Centre for Research in Inclusion

9: Autumn 2020

PICTURED ABOVE: TRAINING CHILDREN TO BECOME RESEARCHERS

About us

The Centre for Research in Inclusion (CRI) in the Education School at the University of Southampton is committed to internationally significant research towards the inclusion of children, adults, families, and practitioners in education. We work with a strong network of collaborators in research that addresses inclusion and engages with the needs of participants and research users. CRI is unusual in working with teachers, young people, disabled and other marginalised groups to carry out the research. See our Centre for Research in Inclusion video [https://tinyurl.com/yc28fpur].

CRI News

CRI welcomes Visiting Researcher Dr Jill Goodwin 2020-2022. Jill has recently completed a PhD at University of Winchester on *Sharing an aesthetic space of refuge in a school for pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities*. She is currently also Researcher in Residence with Oily Cart theatre company. She brings a passion for exploring how art installations and other aesthetic and creative experiences can foster inclusion.

Golden Tent art installation – a place to simply 'be'.

Grant success

Professor Melanie Nind has ESRC-funding for additional work with the National Centre for Research Methods. The project, Changing Research Practice: Undertaking social science research in the context of Covid-19 is looking at how researchers are adapting their methods in light of the public health mandates, limitations on contact and access, and disruption to people's lives that has come with the pandemic. This involves a rapid evidence review and a series of knowledge exchange workshops to engage the research community in finding ways to keep social science research going.

Professor Sarah Parsons has won further funding for impact as co-Investigator on an innovative project funded by the University of Southampton's ESRC impact acceleration account and led by Dr

Hanna Kovshoff in Psychology. 'The Secondary Spy – Creating comic books in collaboration with autistic students to support the transition from primary to secondary school' is a project of the Autism Community Research Network (ACoRNS) designed to enhance the well-being and resilience of autistic children, families and schools in their educational transitions through co-creating with community partners 4 short comics based on research of children's transition experiences. The project is a partnership with staff and students from New Forest School, and Sam Davies, a graphic novelist.

ACoRNS webinar

The Autism Community Research Network @Southampton (ACoRNS) is holding another Festival of Social Science event this year. The webinar, chaired by Professor Sarah Parsons takes place on 13 November and is open for you to register here. It will be a chance hear about the important research done with Digital Stories during lockdown to support the assessments of children for their Education, Health and Care Plans and the transitions of older students with complex needs beyond school.

New papers from CRI – Research synopses

In addition to sharing links to new open access free to view papers by members of CRI, we include accessible abstracts (synopses) of other recent papers. Please get in touch with the authors if you would like the full paper. The first is a paper from a former (prize-winning!) BSc student in the Education School.

Amber Warren, Kate Buckingham & Sarah Parsons (2020) Everyday experiences of inclusion in Primary resourced provision: the voices of autistic pupils and their teachers, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, DOI: 10.1080/08856257.2020.1823166

Resourced provision is an important model for inclusive education, one that could be argued to provide the 'best of both worlds' of special and mainstream provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs. Typically, resourced provision means that pupils split their time between specialist and mainstream classes, gaining balanced support that is highly valued by parents. However, there is little research about resourced provision from the perspectives of the pupils.

The paper reports on a small-scale study that explored how children and teachers experience resourced provision and manage the daily transitions between activities and classes. A qualitative visual storyboard methodology was co-created between the researchers and school staff. This was used to explore what five 9 to 11-year-old pupils on the autism spectrum thought about their everyday experiences, including transitions between special and mainstream classes. Six staff members from the resource base were also interviewed. The storyboard method was found to be a simple and adaptable approach that can enable children to share their views in research and practice.

The findings showed the importance of friendship and peers; where and how support was provided; tensions between structured and unstructured periods; and student/school identity. Encouragingly, the school has implemented changes to how daily transitions are supported in response to pupils' views, with positive impacts on practice.

Marta Cristina Azaola (2020) Support from extended family in higher education: a narrative literature review, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44:8, 1065-1079, DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2019.1648775

Situated in an international context, this literature review provides a map of research on the support of extended family members to university students. It aims to link research to university practitioners and policy makers as a way to promote diversity. The argument is that by facilitating students' support networks, more effective diversity policies can be implemented at the institutional level.

In this review, twenty-two articles were selected, classified, synthesised and analysed by the author. The paper discusses the role of extended families in relation to four sub-groups of university students: traditional; non-traditional; international and dropouts. Employing the concepts of extended family, funds of knowledge and social support, the review identifies social support that achieves positive outcomes and support in which outcomes are less effective. Examples of positive outcomes include family support that enhances students' learning, helps students with university search, the application process and university course choices. Examples of less positive outcomes include family members impeding access to education, interfering with or discouraging certain career choices and failing to act against social discrimination.

