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Restorative practice and young people with special educational needs and disabilities: a scoping study

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ABSTRACT

Restorative practice in schools has been seen to aid inclusive networks and the holistic development of young people; however, this scoping study of peer reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2023, demonstrates a space for further research in this area that includes young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Results foreground empirical gaps, whilst highlighting the uniformity on big data and adult perspectives over the inclusion of young people. The lack of voices of young people is significant, especially when considering the centrality of interpersonal relationships within restorative practice. Although individual and cohort outcomes are evidenced, less is known about the impact of restorative practice on ableism, an issue requiring urgent attention. This study underscores the imperative for future research that addresses these issues, while placing a crucial emphasis on the authentic inclusion of young people and a nuanced analysis of individual experiences.

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Restorative practice;
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social justice, restorative
justice

Points of interest

- The outcomes associated with restorative practice are highly relevant to young people with special educational needs and disabilities; however, there is limited academic research which explores their relationship.
- The current academic literature lacks the voices of young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their inclusion as key stakeholders in knowledge creation.
- This research calls for further empirical work foregrounding young people's voices and ideas which bridge the gap between practitioner-focused and research-focused perspectives.

Background

Restorative practice originates from restorative justice, an alternative approach to conflict resolution within the criminal justice system. This alternative paradigm, largely attributed to the work of Howard Zehr (1990), can be described

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as a shift from retributive to restorative justice, allowing those who have caused harm to take responsibility for their actions. Here crime is perceived as a 'violation of people and interpersonal relationships' (Zehr and Mika 1997) where those responsible are obligated to resolve conflict and victims are key stakeholders in defining obligations. This takes different forms - the most common types being family group conferencing, victim-impact panels, conflict resolution programmes, victim offender mediation and sentencing circles.

Whilst restorative justice is based within the criminal justice system, education is the context for this research. Here restorative ideas are conceptualised as restorative practice; restorative work that links to the latent concept of peace, enacted through relationship centred processes and interactions with young people in education. These practices have developed rapidly since early academic publications and implementation within schools in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Cameron and Thorsborne 2001; Hopkins 2002), over time being described as a philosophy in action (Corrigan 2012). This can be a confusing concept that lacks tangible meaning; however, the seven principles set out by Anfara, Evans, and Lester (2013) support our understanding: (1) 'Meeting needs' - unwanted behaviours are understood as communicating unmet needs, (2) 'Accountability and support' - individuals take responsibility for harm, (3) 'Making things right' - individuals work towards repairing individual or institutional harms, (4) 'Viewing conflict as a learning opportunity' - students learn about their behaviours and teachers learn about their students, (5) 'Building healthy learning communities' - relationships are seen as the most effective way to reduce school-based violence, opposed to control-oriented structures; (6) 'Restoring relationships' - problems are solved by bringing together those involved in conflict; (7) 'Addressing power imbalances' - student behaviours are contextualised within the structural and cultural violence that perpetuate many of our educational systems.

Operationalised into activities, these principles represent work such as peace-making and community-building circles (Wang and Lee 2019), daily emotional check ins, and restorative mediation. Despite restorative circles being the most prevalent activity in the literature (Zakszeski and Rutherford 2021), individual and small group restorative meetings also make up common practices. Here the restorative question framework asks those affected by conflict 'what happened', 'what they were thinking and feeling', 'who was affected', 'what do you need to make things right', and 'what can be done to repair the harm?' (Hopkins 2004). Whilst this work often relates to individual incidents it can also represent wider community-building (Cavanagh 2007), power sharing and the development of positive school cultures (Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne 2005).

Many studies conceptualise restorative practice as a tiered approach moving from a universal offer - to more targeted - and eventually intensive levels of support. Tier 1 represents the universal offer grounded in the desire to

build relationships, enacted through affective statements, celebrations, the use of the restorative question framework and daily check-ins. Tier 2 represents a more targeted offer grounded in repairing relationships, enacted through the way in which schools interact with parents, responsive circles and by taking a non-punitive approach to conflict. Tier 3 represents the intensive level of support grounded in the need to respond to serious harm, enacted through restorative conferences designed to facilitate a space for solution focussed reintegration. These Tiers of building, repairing and responding to conflict may also be seen through a lens of peace whereby schools are working within the concepts of (Tier 1) peace-building, (Tier 2) peace-keeping, and (Tier 3) peace-making.

There is a growing body of evidence showing positive outcomes from restorative practice, with recent quantitative literature reviews demonstrating positive impacts on student behaviour and school discipline, bullying, racial disparity in discipline, attendance and absenteeism, school climate and safety, and academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al. 2020). These outcomes underscore the need for all young people to have access to this philosophy, specifically young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as these outcomes are highly relevant to their experiences. Moreover, all young people (irrespective of their characteristics) have the right to equal access and protection against discrimination within educational and disciplinary systems (United Nations 1989).

This scoping study is situated within disability theory, understanding both the move over time from the impairment, or medical model, to the social model (Oliver 1983), the way in which these theories have been reflected on (Oliver 2013), built on (World Health Organisation 2007) and used to explain differing real-world educational structures (Gable, 2014). Moreover, disability does not exist in a vacuum, instead it is situated alongside other characteristics (i.e. race, gender etc.) creating the need to understand intersectional inequity. Within school age compulsory education in England, the terms 'special educational needs' and 'disabilities' are combined to define needs within the context of learning. Although these terms are combined, it is not to say that a young person with a disability will necessarily have SEN, however 'there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people with SEN' (DfE & DoH 2015, 16). In 2024 over 1.6 million pupils in England were identified as having SEND (Department for Education 2024c) with further categorisation under the following four headings: (1) communication and interaction, (2) cognition and learning, (3) social emotional and mental health difficulties, and (4) sensory and/or physical needs. The following section foregrounds commonalities between reported outcomes for these young people and reported benefits of restorative practice while drawing on studies from the Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) review, with additional evidence from the United States (US), Europe and Asia.

