Voice-Inclusive Practice (VIP) : A charter for authentic student engagement

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Abstract

In an age of high stakes testing, diversified communication, educational transformation and pedagogical evolution, the child's contribution to education remains underutilised. Despite the emphasis on children's active and authentic involvement in educational decision making in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), educational reform continues to ignore the child's view. In contexts where the child's voice is welcomed, there remains little guidance for education professionals on how to seek and incorporate children's perspectives in a practically focused way. By initiating Voice-Inclusive Practice (VIP), educators will be better positioned to take action that supports the imperatives of educational change. Voice-Inclusive Practice is represented by processes that actively engage with children on matters that affect them and includes the child's perspective in planning, decision making and pedagogy. This paper provides an elaboration of the VIP principles that enable the participatory rights of the child in education settings.

Keywords

Voice-Inclusive Practice (VIP): a charter for authentic student engagement.

Introduction

In contemporary education settings, school age children are often described as technologically savvy and socially astute, yet vulnerable and immature (Christenson, 2017; Gillett-Swan & Coppock, 2016; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a; Lee, 1999; Rupp, 2016; Sargeant, 2014a). They are also often described as imaginative and carefree yet paradoxically, unmotivated and disengaged (Bland, 2012). Such perspectives on modern childhood reflect a level of confusion about what childhood is, compared with the idealised and constructed notions of the past century. Childhood has changed significantly in recent years, particularly in terms of social connectivity, increased sedentary behaviour (Demetriou, Sudeck, Thiel, & Höner, 2015). Children have unprecedented access to information and reduced formality between adult and child in social contexts yet in schools, the child as subordinate is maintained. The challenges presented by the changing nature of childhood are most apparent in western, mainstream education contexts, simply because the system on the whole has not kept pace with societal progress (Gonski et al., 2011; 2018). The traditions and practices of education established for more than two centuries are often questioned, but in essence, remain firmly entrenched. As a result, the child's occupation of the educational habitus is confused, and their voice is muted.

When asked, many children identify themselves as global citizens who enjoy participation in discourses regarding world futures, politics, environmental sustainability and civic action (Ben-Arieh, 2005; Mason & Hood, 2011) but the extent to which children are engaged as local 'in school' citizens is less apparent (Gillett-Swan

& Sargeant, 2017). While many opportunities for children to engage with debates and programs for a sustainable future are available, the extent to which teachers provide children the opportunities to deliberate on their 'present-day' lives through Voice-Inclusive Practices are limited (Broström, 2006; Dunn, 2015; Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015).

Voice-Inclusive Practice (VIP) is defined by Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, (2015 p.181) as "activities and practices that incorporate and actively engage with children and their perspectives on matters that affect them". VIP actualises the concept of student voice by respecting the contributions of *all* stakeholders in the education process, allowing for inclusive, authentic educational provision that supports the child's need to learn and the teacher's need to teach. However, it is apparent that many teachers, researchers, and those training to become teachers are motivated to incorporate VIP into their practice but are unsure of the process (Ellwood, 2012; Ferguson, Hanreddy & Draxton, 2011; McIntyre, Pedder & Rudduck, 2007). This paper elaborates on VIP and its key principles so that educators may actualise this philosophical standpoint and engage in authentic listening pedagogy (Egan, 2009). By instituting the key principles of VIP, educators will be better positioned to engage in pedagogical development that align with the transformative imperatives for educational improvement such as those espoused by Gonski, et.al. (2018).

The classroom is no longer a quarantined learning space where external events, information and debate can be neatly controlled by the teacher who directs the activities and provides access to information (Dilekli & Tezci, 2016). Mainstream, social and personal media platforms all offer significant access by children that is often unfiltered and unmonitored. Such widespread availability of information and unfettered exposure

to external events in real-time are seemingly unpreventable and paradoxically presents as both a threat to student[1] wellbeing and an enabler of independence.

The child's human right to freedom to seek information and be informed on matters of interest to them in their lives (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a, 2018b; Livingstone & Third, 2017) is actualised by contemporary access to information sources but these same external influences now affect learning engagement far more than in any previous era. The need for new pedagogies that respond to these challenges and support children's opportunity is evident (Bates, 2016; Livingstone & Third, 2017).