Findings show that, in the majority of cases, less positive outcomes are mainly associated with low socioeconomic background and families' lack of proximity and understanding of university life. We also found that social support varies according to place and ethnicity and across the four sub-groups of university students. Implications for future research include taking into account both positive and negative effects social support and incorporating experiences from both receivers and givers of social support. In relation to the promotion of diversity, policies on access and inclusion in higher education should be established from a non-deficit approach that welcomes students' diverse support networks outside university.

Melanie Nind , Andy Coverdale & Abigail Croydon (2020) Learning from each other in the context of personalisation and self-build social care, *Disability & Society*, DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2020.1812378

This research looked at the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities (known as learning disabilities in the UK), focusing on how they and their friends and family respond to policy change bringing in more personalisation and individual choice. UK policy for adults with learning disabilities no longer supports state-provided, building-based day care like day centres. Instead it promotes personalised care and support under individuals' control with choice of community-based opportunities. The research explored experiences of this new terrain and this paper addresses the informal learning involved. This is important as learning outside schools/colleges gets little research attention.

The study began with a scoping review, followed by interviews with key service providers in one urban and one rural area in England and one of each in Scotland. Next, ethnographic fieldwork with people with intellectual disabilities was conducted. This involved a flexible mix of observations, interviews, focus groups, and participant-generated visual data. Thematic analysis involved an iterative mix of deductive and inductive coding. Often people with learning disabilities and those supporting them don't recognise their everyday learning, so evidence of the learning going on had to be teased out from the people and the data.

Findings showed informal peer learning ranged from ad hoc to structurally supported. Staff and volunteers were helping people to learn from each other in organisations, and this could evolve into more formal peer learning, peer mentoring and peer support programmes. Though learning was often tacit, support was valued and agency developed. The availability of local supportive people and schemes and time spent in them to develop new skills and identities was vital to people self-building community lives. In particular, advocacy groups were found to create a sense of belonging and shared purpose, encouraging peer learning through the sharing of knowledge, experiences and problem solving. However, when new projects start up, or traditional day services change, the staff or volunteers may not involve people with intellectual disabilities in the planning. This means people with intellectual disabilities miss opportunities to learn.

Co-production in action

Regular readers of the CRI newsletter will know that researchers in the Centre for Research in Inclusion largely prefer to do their research *with* the people it is about rather than *on* them. This means that research projects are often planned together (with pupils/teachers/marginalised or disabled people), carried out in partnership, and disseminated together. In addition to academic papers, our research often culminates in things that are useful on the ground, resource packs, toolkits, and so on. For these to be relevant and useable, the people they are for and about need to be involved in their production; this is co-production.

One project, in collaboration with People First Dorset, which has co-production at its heart is *Co-designing activities and resources for enhanced accessibility and impact*. This started in the Spring and ends this Autumn (yes through all the challenges of lockdown!). The project, led by Professor Melanie

Nind, with Dr Andrew Power and Dr Andy Coverdale, was funded by a University ESRC Impact Acceleration Award. The aim was to co-design activities and resources that would enhance the accessibility and impact of the recently completed study about people with learning disabilities self-building their lives without building-based, state-provided day care. (See http://selfbuildingourlives.org/) In keeping with the spirit of the Southampton Platform for Inclusive Research and Ideas Together (SPIRIT!) we wanted to involve local people with learning disabilities and their allies, who had advised on the research, in co-designing and road-testing stages activities and resources for making sure the findings from the research became useful and used by individuals and communities. This dialogue and partnership was important for the process and product to be impactful.
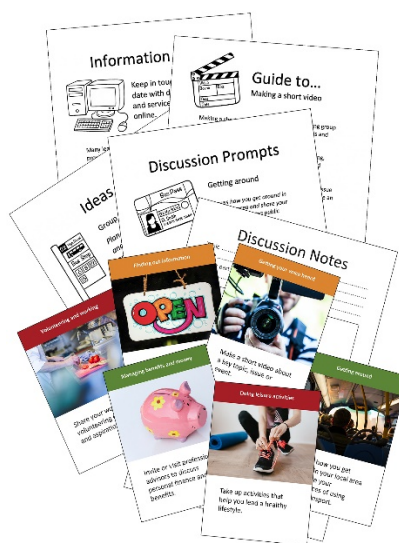
Co-designed resource packs from project in collaboration with People First Dorset.

