

Research Article

Nuno Archer de Carvalho* and Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo

Benefits of Student Debate in Upper Secondary Education: A Scoping Review

<https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2025-0148>

Received December 17, 2025; accepted April 28, 2026;

published online June 15, 2026

Keywords: student debate; structured debate; adolescents; secondary education; outcomes of education

Abstract: Interest in student debate or structured debate in upper secondary education is growing in Portugal and other countries. While there is broad agreement on the benefits of debate for adolescent students, a comprehensive, up-to-date literature review on this topic is missing. For this reason, this study aims to analyse the extent, nature and results of peer-reviewed, published research on the benefits of student debate in upper secondary education over the past 25 years (1999–2023). A scoping review was conducted using Arksey and O'Malley's framework, the PRISMA guidelines, a previously designed protocol, and 11 research databases. Fifty-six studies were selected. The studies revealed an increasing trend in both their number and geographical breadth, and highlighted the diversity of student debate regarding settings, concepts, and formats. As for the benefits, these studies provided evidence of the power of student debate to promote adolescents' competencies, particularly in communication, argumentation, and critical thinking. Benefits related to adolescent thriving included academic adjustment, positive youth development strengths, and civic and political engagement. The studies also presented evidence of societal benefits, including enhanced educational equality. Overall, the review strengthened the case of debate as a powerful and versatile educational resource for adolescent learning and positive development.

1 Introduction

Student debate is not a novelty in education. Although quite spread in the Anglo-Saxon world (Graff 2022), interest in student debate or structured debate in upper secondary education appears to be growing in Portuguese schools. This is visible in specific educational projects (e.g., Carvalho 2019), new debate initiatives between schools (e.g., AEEP 2023; EPIS 2024) and social intervention projects (e.g., Programa Escolhas 2024). This increasing interest is also visible in Eastern European countries (e.g., Valkering et al. 2018) and in new international training projects and debate initiatives (e.g., CEPCEP 2023; ECNAIS 2023). This trend follows the momentum in the United States of America (McIntosh and Milam 2016) and worldwide (Bartanen and Littlefield 2014; Tomohiro and Mezuk 2021).

Many reasons may be advanced to explain this phenomenon. One is the present-day scenario of polarization, erosion of democratic culture (ICFE 2021; Mitchell 1998; Valkering et al. 2018) and youth's increasing political disengagement (Krpanec and Huić 2023) that incentives schools and teachers to look for ways of enhancing civic and democratic values on their students. Another reason is the debate's contribution to change the traditional school model centred on the teacher, abstract content and formal assessment, disconnected from real-life experiences and the development of meaningful knowledge and skills (DiCamillo 2010; Savitz et al. 2021; Zorwick and Wade 2016). Another reason is a social justice argument: beyond access to school, there is growing inequality regarding the quality of education and educational opportunities (Carvalho and Veiga 2025; Gorski 2020; ICFE 2021; Patten and Chapman 2021) including the opportunities to participate in debating activities (Anderson and Mezuk 2015; Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz 2015; Jacques et al. 2022; McIntosh and Milam 2016).

In this context, student debate is gaining space as an educational tool for student learning and development (Kennedy 2007; Zorwick and Wade 2016), as well as for enhancing cooperation and deliberation (Specca 2023). Overall,

*Corresponding author: **Nuno Archer de Carvalho**, CEPCEP – Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Palma de Cima, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal; and Associação Competências para a Vida, Travessa do Pinheiro, 23 1º Dto, 1200-763 Lisboa, Portugal, E-mail: narcher@competenciasvida.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6620-0804>

Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo, CEPCEP – Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Palma de Cima, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal; and AEEP – Associação de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Particular e Cooperativo, Av. Defensores de Chaves 32 1º esq, 1000-119 Lisboa, Portugal, E-mail: rqmelo@ucp.pt. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3024-364X>

there is an agreement in the literature regarding the benefits of structured debate for adolescent students (e.g., American Debate League 2021, ESU 2023, IDEA 2023; Bell 2020; Newman 2020; Shuster and Meany 2015). However, despite the testimonials, anecdotes and examples from participants, more systematic and objective evidence is missing (Allen et al. 1999), especially research on student debate in upper secondary education that has been peer-reviewed and published (Littlefield 2001; Nick and Cote 2002).

An exploratory yet comprehensive search for existing literature systematisations on structured debate in upper secondary education (Appendix 1 in Supplementary Material) confirmed this gap in the literature. The search on Scopus, without any time limit, produced 1.495 results. From these, only 12 studies addressed student debate (0.80 %), only six were literature reviews, and none focused on upper secondary education or adolescent students. Findings laid bare the need for scientific literature systematisation on structured debate benefits in upper secondary education for adolescent students. Some authors also stressed the need to move beyond extracurricular, college settings or intercollegiate debate (Savitz et al. 2021), and invest in sound scientific studies of student debate benefits for adolescent and upper secondary students (e.g., Anderson and Mezuk 2015; Mezuk et al. 2011).

Another reason for deepening student debate educational potential is the old controversy regarding the “Evils of High School Debating” (Barnard 1937), stressing issues related to inadequate training, poor quality and over-emphasis on winning. A steady answer contends the unfairness of the portrait for high-school debate, increasingly moving towards real speech and life training (Gregory 1938). The controversy continues today, with criticism of student debate for eliciting confrontation, polarization, a normative white and male voice, weakening of true convictions and elite privilege. Like in the first half of the 20th century, authors continue to answer, drawing attention to detrimental practices but valuing the educational potential of debating opportunities (e.g., De Conti 2013; Harrigan 2008).

In synthesis, a comprehensive and sound literature review may contribute to a better understanding of the benefits of student debate. For that purpose, three clarifications are in order: (a) *what* is the conceptual approach to student debate, (b) *which* benefits to consider, and (c) *why* focusing on upper secondary education. We end by presenting the study’s research problem and study questions.

1.1 What is Student Debate

The lack of a clear definition of student debate hinders research and promotion efforts (Delgado Reverter 2018).

Some thesaurus presents a vague and polysemic concept of “debate”, which does not help (e.g., APA 2023; US Department of Education 2023).

This study uses the expression *student debate* with a triple purpose: (a) to direct the concept towards debate between students in both formal and non-formal educational settings; (b) to stress debate as an educational resource (Delgado Reverter 2018; Strait and Wallace 2008), that is, conveying a specific educational *telos* or purpose; and (c) to make clear that there is more to debate than mere discussions (De Conti 2014; DiCamillo 2010; Jerome and Algarra 2005), thrilling competitions, amusing games (DiCamillo 2010; Strait and Wallace 2008), or academic simulations (Mitchell 1998).

Based on well known debating manuals (e.g., Atchison 2017; Bell 2020; Broda-Bahm et al. 2004; Quinn 2009; Shuster and Meany 2015), the definition of student debate, should include the idea of structured or formal debate, distinguishing it from more spontaneous and everyday arguments or discussions, and a set of mandatory ingredients. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, we suggest the following definition of student debate: An educational activity of structured or formal debate, with four essential features: (a) one common motion or topic that all agree to debate; (b) different perspectives using a structure that ensures equal and fair opportunities for participation; (c) well-prepared teams to enter debate (attitude) and argue their case (content); and (d) the goal of persuading a third party valuing argumentation and presentation.

Other important concepts exist within debating literature. One is *forensics*. With a strong tradition in the United States of America (USA), forensic stands for competitive speech and debate, addressing public speaking, research and argumentation (Allen et al. 1999; Bartanen and Littlefield 2014). Another concept is *oracy*, describing all forms of verbal communication skills. Within oracy, a helpful distinction is suggested between *performance oracy* (Newman 2020), including “reading aloud, reciting poetry and learning and performing the lines of a play” (p. 5) and (b) *critical oracy*, which “involves engaging with other people, ideas and the outside world and includes discussion, debate, advocacy, enquiry and role play” (p. 5). A third important field of action within this field is *Philosophy for Children or P4C*. Based on the work of Matthew Lipmann, which allowed different approaches and materials (Khodaghali et al. 2025), including *Philosophy with Children* (e.g., Kizel 2016). P4C allows children and adolescents to engage in rich opportunities for questioning, reasoning, building arguments and collaborating in the search for answers, building on each other’s ideas (Trickey and Topping 2004).

1.2 Which Benefits for Student Debate

Following ERIC's thesaurus, which considers educational benefits as "outcomes of education" (US Department of Education 2023), this study focuses on the positive educational outcomes that derive from students' engagement in structured debate activities. More specifically, the study considers three groups of benefits.

The first group, focuses on more personal benefits and addresses students' transversal competencies (Carvalho 2019). These competencies comprise students' knowledge (what I know), skills (what I can do), and attitudes (what I am and my dispositions), which singularly or combined allow adolescents to perform effectively or successfully (Teodorescu 2006; Wong 2020). The second group suggests benefits related to students' *thriving*, pointing to integral growth, developing one's potential, and living healthy, productive, fulfilling and rewarding lives (Cantor 2021). These benefits, studied within the Positive Youth Development approach, are resources or strengths that result from the adolescent ↔ context bidirectional interaction (Benson and C. Scales 2009) or, in other words, by the alignment "of an active, engaged, and competent person with receptive, supportive, and nurturing ecologies" (Benson 2007, 38). Thriving and flourishing are promising avenues for the right to quality education today (Carvalho and Veiga 2025; Yacek and Jonas 2025). Within this group, we may find benefits such as students' relationship with learning and with their school, positive relationships with adults or peers, developmental psychosocial resources (e.g., identity), and caring and contribution behaviours towards the community. The third group includes the societal benefits, i.e., the benefits of student debate that surpass the individual and are valuable for communities and broader society.

1.3 Why Focusing on Upper Secondary Students

Adolescence plays a pivotal role in human development (Carvalho and Veiga 2025). It is a second opportunity to foster students' thriving and well-being with a triple dividend: present, future and next generation (Anderson and Mezuk 2015; Bonnie and Backes 2019; Patton et al. 2016; UNICEF 2018; WHO 2023). Furthermore, the present generation of adolescents is the largest ever (Alfvén et al. 2019; Patton et al. 2016).