Parents, educators and governments struggle to grapple with this change in information consumption as children's access to explicit and graphic content, pornography, 'fake news' and social media further a perception that the fabled 'carefree childhood' is extinct (Šagud, 2015). Furthermore, the proliferation of cyber bullying, sexting, and image-based abuse (Matthews, 2017) increases the sense of risk impacting on children and manifesting at school. This ready access to information contributes to children being more aware of the realities of the world around them than ever before (Bjørgen & Erstad, 2015; Breakstone, McGrew, Smith, Ortega, & Wineburg, 2018; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a; Sargeant, 2014b) but this proliferation in the complexity of issues being faced in educational practice also renders teachers increasingly unprepared and ill-equipped to respond to children's interest in complex social issues. Thus, developing children's critical digital literacy in responding to and critically evaluating the plethora of news sources is an emergent imperative of

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[1] The term 'student' in this paper refers to children under 18 enrolled in early childhood settings, primary and secondary schools.

education (Bjørgen & Erstad, 2015; Breakstone, McGrew, Smith, Ortega, & Wineburg, 2018; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a; Livingstone & Third, 2017).

There is seemingly an ever-increasing roll out of resources to support adults in dealing with these perceived threats to childhood as they emerge. For example, the recent publication of the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* has resulted in a raft of resources to support teachers and adults to provide an informed response to counter the potential impact of the depiction of suicide on vulnerable young people (Headspace, 2017). In other examples, the Australian Government is seeking to enact laws to combat image-based abuse and other social media crimes (Australian Government, 2017), while the United Kingdom proposes legislation for social media users to wipe their underage digital slate clean offering an opportunity for a 'fresh start' to adulthood that is not impacted by views, beliefs and interactions from the individual's childhood (Swinford, 2017). Each response seeks to preserve or protect children from the perceived threats of a media rich 21st century and the impact on children's personal development, but there is little acknowledgement of the children's role in developing responses to these issues. While there is no question that such resources provide a valuable support for a community dealing with new and confronting threats to wellbeing, it is also noticeable that each of these efforts to engage with children in response to an emergent threat positions the child as a passive recipient (Kirshner & Jefferson, 2015).

The absence of an ongoing dialogue with all children on all matters affecting them, both positive and negative, continues a tradition of adult derived responses to the negative effects on childhood as determined by adults. Without a direct appreciation of how children are perceiving, comprehending and responding to these experiential threats to their wellbeing, the effectiveness of response and prevention strategies cannot be

assured (Didaskalou, Skrzypiec, Andreou, & Slee, 2017; Gillett-Swan, 2017). Moreover, the continuation of top-down issue amelioration maintains a level of suspicion and disaffection by children towards adults who do not consult with them directly on matters of shared importance. Such activity also fails to recognise the capacity of most children to personally address these concerns (Gillett-Swan, 2014; Sargeant, 2014b). It is critical in such a changing landscape that those most affected by the perceived threats and opportunities of modern education are included in these important conversations (Kirshner & Jefferson, 2015).

In an age of high-stakes testing, diversified communication, educational transformation and pedagogical evolution, the child's viewpoint on the changing nature of education is largely ignored (Dunn, 2015; Messiou & Ainscow, 2015; Sargeant, 2014b). As Gonski et al. (2018 p.26) note, "achievement and engagement are higher at schools that allow students to voice their opinions in decision making about their education" but despite this positioning as the focus of key deliberations in educational reform, the child's voice remains unheard (Gonski et al., 2018; Osler, 2010). The child's school experience is bounded by hierarchical, power laden systems that assure their distance from the decision-making processes (Aziah & Eddy, 2016) resulting in "large numbers of students not engaged in learning, and while compliant, certainly not meeting what should be high expectations (Gonski et al., 2018 p. 25). Despite the plethora of evidence showing that children are capable, considered and connected with their educational experience they have little, if any, say (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a; Hunleth, 2011; Mitra, 2014; Quinn & Owen, 2016; Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015). If education systems, educators and pedagogy are to advance, it is imperative that the perspectives of the stakeholders at the centre any reform must be considered (Mager & Nowak, 2012).

The principles of Voice-Inclusive Practice (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018a; Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015) offer such access.