Commonalities in outcomes

Young people with SEND are statistically more likely to receive negative disciplinary outcomes than those without a SEND diagnosis (Forman and Markson 2022). Representing 45% of all permanent exclusions in England, the highest rates are amongst those with a primary need of social, emotional and mental health needs (National Statistics 2023). Reasons for this are multifaceted (Thompson, Tawell, and Daniels 2021) and are further compounded when considering intersectionality i.e. gender and SEND (Reid 2005). The literature cited by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) suggests that these needs could be addressed through restorative practice with evidence that includes a randomised control trial (Augustine et al. 2018). The Augustine study, across 44 schools over a two-year period, demonstrated a reduction of 36% days lost to suspension in the schools within the intervention group. Moreover, their study produced statistically significant results for subgroups, including those with SEND. These outcomes are reinforced by Hashim, Strunk, and Dhaliwal (2018), whose interrupted time series design examined suspension trends in 785 schools following the adoption of restorative practice in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Demonstrating a steep decline in suspensions, including reduced suspension gaps between those most frequently disciplined and their less-disciplined peers.

Similarly, bullying is a significant issue for all young people with an estimated number of 1,544,000 young people encountering face-to-face bullying in England and Wales during 2023 (Office of National Statistics 2024). The issue of bullying is particularly relevant to those who have peer interaction difficulties (Brown, Odom, and Conroy 2001) with young people with SEND being more likely to experience frequent bullying than their peers without a SEND diagnosis (Anti-Bullying Alliance 2021). Disproportionate bullying experiences are further compounded when considering the lack of anti-bullying programmes designed or adapted for pupils with SEND (Badger, Nisar, and Hastings 2024). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) cite mixed results of the effect of restorative practice on bullying; however, bullying takes place within context and therefore the effect of restorative practice on school culture, classroom climate and relationships may act as mediating factors. That said, the Augustine et al. (2018) RCT reported small but statistically significant reductions in bullying. It is worth noting that the Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) review is limited to schools in the US, whereas programmes in Hong-Kong have evidenced more significant reductions in bullying where restorative practice has been implemented as a whole school approach (Wong et al. 2011). Similarly, an RCT within the UK (Bonell et al. 2018) saw small but significant positive effects on bullying across 20 schools within the intervention group.

As seen above young people with SEND are disproportionately excluded; however, gender, race and SEND are all compounding factors. Young Black, males, identifying with ADHD or emotional difficulties are most likely to

receive school discipline consequences (Samimi et al. 2023). This is a persistent issue (Anyon et al. 2014), however, there is some evidence of restorative practice reducing this disparity (Augustine et al. 2018) including qualitative data from school administrators suggesting they perceived racial inequity to be significantly reduced through the use of restorative practices (Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt 2018).

Similarly to the issues of exclusion within England, attendance and absenteeism disproportionately effect young people with SEND e.g. 36.2% of young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are persistent absentees (attendance <90%), with greater impact on those in special schools i.e. 46% persistent absentees (Department for Education 2024b). These issues have increased post covid-19, with young people with SEND most acutely affected by the pandemic (Paterson, McCarthy, and Triantafyllopoulou 2024). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) cite evidence of restorative schools increasing attendance by up to 50% (McMorris et al. 2013) and significant reductions in chronic absenteeism (Jain et al. 2014). Likewise, Wang and Lee (2019) demonstrated the perceived positive impact of restorative practice on classroom climate a notion which is supported by anecdotal evidence in Europe (Weber, Rehder, and Vereenoghe 2021) albeit with statistical analysis within their study showing no significant effects. Additionally, qualitative research suggests that a whole school approach to building healthy relationships can create a culture of safety (Cavanagh 2007). These outcomes are particularly relevant due to the way in which school climate supports engagement and academic outcomes for young people with SEND (Daily et al. 2020; Maxwell et al. 2017).

Finally, these young people often need additional support in reaching their desired academic outcomes. In 2023, 17% of young people with SEND in state-funded schools in England achieved grades 5 or above in English and Maths General Certificate of Secondary Education. Moreover, their progress 8 score (measure of the pupil progress between the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 11), showed an average score of -0.62 representing approximately 2/3rds of a grade less than expected (Department for Education 2024a). The reasons for this are complex and it would be naive to assume a singular reason or solution for these outcomes; however, restorative practice has been shown to have some positive effects on academic results. Jain et al. (2014, 57) demonstrated that reading levels in US high schools at grade 9 in restorative schools increased 'from an average of 14% to 33%', whilst also reporting an increase of 60% in graduation rates over a four-year period compared to the benchmark of 7% in non-restorative schools.

Considering the needs of young people with SEND and the outcomes of restorative practice, one may assume that these young people have increased access to this provision and that a lot is known about their interactions with this philosophy. Exploring this assumption was the purpose of this study, whilst seeking to organise and analyse the literature.

