LINEUP
Longitudinal Data For INequalities In Education

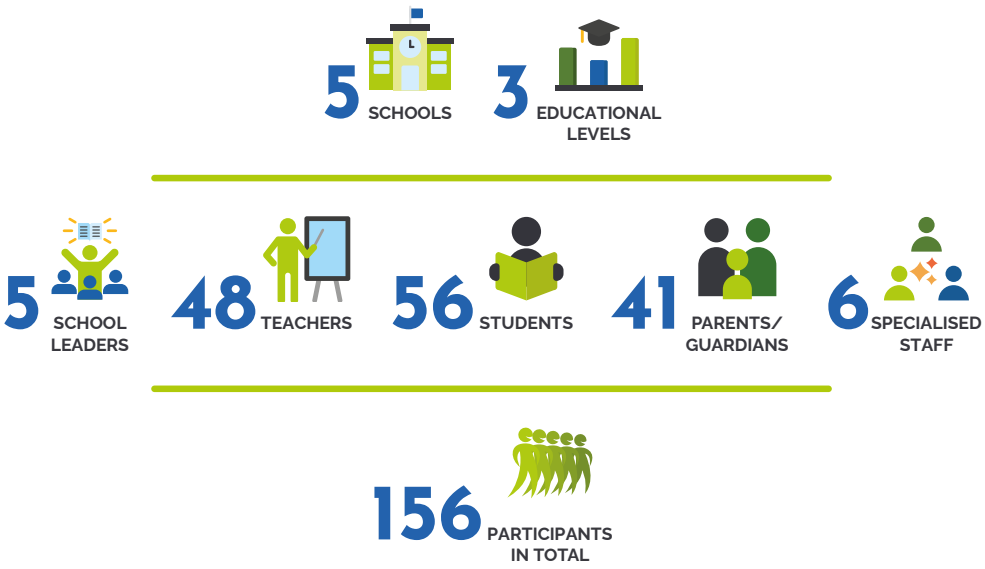
EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL IN PORTUGAL
INSIGHTS FROM THE LINEup QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. LINEup qualitative research at a glance

How can schools foster Student Engagement with School?

LINEup's qualitative research explores how Educational Inequalities are experienced and addressed in everyday school life. The study brings together the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, specialised staff, students, and parents and guardians to understand how school organisation, teaching and learning practices, relationships, and local contexts can foster Student Engagement with School, Learning Outcomes, and more equitable educational opportunities.

In Portugal, the multi-stakeholder qualitative research was conducted in five public schools or school clusters and comprised eight case studies: three in primary education, three in lower-secondary education, and two in upper-secondary education. The cases represented different socioeconomic contexts and school performance profiles.



2. What did we learn? - Three Key Findings

Student Engagement with School takes different forms across contexts and educational levels

Across the cases, students associated their experience of engagement with school with understanding the usefulness of learning, participation in school activities, teacher support, supportive peer relationships, and feelings of safety and belonging. In primary education, safety, friendships, and teacher support were particularly prominent. In lower-secondary education, motivation, perceived fairness, and the relevance of learning gained importance. In upper-secondary education, autonomy, a sense of agency, relationships with teachers, and participation in decisions about future pathways were particularly salient.

Schools mobilise diverse interventions in response to different student needs

Interventions included support for learning, individual or small-group support, co-teaching, tutoring, mentoring, psychological and social support, language and integration support, conflict mediation, and educational and career guidance.

These interventions involved teachers, form tutors, specialised staff, multidisciplinary teams, school leaders, and families. Their implementation was influenced by how well each intervention matched the identified need, the availability of professionals, and access to compatible timetables, transport, suitable spaces, and other resources.

Intervention implementation and continuity depend on school organisation, resources, and professional collaboration

The implementation and continuity of interventions were shaped by school organisation, available resources, and professional collaboration. Shared time within staff timetables supported the exchange of information, coordination of interventions, and ongoing student support. However, shortages of professionals, precarious or short-term contracts, workload, limited allocated teaching hours, and insufficient resources constrained the continuity of interventions, equity of access, and efficiency in resource use.



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3. What seems to help? - Enabling Conditions & Practices

- Perceived support from teachers and peers
- Pedagogical Differentiation according to students' characteristics and needs
- Student participation in teaching and learning processes and school life
- School-based interventions tailored to students' needs
- Collaboration between schools, families, and stakeholders in responding to students' needs

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

- Insufficient human resources and precarious professional contracts
- Time, workload, and conditions for professional collaboration
- Family, social, and economic circumstances associated with different opportunities for family involvement

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

Student engagement with school relies on a whole-school approach.
This encompasses the organisation of learning, relationships, support, and participation across the school community.

Equity requires an integrated approach to student support.
Addressing educational inequalities calls for coordinated responses across different dimensions of students' educational experiences.

Sustained equity requires the capacity to act over time.
Policy and organisational conditions shape schools' capacity to sustain coordinated responses to students' needs.

6. Voices from the School Community

School Leader
"Students like being an integral part of decision-making."

Teacher
"I believe it is important for students to feel that their voice is heard and that it has an impact on the learning process."

Specialised Staff
"What distinguishes this school is its human-centred capacity to reinvent itself, face adversity without turning away, and regard others as equals."

Student
"We talk about problems, some of the problems the school has, and then we turn those problems into a theatre performance."

Parent/Guardian
"Professionals do what they can, but there is a limit to what people can do."



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