For these reasons, the last report from UNESCO, presented by the Commission "Futures of Education" (ICFE 2021), mentions the mission of "propelling the potential of adolescents and youth" (p. 58–59) and highlights the value of formal and non-formal education. However, as adolescents

grow older, satisfaction with school decreases (Inchley et al. 2020), as does school adjustment indicators such as achievement (e.g., Cadime et al. 2016; Widlund et al. 2021) and school engagement (Carvalho and Veiga 2023). The UNESCO report recognises this reality: "When seen from a perspective of possibility, it is clear that precious few secondary educational models are sufficiently releasing the incredible potential of young people." (p. 59). While oracy is important throughout schooling (Newman 2020), this study aims to deepen the contribution of student debate opportunities for adolescents' right to full personality and potential development (UN 1948, 1989).

1.4 Current Study

The conceptual fuzziness regarding student debate and the scarcity of earlier literature reviews on upper secondary education require a comprehensive, rigorous, and up-to-date systematisation of peer-reviewed studies. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the option was to conduct a scoping review. With an increasing presence in education research (Carvalho and Veiga 2022), scoping reviews aim for a thorough and systematic mapping of existing research (Carvalho and Veiga 2022; Colquhoun et al. 2014; Pham et al. 2014).

The problem that guided the study is: What benefits of student debate in upper secondary education are portrayed in peer-reviewed research in the last 25 years (1999–2023)? Five study questions are advanced to answer this question: (Q1) What is the extent of research on the theme? (Q2) What are the main settings, concepts and formats of debate? (Q3) What designs are used by research? (Q4) What are the main benefits of student debate? (Q5) What implications for research and intervention are suggested?

2 Methods

The design of the research followed two sound scientific guidelines. The first is Arksey and O'Malley's framework (2005; Levac et al. 2010). The second is PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (Tricco et al. 2018). In addition, an earlier protocol (Appendix 1 in the Supplementary Material) was produced and registered publicly.

2.1 Identifying Relevant Studies

The search included 11 bibliographic databases: (1) Scopus, (2) Web of Science (WoS), and, using EBSCO search engine, (3)

Table 1: Final search strategy.

Search fields	Scopus: Article title, abstract, keywords; WoS: All fields; EBSCO: Without expanders (full text of articles or equivalent subjects)
Search string	((“formal debat*” OR “structured debat*” OR “student debat*” OR “students debat*” OR “educational debate” OR “debate club*” OR “debate league*” OR “competit* debat*” OR “debat* curriculum” OR “debat* program*” OR “debat* activity” OR “debate and argumentation” OR “school debaters” OR “school debate team*” OR “debate model*” OR “debat* format*” OR “world school* debat*” OR “school policy debat*” OR “debate participation” OR “middle school debat*” OR “high school debat*” OR “secondary school debat*” OR “debating in school*” OR “debate in school*” OR “school debating” OR “debate education” OR “extracurricular debat*” OR “public speaking and debate” OR “public speaking debate” OR “speech and debate” OR “forensic debate” OR “competit* forensic*” OR “academic oracy” OR “critical oracy”) OR (“academic debat*” AND learning) OR (“public speaking” AND debate) OR (debate-based AND learning) OR (debate-based AND pedagogy) OR (“model united nations” AND education) OR (“model united nations” AND school) OR (oracy AND debate))
Refinement	The results were not refined by language, timespan or research areas
Search calendar	07/01/ 2024 (14h15 – 17h00)

Academic Search Ultimate, (4) APA PsycArticles, (5) APA PsycInfo, (6) Business Source Ultimate, (7) Education Source Ultimate, (8) ERIC, (9) Humanities Source Ultimate, (10) Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and (11) Sociology Source Ultimate.

The search strategy, presented in Table 1, used a combination of 38 expressions. Each expression was tested individually for meaningful results and again within the search string. The suitability of the final selection was assessed by confirming the inclusion in the results of a set of meaningful articles selected beforehand.

2.2 Study Selection

The selection of the studies was conducted following three steps: 1st Organisation – creation of an Excel file with all the results (studies) and exclusion of duplicates; 2nd Screening – analysis of the title, abstract and keywords of each study to exclude studies clearly outside the scope; 3rd Selection – analysis of each study to determine its inclusion or exclusion.

A set of criteria, presented in Table 2, guided the selection of the studies.

Initially, no time frame was introduced. Soon, we understood that earlier studies, many from the 19th Century and heavily centred on US reality, were not useful for addressing our research questions. From this assessment of the studies, we identify the late 90s as the best cutoff period. Therefore, the sample only considered studies from the last 25 years (1999–2023).

2.3 Charting the Data

The study used a specific tool (Appendix 1) for data extraction. The tool was filled in directly in the Excel sheet to support retrieving, organising, and preparing the relevant information for each study. The study organised the information according to a set of categories. Categories such as year, country and research design are easy to define. However, other categories were redefined progressively in an iterative process for the 2nd, 4th and 5th study questions.

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion	Exclusion
+ Last 25 years (1999–2023)	– Before 1999
+ Structured debate	– Class discussion or brainstorming, oracy
+ Published, scientific, peer-reviewed journals	– Unpublished or not scientific journals
+ Research article (theoretical, literature, quantitative, or qualitative research)	– Non-research (opinion, essay, editorial, report, book reviews, proceedings, ...)
+ English, Spanish, or Portuguese	– Other languages
+ Upper secondary school students or late adolescent students (15–19 years old)	– Education years up to upper secondary education, higher education, and adult education
+ School, community or extracurricular settings debates	– Clinical settings, English learning (e.g., EAP or EFL)
+ Spoken, face-to-face or online, real-time debates	– Written, interrupted, or delayed forms of debate
+ Assessing debate benefits	– Legislation, activities suggestion, or others

2.4 Collating, Summarising, and Reporting Results

The results section opens with one Figure and one Table. The first, presents an overview of the studies' selection process using the PRISMA's flow diagram (Tricco et al. 2018). The second, presents an index of the selected studies numbered from 01 to 56. Due to the large number of studies, two decisions followed earlier studies (Carvalho and Veiga 2022, 2023): (a) to use the reference number of the study between parentheses (e.g. 34) to identify the study in the results section; and (b) to present the detailed information of each study as supplementary information (Appendix 2), available in the online version of the article.

2.5 Research Corpus

The initial search of the literature rendered 5.522 results. After removing duplicates, screening, and selecting the studies, 56 entered the study's *corpus* or the final selection of studies. Figure 1 presents the process in detail, and Table 3 presents the 56 studies, ordered and numbered from 01 to 56.

3 Results

The results are presented following the study questions (SQ) order, analysing the extent of the research (SQ1), the main debate settings, concepts and formats (SQ2), the design options used by the studies (SQ3), the benefits of student debate found by the different studies (SQ4), and the main suggestions for research and intervention regarding student debate (SQ5).

3.1 Extent of Research

The first study question (Q1) addresses the extension of research. The final selection of studies is relatively small (n=56), especially when compared with the studies from our search focusing on student debate in higher education (n=131). However, Table 4 shows an increase from the first 13 years (n=20; 36 %) to the last 12 years (n=36; 64 %), with the majority of studies originating from the USA (n=35; 62 %), followed by Europe (n=14; 25 %) and Asia (n=4; 7 %). Complementing these findings, the evolution of the studies presented in Figure 2 confirmed the growing trend regarding

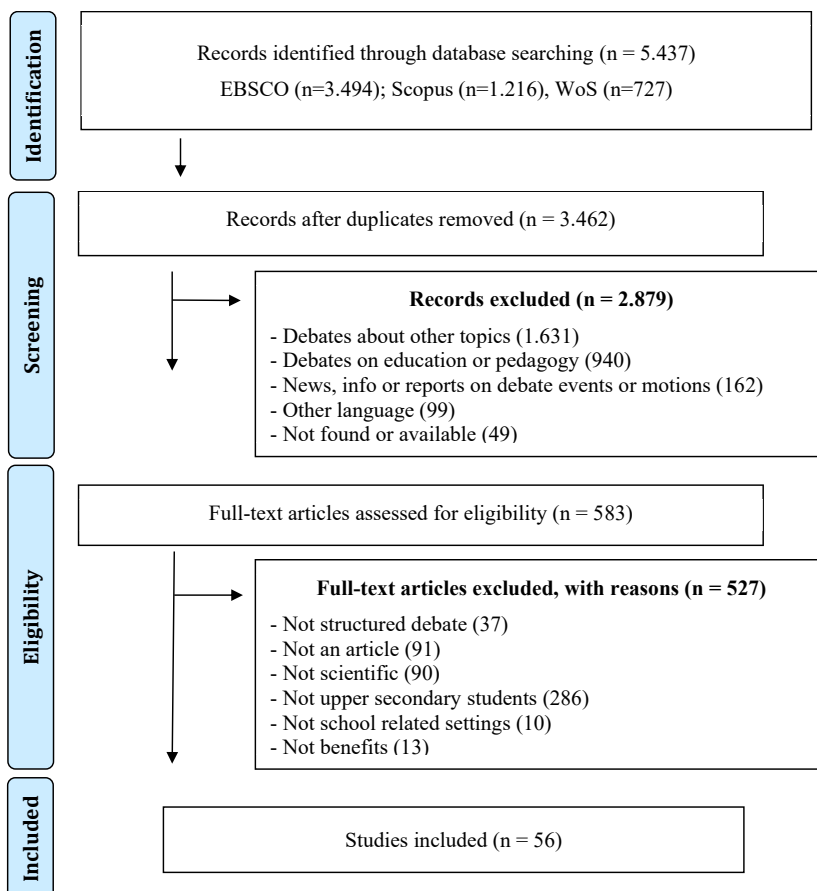


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart of study selection process (1999–2023).

Table 3: Index of studies included with the respective numerical reference.