While we had imagined a series of convivial and creative workshops in the PFD premises, fuelled by tea and biscuits, the global pandemic meant that all our partnership work has happened at a distance. We all worked hard to find the best way to communicate and work together online. We started by recruiting several key members of PFD as co-designers and it was important that we used WhatsApp messaging initially, as this was the technology that they were

familiar with using at PFD. But after doing a few test video-calls they were excited to get introduced to Zoom for our online workshops, and we created an Easy Read guide for them to get started. We ran a series of the online workshops to generate ideas and discuss content and design options. We provided Easy Read summaries of each workshop and work in progress by e-mail and post (the members commented how much they valued getting physical copies) and we continued to use WhatsApp to keep in touch and share updates. Working in groups and individually with staff support, the co-designers and other PFD members tested a range of prototype resources and activities and provided feedback to inform final designs. They have also helped us identify other organisations to send our finished resource packs to.

Open access papers

Parsons, S., Ivil, K., Kovshoff, H. & Karakosta, E. (2020) 'Seeing is believing': exploring the perspectives of young autistic children through Digital Stories. *Journal of Early Childhood Research.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X20951235

Parsons, S., Kovshoff, H., & Ivil, K. (2020) Digital stories for transition: co-constructing an evidence base in the early years with autistic children, families and practitioners. *Educational Review.* https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131911.2020.1816909

Events

ACoRNS webinar – 13th November. You can sign up to attend this event by clicking here. See previous page for more details.

'Reaching the hard to reach' online dissemination event – 26th November. You can sign up to attend this event by registering here. More details on next page.

Reaching the 'hard to reach': Lessons from a three-year study

Pictured above: Child researchers collecting classmates' views.

The project "Reaching the hard to reach': Inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue", funded by the European Union (2017-2020), is approaching its conclusion after three years. Led by Professor Kiki Messiou, the project has involved universities and primary schools in five countries (Austria, Denmark, England, Portugal, Spain) in collaborative action research.

The main research question was:

"How can we reach out to all children, especially those that are seen as 'hard to reach', through the use of Inclusive Inquiry?"

Inclusive Inquiry is an innovative approach that involves three phases: planning, teaching and analysing. At the heart of the approach is the idea of children and teachers having dialogues about learning processes, with a view to enabling all children to participate in lessons.   The study trialled the approach across a total of thirty primary schools in the five countries.

Teachers first form trios to design a lesson collaboratively with their students. Each teacher chooses three students seen as 'hard to reach' to become researchers. This may mean children who fall into certain categories, such as migrants or disabled students, or other students who may be seen as hard to reach in some way, such as those who lack confidence, or who are not engaged in the lessons.

These students are then trained by their teachers to become researchers, focusing especially on methods to collect the views of other students and carry out lesson observations.   The

student researchers proceed with collecting the views of their classmates about learning and teaching. They then analyse this information in order to inform the co-planning of a lesson with their teachers. This lesson is then taught in each of the classes, which are observed by the two partner teachers and by student researchers from the other classes.

After each of the three lessons, the student researchers and teachers analyse the lessons, and identify possible modifications for the next time that the lesson is taught. In all of this, the focus is on ensuring that all learners are included in the learning process.

Data were gathered over the period of three years through detailed lesson observations, questionnaires and interviews to monitor the impact on teachers' thinking and practices. In addition, questionnaires and interviews were used to analyse student engagement in lessons, as well as the impact on student researchers. These data were then analysed thematically.

Through the data analysis process, it was concluded that *Inclusive Inquiry* can be a facilitator to the process of reaching out to all children, particularly those who took on the role of researchers. There was evidence that, through the use of the approach, teachers' thinking and practices changed in a number of ways. For example, in some instances, greater attention was given to details of lessons, such as peer support and the use of experiential learning, in order to ensure that all students participate.   The approach facilitated changes in students' engagement in lessons, again

particularly amongst those children who took on the role of researchers. For example, one student researcher said: *"Before I was a pupil researcher, when teacher asked anyone to answer the questions, I never put my hand up because I didn't have my confidence. And when I was a pupil researcher, I put my hand up."*

Due to the pandemic and its implications, the project has received an extension until the end of December 2020. However, the fieldwork had already been completed by March 2020. What remains is the need to finalise the project outputs. Meanwhile, the final dissemination events (one in each country) are taking place, online, during the coming months.

The free online event in England will take place on 26th November 2020 and is open to anyone outside the University of Southampton and Wordsworth primary school (the partner school). To register for the event, please, follow the link: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/child-teacher-dialogue-to-promote-inclusion-in-classrooms-registration-124293584457

All the project materials can be downloaded for free from the project website.   The six booklets that have been developed include a step-by-step guide that can be used by schools that wish to use the approach (https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/publication/). In addition, there is an introductory video that can be used at the start of staff training in schools: https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/video/