



PICTURED ABOVE: CRI IN MEXICO – REFLECTIVE LEARNING AND SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Centre for Research in Inclusion

2: Summer 2018

About us

The Centre for Research in Inclusion (CRI) is one of three research centres in the Education School at the University of Southampton. We are a group of staff and doctoral researchers committed to internationally significant research that will develop understanding - and support the inclusion - of children, adults, families, and practitioners in education. Centre members work with a strong network of collaborators who value and conduct 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. We want research that is done *with* you rather than *on* you. You can get a flavour of the Centre from our [Centre for Research in Inclusion video](https://tinyurl.com/yc28fpur) [https://tinyurl.com/yc28fpur].

Our website:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/education/research/centres/centre-for-research-in-inclusion.page>

CRI News

CRI in Mexico

CRI's [Dr Cristina Azaola](#) coordinated a four-day workshop in January 2018 entitled *Enhancing reflective learning and school collaboration in rural Mexico*. The workshop was funded by the British Council in Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City and a rural school that acted as a hub of directors of multigrade schools across the state of Hidalgo. Three British scholars, Dr Paul Armstrong (University of Manchester), Dr Cath Gristy (Plymouth University) and Dr Helen Coker (University of the Highlands and Islands), presented their work on school collaboration and dialogic learning. The workshop aimed to share best practices on reflective learning and school collaboration currently taking place in rural schools in Mexico and schools in the UK; identify key challenges that hamper reflective learning and school collaboration; recommend improvements for policy and practice; and design strategies for universities and teacher colleges in Mexico to become a platform of development of reflective learning and school collaboration. The workshop was very well received by the academics, rural educators, NGO representatives, students and different governmental authorities taking part.

CRI in Dublin: Thinking Inclusively

[Prof Melanie Nind](#) gave the keynote lecture in May in Dublin for the Annual Conference of IATSE – the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education. The keynote entitled *Thinking*

Inclusively, Acting Inclusively, Researching Inclusively worked on the key idea that there is a close interrelationship between what we do, know and believe, but showed how inclusive thinking has developed into different kinds of practice in education and research. CRI hope to do something similar in Southampton in the autumn – watch this space!



CRI at the Global Mobile Awards

CRI's [Dr Sarah Lewthwaite](#) was once again part of the panel judging the prestigious 'GloMos' - the Global Mobile Awards (the 'Oscars of the Mobile Industry') for the Best Use of Mobile for Accessibility and Inclusion award 2018. The winners were announced at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona in March, with congratulations being given to Microsoft for 'Microsoft Seeing AI - Talking Camera for the Blind Community' which uses real-time artificial intelligence to voice objects, apps and environments through a smart phone.



The voices and experiences of children with autism, and their families, in their transitions from nursery to primary

Young children with autism are amongst the most scrutinised and assessed in their everyday lives, often leading to characterisations and descriptions that focus on their difficulties (commonly termed 'deficits') and challenges rather than on their abilities, strengths and positive experiences. Consequently, much discussion about children with autism tends to forget that they are children first. While research has considered the transitions of children with autism from primary to secondary school, and from secondary to post-compulsory contexts, there is almost no research focusing on transitions for young children with autism from nursery to primary schools. There is also very limited representation of their voices and experiences being explored, promoted, and valued directly as evidence in their own right.

Members of the Autism Community Research Network @ Southampton [ACoRNS: <http://acornsnetwork.org.uk>] are delighted to have been awarded £35,000 from the [Froebel Trust](#) for a project focusing on 'The voices and experiences of children with autism, and their families, in their transitions from nursery to primary school', which aims to address these gaps in the research. The project started in March 2018 and involves children, families, and staff members at the [Aviary Nursery in Eastleigh](#). This Centre for Research in Inclusion project is led by [Professor Sarah Parsons](#) and [Dr Hanna Kovshoff](#) at the University of Southampton, working in partnership with ACoRNS founding members Kathryn Ivil and Gareth Shaw from Aviary Nursery. The ACoRNS team are joined by CRI's [Dr Efstathia Karakosta](#). Aviary Nursery is a fully inclusive nursery school that prioritises children's play, interests, friendships, and different ways of communicating and interacting with each other.

This project runs until the end of November 2018, involving 4-6 autistic children, their parents and school staff. The project will capture, through digital storytelling, the experiences and perspectives of the children and their families as they prepare for the transition from nursery to primary school.



Digital storytelling is an inclusive approach because it does not prioritise or constrain particular means of expression i.e. it does not rely on primarily written or spoken forms. This method draws upon Sarah Parsons' earlier work developed from the ideas of Joe Lambert in the Digital Storytelling Cookbook that digital stories are natural vehicles for understanding and reflection and for creating meaning, as well as enabling voice, agency and a sense of belonging. Digital stories are expected to be a powerful methodological approach for understanding the experiences and practices of nursery to primary school transition from the perspectives of young children with autism.

Children's voices and views are, therefore, at the centre of the research through highlighting their unique trajectories via individual digital stories. The stories will illustrate both the positive experiences and the challenges that children and their families face as well as model how these challenges are mitigated by school-based processes. The digital stories are important in terms of their co-creation with teachers and families, giving validation and voice to diverse experiences and views. The stories will also be used in a novel way as a tool for

facilitating the transition by introducing the primary school to the child *as a child*, rather than as a paper-based description of needs and difficulties.

There will be a range of outputs from the project. A project website [autismtransitions.org] will provide information about the methods and principles of the project, as well as showcase the digital stories when they are ready later in the year. A screening event will show the stories and share experiences with all the participants and the local education community more widely. If you are interested in finding out more about this project or the work of ACoRNS please contact Sarah Parsons: s.j.parsons@soton.ac.uk



Related open access papers

You don't need access to the university library to read these papers – you can download them free of charge.

["Digital stories as a method for evidence-based practice and knowledge co-creation in technology-enhanced learning for children with autism"](#)

2015. Parsons, S., Guldberg, K., Porayska-Pomsta, K., & Lee, R. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 38(3), 247-271.

["Challenging the knowledge-transfer orthodoxy: Knowledge co-construction in technology-enhanced learning for children with autism"](#)

2017. Guldberg, K., Parsons, S., Porayska-Pomsta, K., & Keay-Bright, W. *British Journal of Educational Research* 43(2), 394-413.