Ref	Authors and date	Ref	Authors and date
01	Abdullah et al. (2021)	29	Krpanec and Huić (2023)
02	Albe and Gombert (2012)	30	Lavelle and Hamburger (2009)
03	Allen et al. (1999)	31	Levy (2016)
04	Anderson and Mezuk (2012)	32	Levy (2018)
05	Anderson and Mezuk (2015)	33	Littlefield and Venette (2004)
06	Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz (2015)	34	Littlefield (2001)
07	Chankova and Spasov (2023)	35	McIntosh and Milam (2016)
08	Coticchia et al. (2020)	36	Mezuk et al. (2011)
09	Coughlin (2013)	37	Mezuk (2009)
10	Cridland-Hughes (2012)	38	Molinatti et al. (2010)
11	Cridland-Hughes (2016)	39	Nick and Cote (2002)
12	De Conti (2014)	40	Osborne and Wagner (2007)
13	Delgado Reverter (2018)	41	Patten and Chapman (2021)
14	Demir and Isleyen (2015)	42	Robertson et al. (2022)
15	DiCamillo (2010)	43	Rosenthal et al. (2003)
16	Fine (2000)	44	Sanonguthai (2011)
17	Fine (2004)	45	Savitz et al. (2021)
18	Genevieve (2015)	46	Simonneaux et al. (2013)
19	Gorski (2020)	47	Specca (2023)
20	Graff (2022)	48	Stockdale (2020)
21	Harrigan (2008)	49	Strait and Wallace (2008)
22	Jacques et al. (2022)	50	Sumarmi (2020)
23	Jerome and Algarra (2005)	51	Tomohiro and Mezuk (2021)
24	Johnson & Johnson (2009)	52	Valkering et al. (2018)
25	Kalpakistan (2023)	53	Winkler et al. (2013)
26	Kennedy (2007)	54	Yuyun (2014)
27	Kensicki et al. (2022)	55	Zorwick and Wade (2016)
28	Keselman et al. (2012)	56	Zorwick et al. (2009)

The complete presentation of each study can be found in Appendix 2 on the online version of the article.

the number of studies and also their geographical breadth, with more studies from Europe and Asia in the last years. An expressive example of this growing interest in Europe is the study of debate activities and their benefits in seven European “new democracies” - Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia (52).

3.2 Student Debate Settings, Concepts and Formats

The second study question (Q2) analyses the settings, concepts, and formats of student debate portrayed in the selection of studies. Table 5 presents the number of studies for

Table 4: Studies by year and country.

		No
Years	1999–2011	20
	2012–2023	36
Countries	Africa – Morocco (1)	1
	Asia–Thailand (1), Indonesia (3)	4
	Australia/ Oceania (1)	1
	Europe – Bulgaria (1), Croatia (1), France (3), Italy (2), Netherlands (2), Spain (1), Türkiye (1), UK (3)	14
	North America – Canada (1), USA (35)	36

n=56.

settings, concepts and formats. The common result is diversity.

Regarding *Settings*, where and when debate happens, the selection offers a rich and well-balanced distribution of studies. We may consider three big groups. The first is student debates focused on curricular settings (n=20; 36%), valuing student debate as an educational activity that fosters active learning. Four of these studies address socioscientific issues or socially acute questions debate (2, 28, 38, 46), which aim to promote students’ active, critical and responsible scientific literacy and citizenship (Molinatti et al. 2010). The second group of studies was focused on “Debate Leagues” and “Extracurricular activities” settings (n=19; 34%). Although not strictly related to school school curriculum and formal learning, these leagues and activities value student debate as a complementary activity to school action. Gathering all these studies under “Debate Leagues” would make sense. Intentionally, the category extracurricular activities highlights, with two exceptions (27, 40), studies addressing the Urban Debate League or Movement (4, 5, 10, 11, 36, 37, 41, 51, 53, 56), which offers vulnerable youth from inner cities of the USA extracurricular and transformative opportunities to engage in debate activities. Finally, the third group of studies focused on “Debate clubs or programs” and “Tournaments” (n=17; 30%), presenting a huge diversity of concepts and formats, with studies in competition settings including both competitive debate (06, 07, 12, 21) and conference-based simulations (08, 09, 43).

Regarding *Concepts*, the diversity of student debate approaches is organised and presented in four main groups. The first group gather studies with an academic scope (n=11; 20%), with studies addressing the “Academic debate” (13, 49) and “In-class debate” (14, 15, 26, 28, 38, 44, 45, 46, 48). These studies approached debate from an educational or pedagogical perspective, valuing debate as an opportunity for active and deep learning (Delgado Reverter 2018, p. 116) or as a safe laboratory in which one experiments, learns, and improves critical thinking and advocacy skills (Mitchell

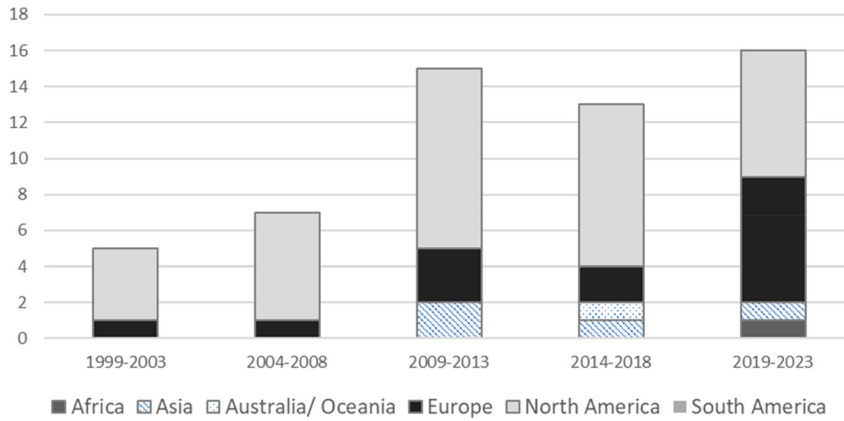


Figure 2: Distribution of the studies throughout the research period (n=56).

Table 5: Settings, concepts and formats.

Settings	No	Concepts	No	Formats	No
Curricular activities	20	Academic debate	2	Broad perspective	14
Debate club or program	10	Competitive debate	8	Deliberative	3
Debate league	7	Conference simulations	11	Policy debate	12
Extracurricular program	12	Debate activities	5	Simulation	11
Tournaments	7	Deliberative debate	2	Stakeholders	2
		Formal debate	1	Two sides	8
		High school debate	7	Unreported	4
		In-class debate	9	World school style	2
		Urban debate	11		

n=56.

1998). The second group freely gather studies focusing on competitive debate (n=8; 14 % – 3, 7, 12, 21, 29, 35, 52, 54), together with studies on conference simulations (n=11; 20 % – 2, 8, 9, 18, 25, 27, 31, 32, 43, 47, 50) and studies on debate with deliberative purposes (n=2; 4 % – 20, 24). The third group is composed of studies on the Urban Debate Movement (n=11; 20 % – 4, 5, 10, 11, 19, 36, 37, 41, 51, 53, 56). Reacting to the competition drive of the American debate community and the white and middle-class predominance, the Urban Debate League was born in the 80s (Cridland-Hughes 2012), to reach new communities and students (Mitchell 1998), with a special focus on low-income, racial/ethnic minority youth in under-resourced schools (Gorski 2020) and valuing argumentation and social justice (Cridland-Hughes 2012). The fourth group are an important number of studies (n=13; 23 %), under the category “Debate activities” (01, 22, 23, 40, 55) or “High-school debate” (16, 17, 30, 33, 34, 39, 42). These studies use looser conceptual approaches or different

concepts regarding student debate. In our selection, only one study, focusing on a student debate project directed at migrant high-school students, consistently brought up the concept of “Formal debate” (6).

Regarding the debate *Formats*, sometimes also referred to as models or style, results mirror the diversity found for settings and concepts. In the selection of studies, a group adopted a “broad perspective” (n=14; 25 %) by not specifying the format (3, 22, 23, 29, 33, 35, 39, 45, 52, 55) or by introducing more than one format (16, 26, 30, 34), while for others the format was “unreported” (n=4; 7 % – 1, 19, 40, 41). Another set of studies brought forward a two-side approach (n=8; 14 %), using pro&con (15, 44), this&that (13), switching sides (21), socioscientific issues (38, 46), or specific suggestions such as Palestra di Botta e Risposta (12) or the Migrant Speech and Debate Tournament (6). Briefly, while Palestra di Botta e Risposta may be presented as a specific format presented by Padua University, which includes two teams of seven students in a diversified eight-stage process oriented for educational growth (Palestra di Botta e Risposta 2026), the Migrant Speech and Debate Tournament aims to bring into debating activities migrant students allowing them to choose the language in which they would like to debate (Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz 2015). Within the two-side approaches, the most prominent format featured in the study selection is the policy debate (n=12; 21 % – 4, 5, 10, 11, 17, 36, 37, 42, 49, 51, 53, 56). Policy debate is a very popular debate format in the USA. It is treated as a co-curricular activity because it complements formal education and addresses educational disparities, by encouraging students to engage in structured, competitive argumentation on social policies (Anderson and Mezuk 2012) and political decision-making (Cridland-Hughes 2012). Policy debate suggests one resolution throughout the year, one affirmative team and one opposing or negative team, two speakers and three interventions per team, and time for cross-examination between interventions (Smelko and Smelko 2013). It is the format used in the Urban Debate

initiatives. Regarding the two-side approaches, two studies featured the World School Style (n=2; 3.6 % – 7, 54) as a counterpoint to the policy debate. More popular internationally, this format suggests one motion for each round, one proposition team, one opposition team, three speakers, three interventions per team and points of information during the unprotected time of the speeches (Quinn 2009).

Complementing the two-side approaches, another set of studies addressed debate formats related to conference simulations (n=11; 20 %), highlighting the MUN–Model United Nations (8, 9, 18, 25, 31, 32, 43, 50), but featuring other suggestions such as the Model Arctic Council (47), Model G20 (27) and a Citizen’s Conference (02). These simulations are gaining momentum with a special mention to MUN (Specia 2023). In the MUN, like in the United Nations, students participate as delegates of a specific country. In this format, debate and argumentation are complemented by negotiation (Genevieve 2015), engaging students in active, creative and collaborative problem-solving experiences (Specia 2023), which allows deepening learning on global issues, global governance (Kensicki et al. 2022) and, by representing a country, developing empathy (Genevieve 2015), overcoming ethnocentrism and valuing different perspectives on the world issues (Coughlin 2013).

