LINEup
Longitudinal Data For INequalities In Education

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL IN ITALY
INSIGHTS FROM THE LINEup QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. LINEup qualitative research at a glance - Introduction

How can schools support student engagement with school?

LINEup's qualitative research explores how educational inequalities are experienced and addressed in everyday school life. The study combines the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, specialised staff, students and parents to understand how school organisation, teaching practices, relationships and local contexts can support engagement, learning and more equitable educational opportunities. In Italy, the research examined 9 schools across primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, selected to capture different combinations of socioeconomic contexts and school performance.

9 SCHOOLS

3 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

9 SCHOOL LEADERS

74 TEACHERS

80 STUDENTS

69 PARENTS

2 SPECIALISED STAFF

234 PARTICIPANTS IN TOTAL

2. What did we learn? - Three Key Findings

Inclusion is a culture, not a delegated task

Across the nine schools, inclusion is rarely confined to specialised staff or students with a formal diagnosis. It emerges as an organisational and pedagogical principle running through teaching, assessment, leadership and family relationships.

Engagement grows from relationships, not methods alone

Students link their most positive learning experiences to the quality of their relationships with teachers, to feeling listened to and to real opportunities to participate, more than to specific teaching techniques.

Inclusion and attention to learning as integrated dimensions of school practice

Wellbeing and inclusion are not traded off against achievement: systematic monitoring and shared assessment criteria allow schools to pursue equity and strong learning outcomes together.

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3. What helps? - Enabling Conditions & Practices

- Distributed, collaborative leadership
- Differentiated, collaborative, student-centred teaching
- Systematic monitoring and shared assessment criteria
- Stable partnerships with local stakeholders (municipalities, health services, third sector)
- Student participation and learning opportunities beyond the classroom
- Teachers' motivation and strong sense of belonging to the school

4. What gets in the way? - Structural & Contextual Constraints

- Shortage and turnover of specialised staff (support teachers, mediators, psychologists)
- Reliance on project-based funding and growing administrative burden
- Territorial and socioeconomic inequalities shaping available resources

5. Three messages to take away - Implications for Policy & Practice

Inclusion works as a shared school culture.
It cannot be confined to targeted interventions: it needs to run through teaching, assessment and leadership to be truly effective.

Equity and excellence are not competing goals.
Schools can combine inclusion, wellbeing and high learning expectations when these goals are supported by coherent organisational practices.

Sustainability needs stable resources, not just individual commitment.
Many effective practices still rely on temporary funding and teachers' personal dedication: without lasting institutional support, these results risk not being sustainable over time.

6. Voices from the School Community

Student

"What I like about my school is being able to express myself to some of the adults there – that is, the teachers; generally speaking, I feel respected by all the teachers."

Teacher

"It is important to diversify the activity you are planning as well… If you introduce a topic, you do so using different strategies: you might start with a video, then move on to a text, combining listening, reading, writing and speaking, so as to engage different kinds of intelligence."



Parent

"There is a sense of belonging which, in my view, is very deeply rooted and quite distinctive, and which is shared by everyone—children and families alike… And there is certainly a very rich educational offer, not only in terms of teaching and learning, but also from a broader educational perspective."

School leader

"Many teachers have a constructive relationship with students, and I believe they also find satisfaction in engaging with them and encouraging their active participation. […] At the same time, in terms of learning outcomes, one monitoring strategy that is certainly effective—even though it is not yet used to its full potential—is working across classes with students grouped by attainment level, so that everyone can achieve the learning objectives."

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