Voice-Inclusive Practice in action

Voice-Inclusive Practice directly aligns with the philosophical underpinnings of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and offers both student and teacher an opportunity to engage in an educational partnership reflective of contemporary educational goals (Beattie, 2012). Conceptually, VIP is deceptively straightforward in that the inclusion of children in the deliberations on their education can be arranged by a series of collaborative interactions. VIP in education is underpinned by a focus on shared outcomes that are achieved through the acknowledgement and actualisation of each child's participation rights (United Nations, 1989; Lundy, 2007). However, to effect a pedagogy that reflects VIP, one must be inclined towards a philosophy of student voice *and* hold confidence in the child's capacity, autonomy, power and agency to express their view (Cook-Sather, 2009; Fielding, 2006; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019). It is critical that teachers develop and reflect on their personal philosophy of teaching, how they view students, their role as a teacher, and their view of how students learn prior to any attempt at VIP (Elwood, 2013; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019). If, upon reflection, teachers feel an alignment with the philosophy and then actively decide to adopt VIP, the opportunity for the already highly skilled members of the teaching profession to move beyond the traditional approaches towards a pedagogy that better seeks and acts upon children's expressed needs is enabled (see Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019). Such voice-inclusive consciousness helps teachers to 'see' learning situations differently and identify the opportunities to consult with children throughout their decision-making process (Beattie, 2012; Kennedy, 2016).

Many of the principles of VIP are aligned with notions of child-centred education first championed by Rugg & Shumaker (1928) however, child-centeredness is variously defined and ranges from concepts that position the child from 'free agent' through to recipient of individualised, developmentally appropriate instruction (Fielding, 2006; Sak, Tantekin-Erden, & Morrison, 2017; Gonzalez, Hernandez-Saca, & Artiles, 2017). As such, simply considering VIP as a synonym for child-centred education, limits its potential. Instead, VIP engages with the child as both a recipient *and* as a key participant in the learning process (Demetriou & Wilson, 2010). VIP acknowledges the collaborative potential of learning environments that represent *all stakeholder* perspectives including teachers, parents and children as Lundy (2018 p. 346) notes; "once in the dialogue (even a restricted or lop-sided one), children will gain insight into how these processes work and can harness them for their own ends". The body of knowledge that supports such methods is vast (Bandura, 1997; Beattie, 2012; Bruner, 1996; Dewey, 1916; Fielding, 2004; Lundy, 2007, 2018; McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005;).

VIP in context.

With a particular focus on children's participation rights within educational contexts, the authors have consulted with children and teachers in a range of educational settings in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Italy and England for more than two decades. The insights gained from these consultations with teachers and with the thousands of children on what constitutes effective educational practice (see Gillett-Swan, 2014, 2017; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2017; 2018a; 2018b, Sargeant, 2014b; Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015) has revealed a clear need for Voice-Inclusive Practice that is not unique to one country or culture, but relevant to all (Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015).

Through these experiences and interactions with children across many contexts it has become apparent that while the issues confronting children continue to grow in breadth and complexity, pedagogy that is responsive to the new imperatives of education has stalled (Gonski et al., 2018).

Educational enhancement through Voice-Inclusive Practice (Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015) is underpinned by four organising principles (everyday *achievable*, *authentic* and free of burden or guilt, *integral* beyond the pleasure or convenience of the adult and, *compatible* with the rights, responsibilities and citizenship of adults) (Figure 1).

Figure 1   Principles of Voice-Inclusive Practice

The principles of Voice-Inclusive Practice illustrated above offer educators a framework for self-assessing the extent to which their pedagogical planning and student engagement strategies reflect a recognition of each child's capacity that is embedded in their instructional design. However, these four key non-sequential but essential principles must work together for VIP to be realised in practice. Within each principle

of VIP are key action indicators summarised in Table 1 that guide teacher practice. These indicators elaborate on the principles of VIP and provide teachers with a measurable focus for implementation and pedagogical self-evaluation.