Two groups with fewer studies enriched the selection. The first, within the deliberative models of student debate (n=3; 5 %), introduces “argumentation-based science learning” (14), “constructive controversy” (24) and “contestatory deliberation” (20). In these approaches, conflict allows deepening perspectives for later investment in common reconceptualisations or decision-making (Johnson and Johnson 2009). One author wrote: “Whereas the mode of communication is contestatory, the purpose is conciliatory” (Graff 2022, p. 624). The second group of studies brought to the selection the realm of the “Stakeholders debate” (n=2; 4 % – 28, 48), in which students assume specific roles or perspectives, such as interest groups within a community regarding a deliberation on water safety (28), or characters from a play or a book (48).

In synthesis, although the study’s selection is not numerous, it presented a rich diversity that strongly advocates for student debate flexibility, possibilities, and potential. This diversity supports questioning narrow views and hasty judgements on what debate is and its benefits and dangers.

3.3 Research Designs

The rich variety of research designs instils hope regarding the results. After all, like in a puzzle, these approaches

complement each other to allow a more vivid picture of student debate benefits. Table 6 shows that most studies opted for qualitative designs (n=22; 39 %). Results also show an expressive number of quantitative studies (n=15; 27 %), with an important set of longitudinal studies, all related to extracurricular urban debate activities and their benefits. A fair number of studies used a quasi-experimental approach (n=6; 11 %), and fewer studies used a mixed methods approach (n=3; 5 %). Research also presented an important number of theoretical studies (n=8; 14 %) and two meta-analyses (n=2; 4 %), one on critical thinking (3) and the other on constructive controversy (24).

3.4 Student Debate Benefits

The fourth study question (Q4) analyses the outcomes of engaging in student debate activities, projects or initiatives. As Table 7 shows, the studies presented an important array of benefits related to student debate, reinforcing the relevance of debate activities for adolescent students. The benefits are organized into three main groups: (a) benefits for the participant competencies (competencies); (b) benefits related to the mutual beneficial relation and alignment adolescent ↔ context (thriving); (c) benefits for society (societal). Benefits references (n=126) are well distributed by the three groups, although with more references for competencies (n=56; 44 %), followed closely by references for thriving (n=51; 40 %) and by references for societal benefits (n=19; 15 %).

Considering competencies, the largest number of references, actually the largest from all categories, is related to students’ skills. One study from the selection has the suggestive title “My voice matters” (Gorski 2020). Studies confirmed the idea, showing that student debate opportunities develop skills related to “communication, negotiation and conflict management” (n=8 – 2, 8, 18, 27, 34, 47, 50). One study presented evidence that debating, rather than

Table 6: Studies designs.

Categories	n
Qualitative – Case study (5), observation and interviews (5), record and transcription (4), ethnographic study (3), interviews or focus group (3), others (2)	22
Cross-sectional (7) and longitudinal (8)	15
Theoretical	8
Quasi-experimental	6
Meta-analysis	2
Mixed methods	3

n=56.

Table 7: Benefits of student debate in upper secondary education.

Categories	Benefits	Total
Competencies–knowledge	Science, social sciences and language learning (7) Research and writing (5) Human rights, sustainability, health and present-day issues (5)	17
Competencies–skills	Communication, negotiation and conflict management (8), argumentation (7), confidence to speak up (6), critical thinking (5), deliberation and decision-making (4), empathy (2), assertiveness (1) and creative thinking (1),	34
Competencies–attitudes	Pluralism and tolerance (3), democratic values (1), value of diversity (1)	5
Thriving–academic adjustment	Engagement in school (9), success (6), and career orientation (2)	17
Thriving–positive youth development strengths	Positive relations with adults and peers (11) Agency (2), cultural capital (1), self-efficacy (2), identity (1)	17
Thriving–prosocial behaviour	Empowerment, social and civic engagement (11) Political participation and political self-efficacy (5) Ethical and moral thinking (1)	17
Societal–integration	Educational equality (8), prejudice reduction (2), gender equality (1), gender and racial diversity (1)	12
Societal–stereotypes	Gender (4), education inequalities (2), adversarial climate (1)	7

Some of the studies have more than one reference. n=126.

polarization, may foster integrative communication and conflict management (12). Other studies highlighted debating contribution to “Argumentation” skills (n=7 – 2, 13, 16, 28, 45, 54), with one study on socioscientific issues valuing the meeting with experts but also with people experiencing the issue in debate (38), but also “Critical thinking” skills (n=5 – 3, 10, 11, 44, 50), “confidence to speak up” (n=6 – 10, 11, 23, 24, 27, 34), including among more vulnerable inner-city youth (10, 11). Studies also presented evidence regarding “Assertiveness” (n=1 – 54) and that a deliberative approach to science learning fostered “Creative thinking” (n=1 – 14). Regarding “Deliberation and decision-making” skills (n=4), studies valued deliberative approaches (20, 24), simulation (47) and the two sides debate (49). Finally, “Empathy” (n=2) was considered related to MUN participation (25) and two sides debating (13).

Within competencies but considering knowledge, studies brought forward evidence that student debate enhances “Formal knowledge” (n=7 – 2, 7, 28, 34, 38, 46, 48),

“Research and writing” (n=5 – 6, 18, 44, 45, 55) and “Human rights, sustainability, health and present-day issues” (n=4 – 2, 8, 28, 29 e 47). Fewer references were found regarding attitudes (n=5), possibly due to the difficulties in assessment (n=5). Nevertheless, one study showed how student debate promotion in seven recent democracies in Eastern Europe (56) promoted “Democratic values” and “Diversity”, and other studies showed how student debate promoted “Pluralism and tolerance” (16, 21, 25).

Regarding the thriving benefits, the three main categories presented the same number of references (n=17). In the category “Academic adjustment” (n=17), studies highlighted the relation between student debate and “Student engagement in school and learning” (n=9), valuing student debate as an active learning strategy (26), that allows motivation for learning in Science (28, 38), History (1), or English (48), of which the relation between constructive controversy, curiosity and involvement is a good example (24). Studies confirmed this relation for more vulnerable youth (5, 53), with a study highlighting student engagement as a particular feature of upper secondary students debaters (39). Maybe student engagement can explain the debate impact on inner-city, low-income, racial/ethnic minority youth academic “Success” (n=6), visible in higher grades, college readiness and graduation likelihood (4, 5, 36, 37, 41), even accounting for the self-selection effect (51). Two studies valued how participation in debates may offer “Career orientation” (n=2) regarding college options in general (30) and international relations (8) in specific.

Another thriving benefits category is “Positive youth development strength” (n=17). Studies showed how entering debate activities allowed “Positive relations” (n=11), both with adults, such as teachers and coaches, who may offer positive guidance and support (17, 30, 31, 32, 33), but also with peers (18, 24, 27, 29, 32, 34). Other studies focused on more scattered but critical strengths, including identity (17), adolescence’s most important development task (Carvalho and Veiga 2022; Erikson 1968/1994), agency (31, 45), overall self-efficacy (27, 31) and, in the context of extracurricular Urban Debate, cultural capital (31).

Thriving research has a strong focus on adolescents’ contribution to the community. At this level, studies presented evidence of student debate’s impact on adolescents’ prosocial behaviour (n=17) at different levels. At the level of “Empowerment, social and civic engagement” (n=11), studies focused on teachers’ and coaches’ opinions (35, 45, 55), and on both curricular (18, 46, 23) and extracurricular (5, 10, 11, 53) debate activities. One study in seven new democracies from Eastern Europe showed that student debate promoted the democratic competencies of adolescent students (52). At the level of “Political participation and self-efficacy” (n=5),

studies presented evidence on student debate's relevant role (16, 42, 32), including findings from the seven new democracies (52), and evidence on the link between longevity in debating and higher political knowledge and participation (29). However, at the level of "Ethical and moral thinking" (n=1), only one study was found which valued how the debate with students taking both sides of an issue or topic prepares them for real-life social problems (16).

The last group of benefits is societal, with positive and negative outcomes. Regarding positive outcomes, most of the references focused on integration (n=12). Findings showed student debate power to promote "Educational equality" (n=8) for students in the class (26), migrant students (42), girls (6) and inner-city, low-budget schools youth (4, 10, 36, 37, 53). Evidence also valued student debate contribution to "Prejudice reduction" (n=2), raising the hypothesis that debaters may be less prejudiced (40), perhaps because student debate values different perspectives and allows meeting others (56). On "Gender equality", one study showed student debate's relevancy for inner-city girls' academic, personal and social well-being (53), and on "Gender and racial diversity" (n=1), one study showed that unlike in college debate, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity exists in upper secondary debate community (39).

Considering the adverse societal outcomes, bringing forward some unintended effects of student debate settings or activities, the study organized the references around "Stereotypes" (n=7). At the "Gender" level (n=4), studies brought forward how the implicit norms and expectations hinder girls' participation (9, 43, 46), but also situations related to girls' objectification and ill-treatment (42). At the "Educational inequalities" level (n=2), studies focused on the disparity of access to student debate opportunities in general (25) and according to the type of school, highlighting the fewer opportunities for student debate in public schools (22). One study addressed the issue of "Adversarial climate" (n=1), calling attention to the educator's inappropriate pedagogical approach to active methodologies, including debate (15).

3.5 Suggestions for Research and Intervention

The fifth study question (Q5) addresses the studies' main suggestions for research and educational practices. The main results are presented in Table 8.

Thematic suggestions for *Research* featured "New themes" (n=15), included (a) changing attitudes, skills or knowledge like open mind, tolerance, negotiation, communication, time needed for attitude change and civic learning (32), student debate and self-concept (34) or general skills

Table 8: Suggestions for research and intervention.

Research (n=58)	No	Intervention (n=75)	No
New themes	15	Promote debate	23
Deepen findings	10	Tips for using debate	21
Sample (9) & bias issues (8)	17	Directions for students' support	15
Design	6	Environment for student debate	7
Measures	6	Opportunities	6
Variables	4	Educator's skills development	3

Some of the studies have more than one reference.