Methodology

This scoping study followed the PRISMA guidelines and was informed by the five stages of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) i.e. Stage 1: identifying the research question, Stage 2: identifying relevant studies, Stage 3: study selection, Stage 4: charting the data, and Stage 5: collating, summarising and reporting the results. This is a systematic process; however, it should not be considered as a systematic review. It is also understood that a scoping study is an iterative process (Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien 2010), conceptualised through the above five stages but also through the cyclical nature of refining the process itself. To this end, a pilot study was completed using one database i.e. Scopus ($n=376$). During the pilot no amendments were made to the inclusion variables or planned deductive codes; however, it afforded the development of a more nuanced application of both variables and codes.

Identifying the research questions

The research questions are unique to this study and lay the foundation for further empirical work with the potential to positively impact young people with SEND and address the prevalence of ableism within schooling education.

RQ1 To what extent are young people with SEND included within the academic literature on restorative practice within education?

RQ2 In what way are young people with SEND represented in the academic literature on restorative practice within education?

RQ3 What can be said about the reported outcomes for young people with SEND within the academic literature on restorative practice in education?

Identifying relevant studies

Four searches were carried out across relevant electronic databases including: Scopus ($n=376$); ProQuest ($n=778$); Web of Science ($n=301$); and British Educational Index ($n=381$). These searches resulted in an automated response ($n=1836$) of peer reviewed articles published in English between 1 January 2000 – 24 November 2023. The search included Title – Abstract – Keywords, using the following thematic and contextual Boolean search terms.

Restorative Justice OR Restorative Practice OR Restorative Implementation

AND Education* OR School* OR Classroom*

These operators replicate the search terms used in a review with an overlapping time-period (Zakszeski and Rutherford 2021) allowing for some comparative discussion. Due to the use of multiple databases, removal of

duplicates ($n=745$) was required before the outputs were exported as .civ files and collated using Microsoft Excel, becoming a repository for titles, abstracts, and keywords.

Study selection

The selection criteria were designed to facilitate the exploration of the intersection of restorative practice, school age educational programmes and SEND. This took place through two phases: phase 1 identifying articles representing school age education and restorative practice; phase 2 identifying articles which also specifically focussed on SEND. In phase 1 articles were funnelled through inclusion variables 1 and 2.

Variable 1: The article's theme linked specifically to restorative practice. Articles were excluded where they were unrelated to restorative practice despite containing the key words of 'restorative' and 'education'.

Variable 2: The context of the article linked to an educational programme between the ages of 5 and 18. Articles were excluded where the context did not link to education e.g. social work or where the context related to programmes outside the age range.

These variables were applied through hand screening of title and abstracts ($n=1091$). 545 exclusions were made through Variable 1 ($n=60$) and Variable 2 ($n=485$), leaving a corpus of articles ($n=546$) which represented restorative practice and education within school age students. These articles are known as meeting the 'wider criteria'.

Phase 2 took the form of deductive hand coding using the Equality and Human Rights Commission's protected characteristics (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2021). These characteristics (codes 1-9) include disability (code 2) which for this study was extended to incorporate 'special educational needs' in line with the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH 2015). Although all inductive codes were used to code all abstracts, the only code used as a study selection tool was Code 2 as this represented the third element of the intersection between restorative practice, school age education and SEND. All other codes were used to provide additional analysis with the aim of adding nuance to the research design.

Full texts ($n=36$) were then assessed for eligibility leading to 12 further exclusions e.g. non-English texts, not explicitly relevant to SEND, non-educational, full text not available and book chapters. This afforded the creation of the final corpus of literature i.e. school age education, restorative practice and SEND. Completing this task across two phases allowed for pre-requisite work within charting the data i.e. coding of protected characteristics and for the study to report on the final corpus' characteristics in comparison to the wider corpus of literature gathered in phase 1.

Charting the data

The final articles meeting all eligibility criteria, and therefore included in the study ($n=24$), are set out in [Table 1](#). For clarity they are referred to hereafter as articles meeting the 'full' criteria and represent 4% of articles which relate to restorative practice and education between 1 January 2000 – 24 November 2023. Charting of data also included qualitative analysis of the way in which young people with SEND were represented in these articles and what can be said about their reported outcomes. This information is set out in the results presented across three sections corresponding to the three research questions.

Results

Results show that young people with SEND could be further included within the academic literature on restorative practice in education. Understanding the level of inclusion is limited by the general descriptions of these young people, creating difficulties in ascertaining who is and who is not included i.e. young people across all categories of SEND. Moreover, there is a significant lack of first-person voice and the inclusion of young people with SEND as participants, potentially hindering the efficacy of restorative practice across this group of young people while raising ethical concerns regarding this groups' lack of inclusion. Without their voices, restorative practice risks perpetuating the very inequities they aim to redress and limits its understanding to adult perceptions and the mainstream narrative of reductions in negative disciplinary outcomes and the school to prison pipeline. These findings are explored further across the following sections corresponding to the three research questions.

Inclusion

Despite the number of publications growing exponentially only a small number of articles discussed young people with SEND in any depth ($n=24$). This lack of inclusion raises questions regarding the way in which these young people are valued, their position in society and the perceived complexities of engaging them as participants. Moreover, within the 546 articles that met the wider criteria, other protected characteristics were also under-represented e.g. articles coded 'age' ($n=3$), 'gender reassignment' ($n=5$), 'marriage or civil partnership' ($n=0$), 'pregnancy' ($n=0$), 'religion' ($n=2$), 'sex' ($n=30$), 'sexual orientation' ($n=6$); with 'race' more prominently represented ($n=140$) within 'all protected characteristics' ($n=210$). Within the articles that included protected characteristics, 66% were centred on 'race', whereas 'SEND' represented 11% (see [Figure 1](#)). The disproportionate focus on race may be attributed to the heightened social justice movements surrounding racial inequities in

Table 1. Articles meeting the full criteria.