Table 1   Voice-Inclusive Practice indicators

Everyday **Achievable** *Embedded in regular activities;* • Routine communication with children • Open communication with children • Shared problem solving and decision-making with children	**Authentic** *Free of burden or guilt;* • Internally motivated • Free of pressure to conform • Informed by a confidence in the participatory capacity of children
Integral *Beyond the pleasure or convenience of the adult;* • Integrated seamlessly into teachers' work • Does not add to teachers' workload • Supports core teaching and learning priorities • Regular dialogue with children	**Compatible** *with the rights, responsibilities and citizenship of adults;* • The child's voice is complementary to the adults' voice. • Teacher responsibility and duty of care with accountable decision-making is maintained

Teachers, as holders of a duty of care and accountability to children, their families and the system, hold significant responsibility and have a legal, moral and ethical obligation to support positive learning events (Lundy, 2007: Sargeant 2018). As such, VIP remains at the behest of the teacher and at risk of inaction. The above indicators seek to counter the problem of enactment, "a phenomenon in which teachers can learn and espouse one idea, yet continue enacting a different idea, out of habit, without even noticing the contradiction" (Kennedy, 2016, p. 947). This juxtaposition between teacher beliefs (or perceptions of their beliefs) and practices is particularly pertinent when considering the child's participation rights. However, teachers also may not actually be aware of their

own beliefs (Kagan, 1992; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019) and, in reality, teacher beliefs do not solely direct teacher behaviour. When seeking to employ new practices, the selection of pedagogy may in fact be influenced in context by other aspects such as the teacher's confidence in the child's capacity, autonomy, power and agency (CAPA) (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019). Other contextual factors such as the teacher's social and emotional competencies also influence teacher behaviour (Soini et al., 2016). Despite the increasing popularity of child-centred education, traditional teaching strategies remain the method of choice for many practitioners even with their incompatibly with the imperatives of modern education (Dilekli & Tezci, 2016). As Kennedy (2016 p. 955) observes, "for teachers, enacting a new idea is not a matter of simple adoption but rather a matter of figuring out whether, when, and how to incorporate that new idea into an ongoing system of practice which is *already satisfactory*, and may also be largely habitual". As such, alongside the promotion of Voice-Inclusive Practice, a clear and practical framework for implementation of VIP is necessary. The principles and associated indicators of VIP provide a workable and measurable reference for teachers to assure implementation. Each will be discussed in turn.

Everyday achievable

The absence of regular and predictable dialogue with children is a recurrent limitation in other voice efforts where project or issue specificity selectively and infrequently attends to the child's perspective or does so in a tokenistic, superficial way (Robinson & Taylor, 2007; Te One, 2007; Tisdall, 2015). Rare or sporadic student consultation that is the exception rather than standard practice, can lead to suspicion or dissatisfaction by

children due to the infrequency of dialogue and is in direct contravention of the UNCRC and General Comment mandates (United Nations, 1989, 2009). Building on the philosophy of VIP, strategies for consultation with children must be embedded in the everyday activities of teaching, learning and planning. As the key action principle of VIP, authentic, *everyday achievable* consultation should be present in routine communication so that openness is an expectation rather than an exception in practice (Kane & Maw, 2005).

In Voice-Inclusive Practice environments, the child feels free to participate at a level of their choosing (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). Some children may at times choose not to participate. However, in the context of schooling, the right to withdraw participation is somewhat anachronistic and as such, requiring a child to participate in mandated learning activities is potentially problematic (Cook-Sather, 2006). In such cases, this paradox of inclusion can be ameliorated through open communication with all stakeholders so that a shared understanding of the learning imperative of activities where participation is not optional is achieved. Ensuring that children understand the legal obligations underpinning their right to education (UNCRC, Article 28) (United Nations, 1989) through pedagogy can support a shared commitment to achieving long term educational enhancement (Sargeant, 2018). When children are consulted on the major *and* the mundane issues regarding their education, an expectancy by both adults and children that shared decision-making is a routine feature of the class community often emerge and thoughtful contributions are likely to follow (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). VIP embraces the range of accessible communication technologies, to ensure that the child can participate at their chosen level, even if within the constraints of compulsory educational curriculum, assessment and policy structures.

As teachers transition to VIP, the principle of everyday achievable may only be indicated in one or two daily activities but with increased exposure to the merits of such an approach, notions of 'special' project consultations will lessen as regular dialogue stimulates a greater awareness, familiarity and motivation by all parties of their positive contribution to the educational process (Demetriou & Wilson, 2010). Application of this principle can be extended to other relevant activities such as daily class meetings, media selection,[2] student feedback surveys, extension activities, teacher reviews, and class blogs. These examples represent varying levels of participatory inclusion with each being able to be integrated on a continuum that respects all stakeholders by incorporating varying levels of student-led or teacher-led prerogatives (Shier, 2001). The extent to which each stakeholder's role is then represented throughout the process can be renegotiated if necessary, once the philosophy and culture of authentic inclusion and participatory practice has been established.