(29); (b) different approaches, formats and options of student debate (n=5 – 12, 23, 29, 39, 46); (c) differences between student debate in upper secondary education and higher education (n=2 – 34.39); and (d) the role of teachers and coaches (34). Studies also suggested "Deepening findings" (n=10), including differences across students, regions and cultures (32, 40, 46), gender issues (8, 23), debate educational purpose (10, 49), public morality (23), participation projects (29) and prejudice reduction (56). Exploring specific "Variables" (n=4) was also suggested, including demographic and contextual features (29, 37), the level of student debate experience (34) and opting for addressing debating activities' impact on political action instead of just the intentions (29).

At the methodological level, studies suggested larger and more diverse or representative "Samples" (n=9 – 4, 8, 12, 27, 31, 37, 40, 41, 54) and the need to address "Bias" (n=8), such as the heterogeneity of the sample (36, 37) and self-selection effect (4, 5, 29, 34, 41, 51). Suggestions on "Designs" (n=6) focused on investing in longitudinal (27, 29, 45) studies, with higher duration (52), but also in experimental (8) and qualitative explanatory studies (41). Regarding "Measures" (n=6), the suggestions pointed out the need for improved measures (3, 4) and the inclusion of different voices, such as students, teachers, and coaches (23, 33, 34, 45).

Regarding *Intervention*, the largest category was "Promoting debate" (n=23) as an active methodology (18, 27, 45) across the curriculum (2, 3, 10, 18, 29, 37, 55), investing in student debate's inclusivity and participants diversity (3, 15, 18, 23, 25, 29, 29, 32, 42), and pursuing the aim of ethical development (16). Regarding "Tips" for action (n=21), suggestions stressed good practices: (a) invest in the educational purpose (10, 47); (b) value the preparation work (2, 38); (c) value the resolutions or motions, considering students' interests (13, 45); (d) ensure students time for preparation but also reflection and debrief (27, 28, 37, 47); (e) use competition as a pedagogical positive resource (37, 39); and (f) uphold learning and openness over cynicism, proselytism, cleavage or competition (13, 16, 28, 46). In addition, suggestions also focused on ideas for "Support" to students (n=15), starting by supporting all students and not just those who are

already motivated or skilled (13, 15, 31, 42, 45), by inspiring students to excel (15, 37), by helping students to develop their research and argumentation skills (28, 28, 47), their communication skills (3), by finding the right balance between support and students' agency (45), and by providing positive role models for students (42).

Other suggestions focused more on the "Environment" for student debate (n=7), stressing open classroom and horizontal talk students-adults (10, 15), positive student-adult relations (37, 45), and the need to ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive space for expression (10, 15). A few suggestions pointed out "Opportunities" to strengthen student debate (n=6), including switching sides instead of entrenchment in the first or personal position (49), high-school-college cooperation (29, 30), openness to the community (10, 37), and learning outside the classroom and school (29). Finally, suggestions also considered "Educator's skills development", highlighting professional training and coaching (25), mastering student debate options, approaches and formats (1) and valuing innovation (37).

4 Discussion

This study aimed to map research addressing the benefits of student debate in upper secondary education. The results are discussed in three main themes: (a) findings on the research extension, (b) debate flexibility and possibilities beyond first impressions, and (c) benefits.

4.1 Research on Student Debate

Debate is a wide and polysemic field, and student debate is no exception. Therefore, to address student debate, a clear conceptual understanding is necessary to distinguish it from other types of debate and/or critical and performance oracy activities (Newman 2020). For this purpose, this study advanced a conceptual definition of student debate upholding the educational character, the relation with structured or formal debating and four characteristics: (a) one motion, (b) different perspectives and a well-defined structure, (c) preparation regarding attitude and content, and (d) the goal of persuasion valuing both argumentation and delivery. In this study, the definition is validated by both the process, which shows that the definition offered criteria for studies selection, and by the results, which show that the definition allowed a representative selection of studies portraying a significant diversity of approaches.

In total, 56 studies entered the selection. The reduced number of studies, when considering the 25-year span, is

consistent with the scarcity of research on student debate in upper secondary education, as pointed out by other authors (Allen et al. 1999; Anderson and Mezuk 2012; Littlefield 2001; Nick and Cote 2002; Savitz et al. 2021). Results also confirmed the existence of more research in student debates in higher education settings (Littlefield 2001; Nick and Cote 2002; Specia 2023). One feature of the research is the number of studies focusing on USA reality. Probably this is due to the strength of speech and debate in young people's education (Fine 2000; Zorwick and Wade 2016). However, the selection exhibited a growing trend of research regarding the number and the geographical range of studies, with increasing contributions from European countries, including Eastern European countries (Valkering et al. 2018), Asia and one study from Morocco. Findings confirmed that student debate is gaining momentum in education (Bartanen and Littlefield 2014; McIntosh and Milam 2016; Tomohiro and Mezuk 2021).

4.2 More than Meets the Eye

The main feature of the studies selected is diversity regarding settings, concepts, formats and benefits. This result, which other authors underline (Zorwick et al. 2009), shows that there is much more to debate beyond the limited scope of our knowledge and experience, often focused on one specific setting and the mastery of concrete approaches or formats. In other words, there is much to learn. Within this theme, we present three comments.

4.2.1 Unleashing Student Debate Possibilities

The diversity of the studies regarding settings, concepts, formats, and benefits reinforces the need to understand student debate as a flexible educational resource with many rich possibilities for adolescent students' academic adjustment (e.g., Kennedy 2007; Tomohiro and Mezuk 2021) and development (e.g., Fine 2004; Kensicki et al. 2022). Despite this richness, we find criticisms regarding student debate born from hasty generalization (De Conti 2013), transferring to student debate negative features of specific debate experiences or other types of debates (e.g., political debates). Findings showed that student debate is an educational resource used in many settings, from classrooms to extra-curricular activities, clubs and tournaments, with a plethora of approaches—academic, competitive or deliberative -, formats and options (Kennedy 2007).

The selected studies show that student debate transcends reified visions and options. And this is good. After all, debate is the substance of democracy. Can deliberation be achieved without debate? What happens to decisions when

we wave away debate? Pericles says without hesitation: "... the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated." (Thucydides 1972, Book II, Par. 40).

4.2.2 Student Debate and Educational Purpose

Despite the diversity, there is a common feature across the selected studies: recognition that there is more to debating than discussions (De Conti 2014; DiCamillo 2010; Jerome and Algarra 2005; Valkering et al. 2018), thrilling competitions, entertainment, amusing games (DiCamillo 2010; Strait and Wallace 2008), or academic simulation unrelated to life or spheres of deliberation outside school (Mitchell 1998). One study illustrated this idea by showing how a teacher's fun and competitive strategies, although well-intended, sabotaged student debate and blocked learning (DiCamillo 2010). Student debate is not just about games or fun; neither should it yield under winning pressure (Delgado Reverter 2018; Mitchell 1998). One author wrote:

The wins and losses are forgotten with the passage of time. However, the educational values of debate are so fundamental that they eventually become ingrained in the decision-making and thought processes of debaters, giving them a uniquely valuable durability (Harrigan 2008, p. 36)

Therefore, this research upholds that the educational potential of student debate is related to its educational *telos* or purpose (Strait and Wallace 2008). This idea brings the educational purpose, or the *why* of using debate, to the forefront. It is not about choosing and blindly following one format but building opportunities for adolescent students' learning and growth. This understanding should guide debating options and small changes, which, even if we use the same format, will significantly impact students' experience and outcomes (De Conti 2014; Johnson and Johnson 2009). Within this context, competition, conflict, cooperation and deliberation gain new, complementary and innovative possibilities (Johnson and Johnson 2009; Kennedy 2007).

Considering the diversity of possibilities, one question is irresistible for educators: Which format should I use? Findings from this research point out two directions. The first is to choose according to meaningful educational purposes (Delgado Reverter 2018). The second is to value different settings and approaches, thus enriching students' opportunities from more competitive to more deliberative experiences.

4.2.3 The Specific Reality of Upper Secondary Education

In this study, one study showed that upper secondary and college students have different perceptions regarding the benefits of debating (Littlefield 2001). Another study on USA

reality showed that, despite the lack of gender and racial diversity in the higher education debate community, debate in high schools attracted girls and minority students and presented a healthy gender and cultural diversity (Nick and Cote 2002). These studies highlight upper secondary students' differences and the importance of orienting student debate opportunities to adolescents' distinctive learning and developmental challenges (Delgado Reverter 2018). Therefore, student debate in upper secondary education should be valued as a specific field for research and action.

4.3 Ideas Around Benefits

Overall, the selected studies confirmed that debate has important benefits for adolescent students, including formal learning (Savitz et al. 2021), but also more transversal competencies and resources associated with adolescent optimal development (Anderson and Mezuk 2015; Fine 2004; Kensicki et al. 2022). Results are discussed in three comments.

4.3.1 Educational Power of Student Debate

The educational power of debating is visible in the wide range of benefits for adolescent students. One explanation may be that student debate in its nature, is an active learning methodology (Kennedy 2007), where the active is less for activity and more for engaging the whole person in the process of learning – "body, intelligence, sensibility, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility, and spirituality" (Delors 1996). Studies highlighted how student debate deeply connects the cognitive with the more emotional and humane dimensions (Delgado Reverter 2018). After all, beyond content, process matters and teaching methods imprint on students (Abdullah et al. 2021; Johnson and Johnson 2009). This may explain students' perception that debate contributes to meaningful learning and growth. In other words, it supports connecting "the cognitive domain with problem-solving skills, innovation and creativity, and also incorporates the development of social and emotional learning and learning about oneself" (ICFE 2021, p. 66).