Title	Author (Year)	Main terms used	Type of study
The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes	Anyon et al. (2014)	Special education and emotional disability	Empirical study using a multi-level logistic regression model within the US
Restorative Interventions and School Discipline Sanctions in a Large Urban School District	Anyon et al. (2016)	Students in special education	Empirical study using multilevel logistic regression methods within the US
Narrating behavior in secondary school: Exploring approaches to behavioral support described by mentor and resident special educators	Ashby and Rood (2019)	Special Education Teachers	Empirical study using qualitative research methods within the US
Supporting students with complex needs living in rural and regional New South Wales: is wraparound the answer?	Cumming et al. (2022)	Complex support needs	Empirical study using qualitative interviews within Australia
Tough Choices: School Behaviour Management and Institutional Context	Deakin and Kupchik (2016)	Mainstream and alternative schools	Comparative empirical study between the US and the UK studying understandings and practices of school discipline
Educators Experiences of Establishing Social and Emotional Learning Pedagogies in an Elementary School With At-Risk Students	Dyson et al. (2021)	Students with disabilities	Empirical study using a case study design within the US
Students with Disabilities and Suspension Rates: A Cautionary Tale for School Districts	Forman and Markson (2022)	Students with disabilities	Empirical study examining the outcomes for K-12 learners within the US
Integrated Systems Approaches: Creative applications for working with disengaged youth	Gatfield and Winter-Simat (2019)	Students with a range of complex challenges including learning difficulties, family dysfunction, risk of homelessness and substance misuse	Empirical study using a case study within Australia
Justice for All? Suspension Bans and Restorative Justice Programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District	Hashim, Strunk, and Dhaliwal (2018)	Special education (SPED) and non-special educational students (non-SPED)	Empirical study using an interpreted time series framework and school administrative data within the US
A language focused approach to supporting children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)	Hibbin and Warin (2020)	Social emotional behavioural difficulties	An empirical study using observations, interviews and focus groups within multiple UK schools
School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System	Hughes, Raines, and Malone (2020)	Students with disabilities	Review of the literature, policy, and practice within the US
The Emerging Promise of Restorative Practices to Reduce Discipline Disparities Affecting Youth with Disabilities and Youth of Color: Addressing Access and Equity	Kervick et al. (2019)	Children with disabilities	An article, positing that restorative practices implementation promises to mitigate educational inequities resulting from discipline disparities for youth with disabilities and youth of colour. Published within the US
Teachers of Color Implementing Restorative Justice Practices in Elementary Classrooms: A DisCrit Analysis	Kulkarni and Chong (2021)	Special education teacher and students with disabilities, and speech and language impairments	Empirical study using multiple case studies within the US
The Potential of Restorative Practices to Ameliorate Discipline Gaps: The Story of One High School's Leadership Team	Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt (2018)	Students with disabilities	Empirical study using interviews from school and district administrators, and suspension data within the US

(Continued)



Table 1. Continued.

Title	Author (Year)	Main terms used	Type of study
Tell me the story: Marginalisation, transformation, and school-based restorative practice	O'Reilly (2019)	Children with special education	Review providing a reading of an autobiographical memoir arguing for a reconceptualization of restorative practice that understands 'story' as a means to a metamorphosis, or re-creation, of the self. Published within the UK
Strategies for Implementing Social-Emotional Learning in Adapted Physical Education	Olive, Gaudreault, and Lucero (2021)	Students with disabilities	Research-to-practice information within the US
Practitioner Perspectives on a Restorative Community: An Inductive Evaluative Study of Conceptual, Pedagogical, and Routine Practice	Procter-Legg (2021)	Children with special educational needs and disabilities, moderate cognition and learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional, mental health difficulties.	Empirical study using thematic analysis of employee statements within the UK
Intersections of Disproportion: A Critical Quantitative Examination of Disability and Gender in Black Students' School Discipline Outcomes	Samimi et al. (2023)	Disability status among students with IEPs e.g. Specific learning disability, other impairments including ADHD, emotional disability, autism spectrum disorder, developmental delay, specific language impairment, multiple disabilities, orthopedic visual impairments, TBI.	Multilevel logistic regression model examining the impact of gender and dis/ability on black students within the US
Fostering community, sharing power: Lessons for building restorative justice school cultures	Sandwick, Hahn, and Ayoub (2019)	Students with disabilities and special education	Empirical study using a multiple case study approach within the US
Colorblind Policy in a Carceral Geography: Reclaiming Public Education	Schlesinger and Schmits-Earley (2021)	Students with disabilities	Empirical 5 Step evaluation using quantitative and qualitative data within the US
Speech-language pathology and the youth offender: Epidemiological overview and roadmap for future speech-language pathology research and scope of practice	Snow (2019)	Developmental language disorder	A review of the epidemiology of youth offending together with research evidence concerning the language and literacy skills of this population within the US
Student-Reported Classroom Climate Pre and Post Teacher Training in Restorative Practices	Weber, Rehder, and Vereenoghe (2021)	Students with special educational needs and disabilities	Empirical study assessing student reported school and classroom climate, within Germany
Educational Landscape for Incarcerated Girls With Disabilities in the United States, Norway, and Mexico**	Welch et al. (2023)	Educational disabilities and youth who exhibit severe behavioural difficulties	Comparative review of educational opportunities within the youth justice system within the US, Mexico, and Norway
Disrupting the Pipeline: The role of school leadership in mitigating exclusion and criminalization of students	Wilson (2013)	Students with disabilities	Review exploring the way in which school leadership contributes to youth exclusion in the US

*These terms were taken directly from the studies with further exploration of the way in which they are used demonstrated through the results section.

