships changed which is at the heart of student voice approaches as found in other studies (Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Fielding, 2004; Hope 2012).

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the most quoted statement from the Salamanca Statement:

Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (p.ix)

What I have tried to illustrate in this paper is how schools can achieve the creation of welcoming communities by valuing their students' voices and acting upon them through meaningful dialogues. As I explained at the beginning of this paper, students' voices are still largely missing from international documents that refer to inclusive education. For example, in the recent 2017 UNESCO document "A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education", which includes some excellent ideas about how to move forward in relation to developing more inclusive contexts, the notion of student voice is not explicitly mentioned.

Some years ago, when I was presenting at a conference, I was asked by a colleague whether students' voices are simply a catalyst, as I had suggested, or a condition in relation to teacher professional development. This excellent question has stayed with me, not just in relation to teacher professional development, but also in relation to the development of inclusive education.

Returning to an earlier statement that I made that students' voices are a manifestation of being inclusive (Messiou 2006), I take the position that students' voices are indeed a catalyst for the promotion of inclusive education. To take the word catalyst literally, according to Oxford English Dictionaries, when it is used in chemistry it means a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction, without itself undergoing any permanent chemical change. Or, when we refer to a person or a situation as a catalyst, it means that a person or something that precipitates an event.

Through the examples that I have used here, students' voices were one of the factors that led to changes in thinking and practice. However, what was most important was the dialogue that resulted from the collaboration between teachers and students. As Fielding (2004) argues, such processes can lead to 'a rupture of the ordinary', involving changes in teachers' and students' roles. In this way, they can encourage moves towards the sorts of inclusive school cultures described by Dyson et al (2004).

However, in order to reach to the stage where students' voices move beyond being catalysts and instead become a condition, schools first need to experience approaches such as the ones described here. In this way, they will be able to see the benefits and embed elements of the approach, if not the whole approach, in their future practices. In other words, the Inclusive Inquiry approach, with dialogues between teachers and students as its most essential feature, can act as what Slee (2018) defines as "a catalytic force for others interested in the fundamental reforms required for schools to diminish exclusion" (p.82). In this way, such approaches can be seen as a means of taking forward the Salamanca agenda as 'a principled approach to education' (Ainscow et al. 2006) that can lead to the development of more inclusive and just societies.

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