A second explanation is that student debate supports adolescents' developmental needs. Considering identity as the main task of adolescence (Carvalho and Veiga 2022; Erikson 1968/1994), one study from the selection suggests that debate may help adolescents reshape childhood identifications into a sound identity, valuable to enter the adult world (Fine 2004). From a different theoretical perspective, evidence from studies suggests debate opportunities potential to nurture Ryan and Deci's (2001) basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence and relatedness—associated

with intrinsic motivation, school engagement and well-being. In addition, studies pointed out how student debate opportunities foster relationships with peers and meaningful adults, which can provide adolescents with positive role models and guidance (Levy 2016).

A third explanation is *the voice and lens* approach. It values how debate empowers adolescents to engage in their contexts and the world by providing them with “an individual voice considered compelling to people in authority but also a lens through which to critique their own society” (Cridland-Hughes 2016, p. 55).

4.3.2 Students Engagement in Building the World

The concept of thriving is well represented by one question: “How do young people flower into the kinds of persons who don’t simply avoid problems and pathologies, but who embrace life and make full use of their special gifts in ways that benefit themselves and others?” (Benson and C. Scales 2009, p. 90). It is a perspective that highlights the mutually influential relationship between adolescent↔context (Benson and C. Scales 2009; Cantor 2021). Findings stressed the impact of debate activities on how students interact with the world (Cridland-Hughes 2012), with two meaningful results.

The first is that student debate, in-class and extracurricular, fosters student engagement in learning and school (Abdullah et al. 2021; Keselman et al. 2012; Nick and Cote 2002; Tomohiro and Mezuk 2021; Winkler et al. 2013). Student engagement is a powerful asset related to many critical indicators regarding adolescents’ school adjustment and well-being (Carvalho and Veiga 2023; Lam et al. 2012). It is possible that debating, by actively involving students but also by promoting positive relations between students and significant adults (teachers or coaches), which is the most definitive variable regarding student engagement in school (Lam et al. 2012; Quin 2017), may enhance students motivation, proximity with subjects and school and therefore, adolescent students’ higher engagement in learning and school.

The second result is the relation between debate opportunities and students’ civic, social and political engagement (Anderson and Mezuk 2015; Genevieve 2015; Jerome and Algarra 2005; Levy 2016; McIntosh and Milam 2016; Valkering et al. 2018; Zorwick and Wade 2016). A group of authors wrote: “The fundamental value of debate is related to the potential for opening the school environment to a dimension that reaches beyond the acquisition of knowledge, supporting students’ development as active members of society” (Savitz et al. 2021, p. 11). Some studies’ findings support this idea by presenting debate as a *pedagogy for democracy* (Jerome and Algarra 2005), which enhances students’ civic, social and political empowerment and

engagement (Levy 2016, 2018), transforms community beliefs and supports a culture of participation and attention to social justice issues (Savitz et al. 2021). Student debate offers a space for adolescents to confidently and critically explore, consider and challenge ideas and concepts with their peers (Stockdale 2020). Maybe debate is a gateway that allows adolescents to enter with others, peers and adults (Stockdale 2020), the adventure of searching for the truth (Fine 2000) and building the world (Jerome and Algarra 2005). For this reason, one manual claims that debate matters because *debate can save the world* (Bell 2020, pp. 21–23).

4.3.3 Debate Benefits for All Students

In the face of educational inequalities, “for all” is the leitmotif of UNESCO’s report (ICFE 2021) and the Science of Learning and Development (Cantor 2021). This tension also emerged in the research stressing the need to promote “all students’ public voice” (Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz 2015; Jerome and Algarra 2005). If student debate offers such relevant benefits, it should be for all. However, two different types of difficulties exist.

At one level, we find some students with opportunities but lacking motivation, skills or facing impairments. At this level, some studies from the selection highlight the role of educators. One study showed how teachers scaffolded in-class debating activities, progressively fostering autonomy as students become more confident regarding the structure and skills (Savitz et al. 2021).

At another level, students lack opportunities or have opportunities for which they feel unqualified. One study from the selection found that, in New York, 82 % of independent schools offered student debate opportunities, and only 24.31 % of the public schools did it (Jacques et al. 2022). Another study in Morocco confirmed the inequality regarding accessing participation in MUN simulations (Kapakian 2023). Authors suggest a *civic empowerment gap* between families with more and fewer resources (Levy 2018). In this context, the Urban Debate movement is inspirational. Studies have shown how student debate addresses educational inequalities (Anderson and Mezuk 2012) by allowing (a) rigorous academic opportunities, (b) time engaged with relevant educational material, and (c) positive mentorship of adults and peers references (Mezuk et al. 2011). In addition, by allowing the encounter of different students and voices, debate supports the reduction of social, economic and cultural divisions (Zorwick et al. 2009). Another inspirational project is the Migrant Education Speech and Debate Tournament. This project allows students to select the language of the debates when they begin, offering support to enhance bilingual debates (Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz 2015).

In synthesis, considering that different formats presented different benefits (Allen et al. 1999; Krpanec and Huić 2023), one question arises: What formats are more promising for adolescent students? It is a question for future studies. Nevertheless, from the set of studies, some ideas may further the use of debating. Studies presented different suggestions for research and action that may improve student debate opportunities.

4.4 Suggestions to Make the Change

One transversal suggestion is the challenge of investing in more debating opportunities in upper secondary education. Studies from the selection offered some tips and directions to boost the impact of students' debating experiences. Among different suggestions, one tip is to focus on student participation, learning and growth versus cynicism, proselytism, cleavage or competition (Fine 2000; Simonneaux et al. 2013). Another cut-edging tip focused on a key feature of all active methodologies if they are to have positive educational outcomes: to create space and time for debriefing and reflection after the debate (Specá 2023). Findings showed that educators are critical in meaningful and positive student debate opportunities. Therefore, educators' motivation and training regarding using debating activities also becomes critical (Abdullah et al. 2021; Kalpakian 2023).

4.5 Implications and Limitations

The present study fills a gap in scholarly research and literature by presenting a comprehensive, rigorous and sound overview of the research from the last 25 years, focusing on student debate in upper secondary education. Two implications derive from this task. The first is a conceptual approach to student debate, grounded on structured debate complemented with four ingredients. The second implication is evidence of student debate's potential to enhance adolescent learning, engagement and development.

At the research level, findings may motivate and support new research on student debate deepening: (a) new or existing initiatives in different settings; (b) mapping the multiple approaches or formats, their features and potential; (c) the relation between debating activities and specific education and development outcomes; and (d) educators engagement in fostering student debate opportunities. Future studies could replicate this research on younger and higher education student debate.

At the intervention level, findings may motivate decision-makers and educators to value and promote

opportunities for debate in formal and non-formal education settings. These findings are also a powerful stimulus for teachers to invest in debate activities. Student debate can be a great doorway to innovation in learning and teaching (Savitz et al. 2021) and, therefore, to renew education. Joint efforts of researchers and educators should invest in building new perspectives to promote debate throughout schooling.

Several limitations must be considered. First, despite comprehensiveness, the selection is not exhaustive. New studies should complement the database search by checking the reference lists (Horsley et al. 2011) or including grey literature (Paez 2017). A second limitation is the exclusionary character of some research options, like the language and the database selection, which hindered the inclusion of studies and authors from different regions and countries. New studies should focus on other, more regional databases, such as Scielo (SciELO 2020) or Asia-Studies Full-Text Online (International Information Services 2024).

5 Conclusions

Debate pedagogy as practised in this community treats youths as agents of change by encouraging critical engagement. (Cridland-Hughes 2012, p. 202)

Why should we expect someone who was taught to learn what others decided, without questioning, to comply quietly, to be silent, to expect reward by repeating and behaving according to outer expectations, to be engaged in learning, school and society? The point is that in education, the process matters. The process is a vital dimension of the lesson that each student takes home every day. Therefore, research in active methodologies in general, and debate in particular, is critical regarding adolescent students' motivation, autonomous learning and thinking, positive relations, and responsible and active engagement in building our common future together.

The present work *stirs the waters* of student debate. Firstly, it bridges the gap in the literature on student debate in upper secondary education by offering a broad perspective of the research. Secondly, it proposes a definition of student debate that is both (a) concise, valuing the focus and delimitation needed for research, and (b) comprehensive, valuing the ability to address different settings, approaches and formats. This definition was validated by the study's findings. This definition was validated by the study's findings. Thirdly, based on this definition, the study presents a sound, rigorous and comprehensive literature review mapping the features of student debate and its benefits.

Diversity is, perhaps, the most important feature of the selected studies. It suggests that student debate is more *than meets the eye*; it is a flexible educational resource with many possibilities across settings, approaches, and formats. For this reason, several authors highlighted the need to nurture student debate opportunities across the curriculum, bridging formal and non-formal settings and valuing the experience of debating using different formats and options.

Evidence presented a wide range of benefits of student debate for adolescent upper secondary students' transversal competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and thriving resources (engagement in school, society and psychosocial strengths). Finally, some studies also presented societal benefits. These results underlined student debate power towards learning, but also towards adolescent students engagement, development and well-being.

Finally, research opened two avenues for research and action on adolescent student debate. The first is to invest in a specific approach for student debate in upper secondary education, distinct from student debate in higher education and more focused on adolescent students' specific development, tasks, and challenges. The second avenue, aligned with adolescents' right to quality education, is investing in more inclusive student debate opportunities. It is an avenue that demands investing in educators' motivation, confidence, training, and resources to promote student debate educationally.

Supplementary Information

The online version contains supplementary material.

- (a) Appendix 1: Scoping Review Protocol
- (b) Appendix 2: Summary of the reviewed studies

Acknowledgments: The authors thank the researchers from Instituto Alberto Magno's research seminar for their kind support, thorough review of the study, and important suggestions for improvement.

Research ethics: Not applicable.

Informed consent: Not applicable.

Author contributions: NAC and RQM worked on the protocol and methodological design of the review. NAC conducted the research, analysed the studies, and presented the initial text for the results and their discussion. RQM oversaw the conceptualisation, research, and analysis of the studies. Both authors wrote, read and approved the final manuscript.

Use of Large Language Models, AI and Machine Learning Tools: None declared.

Conflict of interest: The authors state no conflict of interest.

Research funding: This work was supported by the Porticus, within the project Debating Skills (2022–2025), promoted by CEPCEP Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa, Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Data availability: The authors confirm that all data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article or in its supplementary information.