**Some appear to be situated outside of education; however, they all include educational programmes albeit in some cases within criminal justice settings.

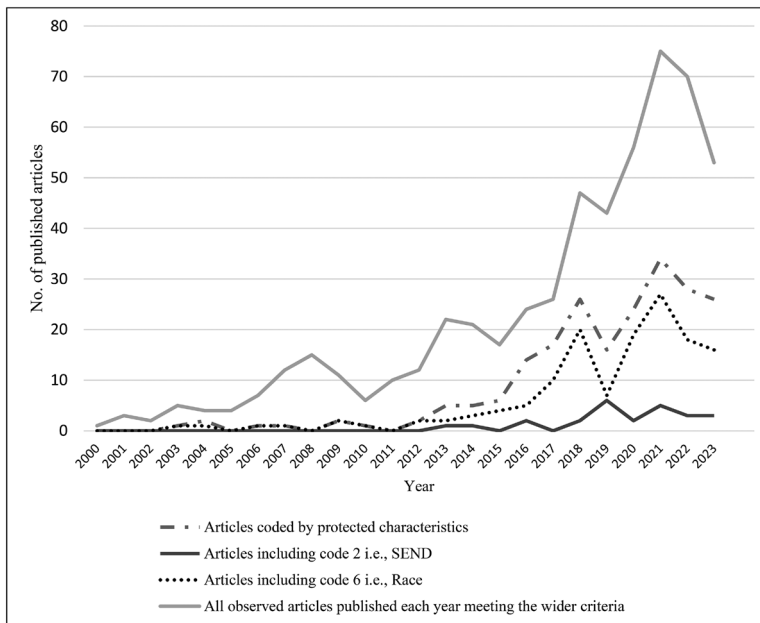


Figure 1. Year-on-year publication of articles resulting from the search terms used in this scoping study.

education, such as #BlackLivesMatter; however, it raises questions about the visibility and advocacy for young people with SEND, whose needs, although critical, remain less prioritised in the academic discourse suggesting a hierarchy of protected characteristics. Moreover, articles were not evenly distributed across the time series, with exponential growth and significant influx post 2013 e.g. 2000-2013 included 20% of articles ($n=114$), whereas 2014-2023 included 80% of articles ($n=432$). An observation which suggests increasing critical consciousness albeit with the underrepresentation of SEND, highlighting the ongoing marginalisation of young people with disabilities within both research and educational systems. This reflects broader trends of ableism in educational structures and suggests a critical gap in the literature which has the potential to address the intersectional needs of young people with SEND.

Due to the diverse nature of SEND - for these young people to be fully included the data would need to represent cognition and learning difficulties; speech and language difficulties; social emotional and mental health difficulties; and sensory and physical difficulties. As it can be seen from [Table 1](#), it is not possible to report on this aspect of inclusion due to the generic terms and lack of detailed descriptions which allow the reader to locate these young people within the code of practice or develop a picture of their needs. Despite the issue this creates for evaluating inclusion, these studies make important contributions and often used terminology which aligns to existing frameworks for clarity within their own contexts.

To the researcher's knowledge, there are no existing reviews that explore the specific intersection set out by this scoping study; however, there are existing reviews of restorative practice in education offering comparative data (Darling-Hammond et al. 2020; Lodi et al. 2021; Zakszeski and Rutherford 2021). These reviews support the notion of increased publications and the influx from 2006 onwards, representing a shared finding with the data in this study. However, they also support the takeaway from this scoping study's results i.e. that SEND is not significantly represented. Suggesting there is an oversight regarding young people with SEND and that while the field of restorative practice has expanded, its conceptualisation remains limited by its exclusion of specific marginalised groups.

Representation

This study looked at both the way in which these young people were represented through their descriptions and the way in which they were represented through their positionality. Results show that disability often lacked specificity in description e.g. 'students with disabilities' (Wilson 2013) and students with a range of 'complex challenges' (Gatfield and Winter-Simat 2019). Broad categorisations have the potential to obscure the unique challenges faced by those with specific needs, and the failure to disaggregate categories of disability may perpetuate the marginalisation of specific groups; potentially rendering their experiences invisible within the literature. Moreover, descriptions represented a continuum beginning with studies which used the term in a more isolated way e.g. Weber, Rehder, and Vereenoghe (2021), moving towards studies which described a cohort of young people intrinsically associated with race e.g. Anyon et al. (2016) and Hughes, Raines, and Malone (2020). These co-located descriptions (of race and SEND) were often used as categorical tools revealing statistics such as rates of participation in restorative interventions for 'Black, Latino, and Native American youth; boys; and students in special education' (Anyon et al. 2016, 1663). Or to highlight the 'challenges in the degree to which schools effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities, particularly those with... intersecting marginalized identities' (Kervick et al. 2019, 589), with other categorical descriptions used to describe further differences e.g. English Language Learners (Sandwick, Hahn, and Ayoub 2019).

