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**Title of Paper:**

Student Voice: a key to school improvement?

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## **Abstract**

This research explored the perceptions and current uses of student voice in three schools in Norway. Moreover, it investigated the potential of student voice to contribute to school improvement. Data were collected from students, teachers and school leaders using a questionnaire, focus groups and interviews. These revealed some recognition of the centrality of student voice in the enactment of democracy in schools: participants had positive perceptions of student voice and school leaders were willing to incorporate student voice in school improvement processes. Barriers existed, however: time, prioritisation, competence and the issue of power relationships. Current uses of student voice were largely restricted to the operations of the student council, and consequently had little impact on school improvement. Fundamentally, it became evident that students and adults have different and sometimes conflicting experiences in schools. This research draws two main conclusions. The first is as schools in Norway are compelled to listen to children, teachers' competence in this area needs development. The second is that student voice could be an essential tool for school leaders to understand the culture of their school and thus better facilitate school improvement.