References

- Abdullah, A., Komara, E., and Alim, A. (2021). The influence debate model on students' learning motivation in history subjects. *Cypriot J. Edu. Sci.* 16: 1836–1857.
- AEEP. (2023). + *Debate AEEP*. AEEP – Associação de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Particular e Cooperativo, <http://www.aeep.pt/page.aspx>.
- Albe, V. and Gombert, M.-J. (2012). Students' communication, argumentation and knowledge in a citizens' conference on global warming. *Cult. Stud. Sci. Educ.* 7: 659–681.
- Alfvén, T., Dahlstrand, J., Humphreys, D., Helldén, D., Hammarstrand, S., Hollander, A.-C., Målvist, M., Nejat, S., Jørgensen, P.S., Friberg, P., et al. (2019). Placing children and adolescents at the centre of the sustainable development goals will deliver for current and future generations. *Glob. Health Action* 12: 1670015.
- Allen, M., Berkowitz, S., Hunt, S., and Loudon, A. (1999). A meta-analysis of the impact of forensics and communication education on critical thinking. *Commun. Educ.* 48: 18–30.
- American Debate League. (2021). *Benefits of debate*. American Debate League, <https://www.americandebateleague.org/benefits-of-debate.html>.
- Anderson, S. and Mezuk, B. (2012). Participating in a policy debate program and academic achievement among at-risk adolescents in an urban public school district: 1997–2007. *J. Adolesc.* 35: 1225–1235.
- Anderson, S. and Mezuk, B. (2015). Positive youth development and participation in an urban debate league: results from Chicago public schools, 1997–2007. *The J. Negro Educ.* 84: 362.
- Antilla-Garza, J. and Cook-Gumperz, J. (2015). Debating the world – choosing the word: high school debates as academic discourse preparation for bilingual students. *Ling. Educ.* 31: 276–285.
- APA. (2023). *Thesaurus of psychological index terms*. American Psychological Association, <https://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/training/thesaurus>.
- Atchison, J. (2017). *The art of debate: course guidebook*. Great Courses, Wake Forest University, Virginia.
- Barnard, R.H. (1937). The evils of high school debating. *The Clear. House* 12: 211–213.
- Bartanen, M.D. and Littlefield, R.S. (2014). An introduction to the study of American forensics in the twentieth century. In: *Forensics in America: a history*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, pp. 1–25.
- Bell, J. (2020). *The debating book: everything you ever need to know about debating*. Debating for Everyone.
- Benson, P.L. (2007). *Developmental assets: an overview of theory, research, and practice. Em approaches to positive youth development*. SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 33–58. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446213803.n2>.
- Benson, P.L. and C Scales, P. (2009). The definition and preliminary measurement of thriving in adolescence. *The J. Posit. Psychol.* 4: 85–104.

- Bonnie, R.J. and Backes, E.P. (Eds.) (2019). *The promise of adolescence: realizing opportunity for all youth*. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine – National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., p. 25388.
- Broda-Bahm, K.T., Kempf, D., and Driscoll, W.J. (2004). *Argument and audience: presenting debates in public settings*. International Debate Education Association (IDEA), New York.
- Cadime, I., Pinto, A.M., Lima, S., Rego, S., Pereira, J., and Ribeiro, I. (2016). Well-being and academic achievement in secondary school pupils: the unique effects of burnout and engagement. *J. Adolesc.* 53: 169–179.
- Cantor, P. (2021). All children thriving: a new purpose for education. *Educator* 45: 14–48.
- Carvalho, N.A.de. (2019). Formação Humana no Currículo: um programa para fazer à medida [Human development in the curriculum a program to customize]. *Sisyphus – J. Educ.*, 7, Artigo 2.
- Carvalho, N.A.de and Veiga, F.H. (2022). Psychosocial development research in adolescence: a scoping review. *Trends in Psychol.* 30: 640–669.
- Carvalho, N.A.de and Veiga, F.H. (2023). Studies on student engagement in adolescence: a scoping review. *Psicologia* 37: 62–79.
- Carvalho, N.A.de and Veiga, F.H. (2025). Education through human rights lens: psychosocial development and student engagement in school. *Revista Contexto & Educação* 40: e15638.
- CEPCEP. (2023). *Debating skills: strengthening democracy and citizenship in Europe*, <https://www.debatingkills.eu/>.
- Chankova, Y. and Spasov, K. (2023). On the use of focussing constructions by Bulgarian students of English. *Chuzhdoezikovo Ob.-Foreign Lang. Teach.* 50: 231–243.
- Colquhoun, H.L., Levac, D., O'Brien, K.K., Straus, S., Tricco, A.C., Perrier, L., Kastner, M., and Moher, D. (2014). Scoping reviews: time for clarity in definition, methods, and reporting. *J. Clin. Epidemiol.* 67: 1291–1294.
- Coticchia, F., Calossi, E., and Cicchi, L. (2020). A reality check for students? How participating to the model United Nations influences skills, IR perceptions, and perspectives on future career. *Politics* 40: 245–261.
- Coughlin, R.W. (2013). Gender and negotiation in model UN role-playing simulations. *J. Polit. Sci. Educ.* 9: 320–335.
- Cridland-Hughes, S. (2016). The Atlanta urban debate league: exploring the making of a critical literacy space. *Am. Educ. Hist. J.* 43: 41–57.
- Cridland-Hughes, S. (2012). Literacy as social action in city debate. *J. Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 56: 194–202.
- De Conti, M. (2013). Debate as an educational tool: is polarization a debate side effect? Em Gabrijela Kišiček. In: Žagar, Igor Ž. (Ed.). *What do we know about the world? Rhetorical and argumentative perspectives*. Centre for Research in Reasoning, Argumentation and Rhetoric (CRRAR): Windsor Studies in Argumentation, Ontario, Canada, pp. 275–300.
- De Conti, M. (2014). The impact of competitive debate on managing the conflict communication strategies of Italian students. *Argum. Advocacy* 51: 123–131.
- Delgado Reverter, L. (2018). El debate académico como instrumento educativo en la enseñanza secundaria. *Publicaciones* 48: 113–125.
- Delors, J. (Ed.) (1996). *Learning, the treasure within: report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the twenty-first century*. Unesco, Paris.
- Demir, B.K. and Isleyen, T. (2015). The effects of argumentation based science learning approach on creative thinking skills of students. *Educ. Res. Q.* 39: 49–82.
- DiCamillo, L. (2010). «Fun» pedagogy curtails intellectual rigor in a U.S. history class. *J. Soc. Studies Res.* 34: 175–207.
- ECNAIS. (2023). *Debate*. ECNAIS – European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools, <http://www.ecnais.org/page.aspx>.
- EPIS. (2024). *EPIS – Associação Empresários pela Inclusão: Homepage [EPIS Association—Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion: Homepage]*, <https://www.epis.pt/homepage>.
- Erikson, E.H. (1994). *Identity, youth and crisis*. Norton, (Trabalho original publicado 1968).
- ESU. (2023). *English-speaking union*, <https://www.esu.org/>.
- Fine, G.A. (2000). Games and truths: learning to construct social problems in high school debate. *The Socio. Q.* 41: 103–123.
- Fine, G.A. (2004). Adolescence as cultural toolkit: high school debate and the repertoires of childhood and adulthood. *The Socio. Q.* 45: 1–20.
- Genevieve, H. (2015). Developing human rights and political understanding through the model United Nations program: a case study of an international school in Asia. *Ethos* 23: 9–14.
- Gorski, K.J. (2020). “My voice matters”: high school debaters’ acquisition of dominant and adaptive cultural capital. *Am. J. Educ.* 126: 293–321.
- Graff, J. (2022). Debating as a deliberative instrument in educational practice. *Stud. Philos. Educ.* 41: 613–633.
- Gregory, J.R. (1938). High-school debating is worthwhile: an answer to «the evils of high school debating». *The Clear. House* 13: 235–237.
- Harrigan, C. (2008). Against dogmatism: a continued defense of switch side debate. *Contemp. Argum. Debate* 29: 37–66.
- Horsley, T., Dingwall, O., and Sampson, M. (2011). Checking reference lists to find additional studies for systematic reviews. *Cochrane Database of Syst. Rev.* 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.MR000026.pub2>.
- ICFE (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*. UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris.
- IDEA. (2023). *International debate education association (IDEA)*, <https://idebate.net/>.
- Inchley, J., Currie, D., Budisavljevic, S., Torsheim, T., Jåstad, A., Cosma, A., Kelly, C., and Arnarsson, Á.M. (2020). *Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 health behaviour in school-aged children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. International report. Volume 1. Key findings*. WHO Regional Office for Europe, <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/332091>.
- International Information Services. (2024). *Asia-studies full-text online*, <http://www.asia-studies.com/index.html>.
- Jacques, E.T., Basch, C.H., Fera, J., and Basch, C.E. (2022). Debate in public versus independent secondary schools in New York city: post-COVID-19 health literacy and equal access to basic educational opportunities. *J. Community Health* 47: 745–749.
- Jerome, L. and Algarra, B. (2005). Debating debating: a reflection on the place of debate within secondary schools. *The Curric. J.* 16: 493–508.
- Johnson, D.W. and Johnson, R.T. (2009). Energizing learning: the instructional power of conflict. *Educ. Res.* 38: 37–51.
- Kalpakistan, J.V. (2023). Towards evaluating the model United Nations as teaching tool in Morocco. *J. Int. Soc. Studies* 13: 61–69.
- Kennedy, R. (2007). In-Class debates: fertile ground for active learning and the cultivation of critical thinking and oral communication skills. *Int. J. Teach. Learn. Higher Educ.* 19: 183–190.
- Kensicki, A.E., Harlow, J., Akhilandeswari, J., Peacock, S., Cohen, J., Weissman, R., and Gordon, E. (2022). Exploring the impacts of educational simulations on the development of 21st century skills and sense of self-efficacy. *J. Polit. Sci. Educ.* 18: 635–651.
- Keselman, A., Levin, D.M., Hundal, S., Kramer, J.F., Matzkin, K., and Dutcher, G. (2012). Teaching environmental health science for informed citizenship in the science classroom and afterschool clubs. *The Int. J. Sci. Soc.* 3: 31–44.