Alternative terms used to describe these young people were derived from official policy or governmental documentation i.e. The USA Department of Education's description of students at risk of educational failure (Dyson et al. 2021), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Forman and Markson 2022) and the SEND Code of Practice (Procter-Legg, 2021). Cumming et al. (2022, 1567) used the term 'complex support needs' to include disability and 'behavioural and mental health issues'; whereas others provided diagnostic

labels e.g. ADHD, autism, and developmental delay (Olive, Gaudreault, and Lucero 2021; Samimi et al. 2023) in some cases coupled with other characteristics such as race (O'Reilly 2019).

Despite these categorical terms, many studies were keen to problematise the language (Kervick et al. 2019; Kulkarni and Chong 2021; Samimi et al. 2023; Snow 2019) discussing how the use of labels did not represent the desire to 'reduce pathologisation of students and increase inclusivity' while also recognising they may aid understanding (Gatfield and Winter-Simat 2019, 44). Other studies pushed back on labels which they felt did not adequately represent their cohort, discussing how although social emotional behavioural difficulties 'has been superseded by a move to categorise such children under the umbrella term Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties' they continued with the previous description 'due to the explicit focus on 'behaviour' that the term brings to mind, which is the primary interest behind our exploration' (Hibbin and Warin 2020, 316).

Very few studies gave comprehensive descriptions of the young people that went further than categorisation. One study used pseudonyms (Gatfield and Winter-Simat 2019) and another described the way in which a specific young person, perceived to have special educational needs, looked, behaved and was treated through a case study approach,

Johnathan is a Filipino boy with sandy brown hair and dark skin. When he started kindergarten, he cried every day during the first few weeks of school... They decided immediately that Johnathan either must be experiencing a troubled home situation or may be emotionally unready to participate in school. (Kulkarni and Chong 2021, 378).

This lack of descriptive representation was echoed in the way in which young people were represented as participants. This can be conceptualised on a continuum from theoretical representation i.e. thought pieces and literature reviews to fully engaged participation. The former, non-empirical articles made up 29% of the studies with another 29% representing young people through statistics and numeric data, e.g. Anyon et al. (2016), Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt (2018), and Forman and Markson (2022). All of these studies are considered as important contributions; however, very few included young people as participants (Hibbin and Warin 2020; Sandwick, Hahn, and Ayoub 2019) or even quoted them through secondary representation in the voice of adults (Kulkarni and Chong 2021). Further inclusion of the voices of young people could aid understanding, as when included, they gave insightful perspectives on the interrelationships between students and restorative teachers,

Most likely when you're in a mad mood, a teacher or staff will recognize you and they will ask you what's going [on]...when there's a problem, teachers immediately know, maybe they're magic or something... (Sandwick, Hahn, and Ayoub 2019, 16)

Most starkly, no studies represented young people as knowledge creators, as agents who were able to set the aims of the study, the research questions or to disseminate the results. This is problematic, however, due to the small numbers of articles found in this scoping study these authors should be seen as pioneers, with this scoping study foregrounding the need for greater representation as an implication for future research.

Outcomes

The reported outcomes within these studies reinforce much of the wider literature on restorative practice in education. Studies reported positive impacts on disciplinary outcomes and student behaviour, seen across both schools (Hibbin and Warin 2020; Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt 2018) and districts (Anyon et al. 2016; Forman and Markson 2022). Notable examples of policy changes such as the suspension bans in the Los Angeles United School District and their accompanying restorative programmes were linked to reductions in suspensions (Hashim, Strunk, and Dhaliwal 2018) and reduced repeat behaviours (Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt 2018). However, it was also apparent that the intersection of protected characteristics continued to be an 'enduring risk' (Anyon et al. 2014, 379). Some studies suggested that the discipline gaps across protected characteristics have reduced over time (Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt 2018; Schlesinger and Schmits-Earley 2021), albeit with continued disparities within race and SEND. This persistent over-representation demonstrated that despite increased participation in restorative inquiry young people with SEND 'had higher odds of being issued a second-semester suspension than their more advantaged peers' (Anyon et al. 2016, 1688) and that a general focus, instead of a detailed breakdown of differing types of SEND masked discipline disparities (Samimi et al. 2023). These articles point to the need for expanded categories (or greater detail) across disability status, with the aim of enhancing the readers' understanding of intersectional inequality and the way in which it is linked to restorative practice i.e. the likelihood of Black boys being identified with SEND, the type of SEND diagnosis they are likely to receive, and their consequential disciplinary outcomes and interactions with restorative processes.

Linked to disciplinary outcomes, 50% of studies focussed on interrupting the school to prison pipeline. However, there was limited evidence showing the direct, long-term effect of restorative educational programmes on the criminal justice system. Surprisingly, there was also limited evidence of the way in which restorative practice effects attendance and bullying for young people with SEND, despite the evident challenges associated with these issues. Suggesting that whilst restorative practice may wish to address these issues, it may be overlooking the specific dynamics associated with young people with SEND.

As in the wider literature, classroom climate was evidenced as a positive outcome. Weber, Rehder, and Vereenoghe (2021) demonstrated small improvements in classroom climate within the intervention group, albeit without statistical significance; alongside others who proposed using restorative practice alongside a range of solutions to promote positive school climate (Hughes, Raines, and Malone 2020). That said, despite restorative practice having a positive effect on climate, restorative work is ineffective without navigating 'traditional power dynamics', findings which were derived from the analysis of student voice regarding their experiences during a restorative intervention (Hibbin and Warin 2020, 325).