Authentic: Free of burden or guilt

Voice-Inclusive Practice will not succeed if the educators feel undue pressure to conform to a process of consultation they ultimately do not believe in. The resulting tokenism can lead to negativity between children and adults who feel forced to conform to external forces (Cook-Sather, 2006). If student voice processes are imposed on teachers who lack confidence in children's capacity, any outcomes are unlikely to reflect VIP. Student voice efforts, without personal investment in an authentic and inclusive participatory approach are unlikely to meet with success as the risk of tokenism is heightened (McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005). When considering the

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[2] Refer to Gillett-Swan & Sargeant (2018a) for an elaboration on Voice-Inclusive Practice as applied to digital decision-making and the implications for an increasingly digitalized education system.

breadth and scope of education systems, the continuing education of teachers in understanding the capacity of children to form and express a view remains and will remain a critical objective for some time (Sargeant, 2014a). It is not enough to declare that children's voice *must* be heard, for some, the evidence of children's capacity must be compelling before any training or implementation of VIP can transpire (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2019).

If an individual does not hold an underlying philosophy of inclusion as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (UNESCO, 2005 p. 13), then at least *an appreciation* of children's capacities may be achieved through access to empirical demonstration and research. Strategic professional development that targets teachers' reticence to employ Voice-Inclusive Practice should include:

- an exploration of the detail of the UNCRC and associated General Comments on the Voice of the Child

- exposure to the breadth of contemporary evidence of children's participative capacity

- an exploration of the evidence that demonstrates the depth of perspective children can offer on matters affecting them

- reinforcement of the mandates that assure that teacher authority and responsibility is not threatened by including the voice of children

Supporting, where possible, full participation, the implementation of pedagogy from a VIP standpoint is inherently respectful and mindful of the child's perspective but relies on a teacher's 'buy-in' for successful transformation.

Integral: beyond the pleasure or convenience of the adult

Alongside the philosophy of authenticity and the everydayness, the inclusion of the child's perspective must be integrated seamlessly into a teacher's work. Voice-Inclusive Practice must not add to workload or be seen to supersede the core teaching and learning priorities of the education system. Critically, VIP should not be a burden to implement. VIP is not an *activity* that can be selectively added to the educational process 'when the teacher can fit it in' nor can VIP be applied as an occasional 'reward' for students (Tisdall, 2015). VIP acknowledges the importance of all stakeholders' voices and considers each equally as an integral part of the education process. Seamless Voice-Inclusive Practice would provide regular opportunities for children to assist in the planning and organisation of the classroom and educational activities. Activity planning that embed Voice-Inclusive activities *authentically* within the regular teaching and learning cycle can include social skills activities, classroom arrangement, in class activity timetables, daily curriculum lessons, technology and media choices, classroom rules and expectation development, and academic performance reviews. As with earlier examples, the extent of student-led/teacher-led action for each of these activities can be refined once the authentic culture of inclusion has permeated daily practice.

There are however, activities that are not appropriate for VIP integration and should be retained as teacher directed, for example; summative assessment, intensive curriculum remediation and specialist classes. Notwithstanding these exceptions, successful VIP embeds into the ecology of the majority of regular teaching and learning activities, the child's voice (Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015).

Compatible with the rights, responsibilities or citizenship of adults

The fourth principle of Voice-Inclusive Practice implementation asserts that at no point should the child's voice be considered in contest with adults' voice. While VIP reinforces the child's right to participate it does not demand the child as decision maker. The principle of compatibility both respects and emphasises the importance of incorporating the views and perspectives of multiple stakeholders involved in the education process, not just the children, and not just the adult/teacher. The legal, ethical and moral responsibilities that remain with the teacher ensure the best interests of the child are considered and achieved at all times (UNCRC, Article 3) (United Nations, 1989). The considerable professional, legal, and duty of care knowledge, obligations and insights that teacher's/adults have in ensuring children's best interests supported must not be compromised. At times, adult decisions may in effect override children's communicated preferences in line with 'best interests' mandates. Such activities may include report writing, disciplinary matters, specialist learning support, formal assessment, core curriculum benchmarks and subject selection, choice of teaching strategies most compatible with teaching style, final decision-making responsibilities, and duty of care.