- Khodaghali, F., Mousavi, M.A., Ghaedi, Y., Salarvandian, S., Vosoughian, F., Javadi, M., Khodaghali, F., Khalifeh, S., Karimi, R., Seddighfar, M., et al. (2025). Looking at philosophy for children and its outcomes through a neuroscience lens. *Basic and Clin. Neurosci. J.* 16: 551–568.
- Kizel, A. (2016). Philosophy with children as an educational platform for self-determined learning. *Cogent Educ.* 3: 1244026.
- Krpanec, E. and Huić, A. (2023). Can high school competitive debating facilitate political participation? The role of political knowledge and identification with a politically active group. *Argum. Advocacy* 60: 1–17.
- Lam, S., Wong, B.P.H., Yang, H., and Liu, Y. (2012). Understanding student engagement with a contextual model. In: Christenson, S.L., Reschly, A.L., and Wylie, C. (Eds.). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. Springer US, New York, NY, pp. 403–419.
- Lavelle, K. and Hamburger, B.A. (2009). Where did all the debaters go? Strategies for developing relationships between high school and college programs. *Contemp. Argum. Debate* 30: 94–113.
- Levac, D., Colquhoun, H., and O'Brien, K.K. (2010). Scoping studies: advancing the methodology. *Impl. Sci.* 5: 69.
- Levy, B.L.M. (2016). Advising a model United Nations club: a scaffolded youth-adult partnership to foster active participation and political engagement. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* 59: 13–27.
- Levy, B.L.M. (2018). Youth developing political efficacy through social learning experiences: becoming active participants in a supportive model United Nations club. *Theor. Res. Soc. Educ.* 46: 410–448.
- Littlefield, R.S. (2001). High school student perceptions of the efficacy of debate participation. *Argum. Advocacy* 38: 83–97.
- Littlefield, R.S. and Venette, S.J. (2004). Perceptions of high school opinion leaders about the role of college debaters in the high school debate community. *Argum. Advocacy* 40: 259–266.
- McIntosh, J. and Milam, M. (2016). Competitive debate as competency-based learning: civic engagement and next-generation assessment in the era of the common core learning standards. *Commun. Educ.* 65: 420–433.
- Mezuk, B. (2009). Urban debate and high school educational outcomes for African American males: the case of the Chicago debate league. *The J. Negro Educ.* 78: 290–304.
- Mezuk, B., Bondarenko, I., Smith, S., and Tucker, E. (2011). Impact of participating in a policy debate program on academic achievement: evidence from the Chicago Urban Debate League. *Educ. Res. Rev.* 6: 622–635.
- Mitchell, G.R. (1998). Pedagogical possibilities for argumentative agency in academic debate. *Argum. Advocacy* 35: 41–60.
- Molinatti, G., Girault, Y., and Hammond, C. (2010). High school students debate the use of embryonic stem cells: the influence of context on decision-making. *Int. J. Sci. Educ.* 32: 2235–2251.
- Newman, D. (2020). *The noisy classroom: developing debate and critical oracy in schools*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, Oxon; New York, NY.
- Nick, M. and Cote, R. (2002). Does college debate inherit a lack of diversity from high school debate? *Contemp. Argum. Debate* 23: 28–44.
- Osborne, D. and Wagner, W.E. (2007). Exploring the relationship between homophobia and participation in core sports among high school students. *Sociol. Perspect.* 50: 597–613.
- Paez, A. (2017). Gray literature: an important resource in systematic reviews. *J. Evid.-Based Med.* 10: 233–240.
- Palestra di Botta e Risposta. (2026). *La Scuola di Dibattito*, <https://bottaerisposta.org/>.
- Patten, J.N. and Chapman, S.J. (2021). Passport to the future: boosting academic outcomes and citizenship through urban debate. *Citiz., Soc. Econ. Educ.* 20: 17–36.
- Patton, G.C., Sawyer, S.M., Santelli, J.S., Ross, D.A., Afifi, R., Allen, N.B., Arora, M., Azzopardi, P., Baldwin, W., Bonell, C., et al. (2016). Our future: a lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *The Lancet* 387: 2423–2478.
- Pham, M.T., Rajić, A., Greig, J.D., Sargeant, J.M., Papadopoulos, A., and McEwen, S.A. (2014). A scoping review of scoping reviews: advancing the approach and enhancing the consistency. *Res. Synth. Methods* 5: 371–385.
- Programa Escolhas. (2024). Escolhas em Debate | Facebook [Facebook]. Programa Escolhas, https://www.facebook.com/programa.escolhas.3/posts/pfbid034fSnhLrsHFK61LcoiV6CuYZGSjqpQkwh5YzyCFRUJlVQ7qmvdBpr1MtGvye7s5dpl?locale=pt_PT.
- Quin, D. (2017). Longitudinal and contextual associations between teacher–student relationships and student engagement: a systematic review. *Rev. Educational Res.* 87: 345–387.
- Quinn, S. (2009). *Debating in the world schools style: a guide*. International Debate Education Association, https://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/quinn_DEBATING.pdf.
- Robertson, S., Zuniga, P., Christenson, H., and Young, J. (2022). Gender dynamics in high school policy debate: propagating gender hierarchies in advocating ‘better’ futures. *Gender and Educ.* 34: 1025–1040.
- Rosenthal, C.S., Jones, J., and Rosenthal, J.A. (2003). Gendered discourse in the political behavior of adolescents. *Polit. Res. Q.* 56: 97–104.
- Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: a review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 52: 141–166.
- Sanonguthai, S. (2011). Teaching IELTS writing module through English debate: a case study in Thailand. *Lang. Test. Asia* 1: 39–99.
- Savitz, R.S., Cridland-Hughes, S., and Gazioglu, M. (2021). Debate as a tool to develop disciplinary practices and student agency. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* 102: 103341.
- SciELO. (2020). *SciELO.org*. SciELO – Scientific Electronic Library Online, <https://scielo.org/>.
- Shuster, K. and Meany, J. (2015). Speak up! Debate and public speaking in high school. International Debate Education Association, New York.
- Simonneaux, L., Panissal, N., and Brossais, E. (2013). Students’ perception of risk about nanotechnology after an SAQ teaching strategy. *Int. J. Sci. Educ.* 35: 2376–2406.
- Smelko, B. and Smelko, W. (2013). Everything you need to know about policy debate: you learned here. National Speech & Debate Association, Wisconsin.
- Specia, A. (2023). Model arctic council for sustainable development. *Polar Geogr.* 46: 41–61.
- Stockdale, F. (2020). Finding voice: debating in secondary school English. *Chang. Engl.* 27: 285–294.
- Strait, L.P. and Wallace, B. (2008). Academic debate as a decision-making game: inculcating the virtue of practical wisdom. *Contemp. Argum. Debate* 29: 1–36.
- Sumarmi, S.A.K. (2020). Model united nations (MUN): learning method to enhance critical thinking skill and communication skill for high school students. *J. Educ. Learn. (EduLearn)* 14: 495–501.
- Teodorescu, T. (2006). Competence versus competency: what is the difference? *Perform. Improv.* 45: 27–30.
- Thucydides (1972). History of the Peloponnesian war. In: Finley, M.I. and Warner, R. (Eds.), Trad.; Rev. ed Penguin Books, Whitehouse Road.
- Tomohiro, M.K. and Mezuk, B. (2021). Debate participation and academic achievement among high school students in the Houston independent school district: 2012 – 2015. *Educ. Res. Rev.* 16: 219–225.

- Tricco, A.C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K.K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M.D.J., Horsley, T., Weeks, L., et al (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): checklist and explanation. *Ann. Intern. Med.* 169: 467.
- Trickey, S. and Topping, K.J. (2004). Philosophy for children': a systematic review. *Res. Pap. Educ.* 19: 365–380.
- UN. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (general assembly resolution 217 A). General assembly of the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>.
- UN. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by general assembly resolution 44/25). General assembly of the United Nations, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>.
- UNICEF (2018). *UNICEF programme guidance for the second decade: programming with and for adolescents*. UNICEF, New York.
- US Department of Education. (2023). *ERIC thesaurus*. ERIC – Institution of Educational Sciences, <https://eric.ed.gov/?ti=all>.
- Valkering, A., Nemčok, M., Matu, G., and Spáč, P. (2018). It's more than just debating: the political participation and democratic attitudes of debate programme participants in seven "new" democracies. *Sociální studia / Soc. Studies* 15: 35–54.
- WHO. (2023). *Global accelerated action for the health of adolescents (AA-HA!): guidance to support country implementation*, 2nd ed. World Health Organization, <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/255415>.
- Widlund, A., Tuominen, H., and Korhonen, J. (2021). Development of school engagement and burnout across lower and upper secondary education: trajectory profiles and educational outcomes. *Contemp. Educ. Psychol.* 66: 101997.
- Winkler, C.K., Fortner, C.K., and Baugh-Harris, S. (2013). Overcoming educational challenges to women living in at-risk communities through urban debate. *Forum on Publ. Pol. Online* 2013: 1–22.
- Wong, S.-C. (2020). Competency definitions, development and assessment: a brief review. *Int. J. Academic Res. Prog. Educ. Dev.* 9: 95–114.
- Yacek, D. and Jonas, M. (2025). Rethinking the route to flourishing: education, epiphany, and a life worth living. *Revista Española de Pedagogía* 83: 533–546.
- Yuyun, I. (2014). A study of assertiveness in a debate setting. *Indonesian J. Appl. Ling.* 3: 140.
- Zorwick, L.W. and Wade, J.M. (2016). Enhancing civic education through the use of assigned advocacy, argumentation, and debate across the curriculum. *Commun. Educ.* 65: 434–444.
- Zorwick, L.W., Wade, M.M., and Heilmayr, D.P. (2009). Urban debate and prejudice reduction: the contact hypothesis in action. *Contemp. Argum. Debate* 30: 30–51.

Supplementary Material: This article contains supplementary material (<https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2025-0148>).