SEND specific outcomes were evident in a significant number of articles, with links to speech and language (Ashby and Rood 2019; Hibbin and Warin 2020; Kulkarni and Chong 2021; O'Reilly 2019; Snow 2019), social emotional development (Dyson et al. 2021; Gatfield and Winter-Simat 2019; Hibbin and Warin 2020; Kervick et al. 2019; Olive, Gaudreault, and Lucero 2021), and the 29% of articles that mention outcomes linked to cognitive development (Deakin and Kupchik 2016; Dyson et al. 2021; Gatfield and Winter-Simat 2019; O'Reilly 2019; Procter-Legg 2021; Weber, Rehder, and Vereenoghe 2021; Welch et al. 2023). Moreover, in some cases articles gave examples of the way in which restorative practice challenged societal views of disability e.g. Kulkarni and Chong (2021, 378) who saw 'students of color with disabilities quickly labeled as defiant or disruptive... without consideration for how behaviors are often indicators of classroom environments failing to support students' needs'. Similarly, Ashby and Rood (2019) foreground wider societal impacts, positive classroom climate, and speech and language development; whilst also demonstrating the way in which educators can approach restorative work that engages with disability theory, modelling critical consciousness and humanistic approaches. Whilst all the above outcomes are relevant, the researcher's lived experience of SEND education in England tells of a prevailing conflict within the system itself - one which embodies the language of violence and is completely missing from the literature. This is the parents' 'fight' for diagnosis, 'battle' for provision and the way in which the SEND system has become increasingly legislative - requiring parents to enter legal 'disputes' and navigate tribunals to 'direct' schools and 'order' local authorities to carry out duties. This conflict does not exist in the literature but is highly relevant to these young people and their communities of care. Restorative practice that addresses these issues in a solution focussed way may offer more relevant, tangible and meaningful results, removing not only the visible but invisible disproportionate outcomes for these young people.

Discussion

The lack of inclusion within the literature is significant and echoes the lack of inclusion within educational systems, conflicting with educational reform

(Warnock 1978), global commitments for special educational needs to form part of every discussion within education (UNESCO 1994) and the child's right under Article 12 to be included and taken seriously in all matters affecting their provision. This exclusion suggests similarities between publications and real-life outcomes and the way in which both society and academic research excludes marginalised groups both in explicit and implicit ways. A young person's individual characteristics are not the only factors which impact their inclusion. Payne and Welch (2018) highlight the way in which school level (i.e. school size, school structure, the number of students taught by individual teachers etc.) and pupil level characteristics (such as race, SEND and gender etc.) all intersect to affect the likelihood of restorative approaches to discipline. This suggests that young people's real-life experience of restorative practice is affected by societal factors and therefore a more complex, intersectional engagement with the way in which disability can be seen as socially constructed is likely to aid inclusive application. Similarly, within the literature, the lack of inclusion is likely to be influenced by the way in which SEND is understood, the qualitative or quantitative nature of the research, and the theoretical stance of the researcher. Future studies that wish to further include young people with SEND may, therefore, need to consider direct and indirect barriers to inclusion in research.

Representation was also a significant issue in the literature with limited number of studies that engaged young people with SEND as participants and the lack of studies engaging them as knowledge creators. This raises the ethical issue of re-representation through numeric data or adult perspectives. Lack of authentic and original voice within these studies shows a lack of Parity of Participation (Fraser 2008), an issue which speaks not only to redistribution, but recognition and representation. Articles where this paradigm was challenged were limited, however, within the wider literature there were examples of disruption within the power structures of academic literature, albeit limited to higher education. The Ramirez-Stapleton and Duarte (2021, 11) co-publication between 'a hearing faculty member and a Deaf+ student' challenged the dominance of the researcher's gaze and championed the prospect of vulnerability while navigating what can be understood as a 'complex web of intersectional privileged and oppressed identities in the classroom'. Set out through four vignettes this article provided a first-person voice account of three situations, moving back and forth between the teacher and student across the story. This article addressed privileged identities, how they manifest themselves in the classroom and how they affect students with disabilities, while considering how restorative practice can be used to better understand these issues. This is a conceptual shift regarding both the representation of SEND but also regarding the focus of restorative practice itself, shifting from the main narrative of addressing exclusion to the broader goal of 'understanding' (Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne 2005, 339).

Despite the right for young people to express their views in all matters that effect their provision (United Nations 1989) the complete lack of co-publications between researchers and young people within the scoping study results foregrounds the gap between the United Nations' commitment and what happens in practice, a concern which is supported by the United Nations Committee, an independent body who posit that despite the convention, young people are not 'systematically consulted', calling for further steps to be taken to ensure 'meaningful participation (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1995). Moreover, this lack of representation in the restorative literature is mirrored in the wider educational research where evidence shows that young people with a disability are less likely to be included in research than their non-disabled peers (Bailey et al. 2015; Beresford 2012; Morris et al. 2011). Explanations for this exclusion include: scepticism about children's capacity, how inclusion will undermine authority, and that this inclusion will take too much time (Lundy 2007, 929–930). Issues which are acutely relevant to restorative practice, within which inclusivity, individual's voices, and power sharing are championed. This is significant because restorative practice positions voice and agency as central to resolving conflict and healing harm. The exclusion of these students from the process is therefore telling of a deeper, structural issue within both the educational and restorative systems; therefore, demanding a more nuanced approach in how schools and researchers design restorative interventions.