From principle to practice

The principles of VIP and the examples above provide a starting point for teachers to develop their skills to seamlessly and authentically incorporate a philosophy of VIP into their everyday activities and educational endeavours for the benefit of all stakeholders. Provided the teacher's fundamental beliefs support the potential for a truly inclusive,

and authentic pedagogy, VIP represents a significant opportunity for educational enhancement.

Voice-Inclusive Practice is designed to engender a model of professional educational practice that enhances the everyday functions of schooling through supportive, motivational and responsive pedagogy. Teachers who align with a philosophy of inclusion can use these principles to enrich children's participatory rights in education. An effective application of VIP should present in every class, complement the teacher's work, support the teacher's educational beliefs and recognise the contribution all stakeholders can make. While VIP is ultimately directed by teachers and guides those wishing to affirm the child's participatory potential and rights in acting on their philosophical leanings, the true measure of successful VIP implementation is increased student engagement (Kennedy, 2016).

The intent of the participatory mandates of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) that support the acknowledgement of the interests of all parties, allows for an ongoing and open exchange of ideas. The traditional hierarchical model of decision-making is suspended at the planning and implementation phases of educational provision in favour of more authentic inclusionary practices as VIP welcomes a range of perspectives and readily accepts a diversity of perspective rendering it a wholly inclusive and respectful approach to practice (Arnot & Reay, 2007). While the varying levels of knowledge and experience of each stakeholder are acknowledged, and the legal and ethical duties remain, a broader level of recognition is fundamental to the success of an authentic Voice-Inclusive environment.

Voice-Inclusive Practice is underpinned by a recognition that participation empowers all stakeholders and values the contributions of both children and teachers with regards

to education (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011; Fielding, 2004; McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005). This recognition reaffirms Paulo Freire's assertion that the power of education is realised when students experience it as something they *do*, rather than have done to them (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). Harnessing this power through active and authentic student-centred participatory methods therefore enables greater ownership of the learning experience, cultivates a more inclusive classroom practice, and better caters to the individual learning needs expressed by children (Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

The interrelationship between children's participatory rights, and transformative educational practice, are inherently intertwined. However, as children's views and perspectives are infrequently considered in educational practice, the extent to which this can be realised is questionable. In seeking to reform the hierarchic traditions of teaching and learning, an abundance of empirical research evidence indicates that Voice-Inclusive methods incorporating the views of *all* stakeholders - including children - is the most effective method to support student wellbeing and educational success (Emmer, Sabornie, Evertson, & Weinstein, 2013; Lundy & Cook-Sather, 2015; Sargeant, 2014a; Sargeant & Gillett-Swan, 2015).

Conclusion

Fundamental to the success of Voice-Inclusive Practice is the teacher's alignment with a philosophy of inclusion that does not rely on strategies that are hierarchical and driven by a need for control and power. To influence change, the *why* of Voice-Inclusive Practice and the application principles of VIP implementation must be supported by evidence of children's perspectives in action. Pedagogical change is most successful when educators are offered a clear rationale and framework for implementation that

demonstrates the likely improvements in educational outcomes. It is therefore, not enough to simply espouse VIP, if it is not also supported by the above elaborations of how it can be achieved in practice.

The role of the teacher in establishing and maintaining pedagogy that represents VIP is crucial to modernised educational provision that respects the child's participation rights. Establishing and incorporating an authentic and meaningful approach to practice that is considerate of all stakeholders' roles, actively and regularly incorporates children's participatory involvement, supports the skill and reflexivity required of modern teaching. VIP aids in developing and fostering a safe and supportive pedagogy that advances relevant and quality educational experiences. Clear principles and indicators that support VIP implementation reduces perceptions that such pedagogy is out-of-reach or too difficult for teachers in an already over-crowded and pressure filled curriculum. The Voice-Inclusive Practice principles and indicators discussed in this paper offer a clear, accessible and practical impetus for a transformative pedagogy that achieves authentic student engagement.

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