Furthermore, categorisation and use of generic terms to describe these young people has the potential to reinforce exclusion within society, simplify issues and mask multifaceted and intersectional inequities. These findings encourage us to consider intersectional theory e.g. dis/crit. An amalgamation of disability theory and theory which foregrounds 'how racism and ableism uphold normalcy for dominant groups' (Kulkarni and Chong 2021, 381) i.e. those who are white or 'able'. Future studies which understand this alignment of disability and intersectionality are essential to addressing inequity within restorative practice as it has been shown that the interaction of disabilities with other protected characteristics is significant (Shaw, Chan, and McMahon 2012); that gender, race and type of disability all matter when considering how people are perceived, and consequently, how they are treated. These ideas call for empirical work, where researchers fully explore the intersectionality of young people; however, this is not to say there is a need for further labelling or categorisation. Greater use of labels may result in stereotyping, especially for young people of colour, where behaviours are misinterpreted as defiant or disruptive rather than symptomatic of disability. For instance, Black boys with behavioural issues linked to SEND are often viewed through a deficit lens, which aligns with stereotypes of aggression. There is, therefore, a requirement for researchers to understand the individual's needs, their reality and lived experience, as the intersecting identities of young people shape how they are perceived and treated within educational settings;

potentially limiting the success of restorative practices. The main take-away being that the current literature lacks detailed descriptions, favouring categorical definitions of young people who remain silenced due to their lack of inclusion as participants or knowledge creators.

This article considered the reported outcomes for young people with SEND. Patterns within this scoping study reinforced much of the mainstream narrative on reduced exclusions and the school to prison pipeline. These are important issues, however, overly focussing on them becomes generative whereby young people are even further associated with these negative connotations and describing the issues in this way i.e. school to prison pipeline, gives 'unintended life' to these concepts (Hooker and Schiff 2019, 213). Moreover, this narrative is driven by restorative practice's association with restorative justice within the criminal justice system. These are reactive systems by design which assume, by nature of their existence, that harm has been caused and punishment or restoration is required. Alternatively, framing restorative practice within peace (Cremin and Bevington 2017) or as 'relational and restorative practice' has the possibility to frame young people in an alternative way. In doing this we can begin to think of restorative practice predominantly through the work in Tier 1 i.e. building relationships, conceived as a prerequisite for anything that follows. This repositions young people with SEND into Tier 1, creating ethical prioritisation and greater potential for agency. Helping us to begin the process of providing an alternative lens which positively contributes to the way in which these young people are seen both within the literature and within society.

Finally, critical engagement with intersectional issues regarding outcomes encourages us to further explore patterns constructed within the data e.g. that race and SEND act as magnifiers of disciplinary disparities. Young people, such as Black males with ADHD are more likely to be disciplined, and that the combination of being Black and having SEND amplifies punitive responses. Without direct engagement with these issues, restorative practice may fail to address these compounding inequalities, leading to continued higher disciplinary rates for this group. Therefore a 'one-size-fits-all' model of restorative practice may overlook these specific dynamics - findings which support the need for nuanced application when considering the impact of restorative justice on social justice (Procter-Legg, Hobson, and Quimby 2024). Future studies, therefore, may consider the nuances of application and the way in which they support intersectional identities.

Limitations

The main limitation relates to the epistemological understanding of how knowledge is constructed and the assumption that a scoping study, completed in a systematic way offers complete and comprehensive information. Results of this study show an automated search response therefore although

the scoping study was designed to be systematised, exclusion and inclusion criteria limit factors such as scope, time-period, publication type and language. Additionally, manually reviewing abstracts allowed for the inclusion of nuanced language i.e. the way in which SEND can be understood, however, the manual process and lack of multiple coders could be seen as a risk to coding validity. Steps were taken to avoid omissions e.g. cross referencing reference lists from other reviews; however, one body of literature excluded from this study is work published in book form. This was most relevant in books designed for practitioners (Burnett and Thorsborne 2015). Moreover, it is known to this study (through the researcher's previous practitioner-based work) that scholars within England, have engaged extensively with SEND in practical ways that are not captured in the literature e.g. providing supervision for special schools and training young people with SEND as restorative champions. Evidence of this through anecdotal reports or narrative storytelling could potentially become interesting future research.

Conclusion

Set out as a scoping study, this article explored the nature and extent of academic literature published on restorative practice in school age educational programmes, and young people with SEND. This scoping study is unique in its focus on SEND and includes findings that demonstrate a need for further stakeholder engagement and empirical work which include the voices and participation of young people. Results demonstrated a lack of inclusion, limited and categorical representation, and outcomes which reinforced the mainstream narrative. Recommendations include nuanced analysis which further considers the lived experience of these young people with greater ethical orientation to enable further Parity of Participation. Future research has the potential to include greater intersectional SEND analysis and to address the patterns highlighted by this scoping study regarding intersectional disparities. These studies should include the voices of young people with SEND and where possible engage them as knowledge creators. Moreover, there are pre-existing links between restorative practice and SEND, both within the practitioner literature and within practice; therefore, recommendations include co-publications between practitioners and researchers, and studies that bridge the gap between practitioner-focused and research-focused perspectives. The main take-away, however is that whilst restorative practice may wish to be situated as an inclusive pedagogy, without the voices of young people with SEND, restorative practice will continue to lack inclusivity.

Disclosure statement

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