

Institution: University of Southampton		
Unit of Assessment: 23 Education		
Title of case study: 23-02 Promoting inclusion for marginalised groups and individuals		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: April 2011 – December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Kyriaki (Kiki) Messiou	Professor of Education	October 2012 – present
Melanie Nind	Professor of Education	September 2004 – present
Sarah Parsons	Professor of Autism and Inclusion	January 2011 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Research led by three members of the University of Southampton's Centre for Research in Inclusion (CRI) has led to impact in four main areas: Changes in educators' thinking and practices; children and young people's engagement in schools; adults' with learning disabilities contribution to research dialogue and quality of life; and parents' and advocates' empowerment. These impacts occurred through inclusive and participatory models of research and knowledge co-construction that involved marginalised groups and individuals, including adults with learning disabilities, autistic children, and other school students whose views are not usually considered and acted upon. The impacts occurred locally, nationally, and internationally in Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Spain. CRI research has been quoted by UNESCO in a globally distributed Guide for Inclusion, and by the Autism Education Trust; identified by the European Commission as best practice; and recognised by Ofsted in their grading of 'outstanding' local schools.

2. Underpinning research

Marginalised groups or individuals, e.g. adults with learning disabilities, children on the autism spectrum, and 'hard to reach' children in primary schools, have typically been viewed as possessing limited knowledge of the issues that affect them and as subjects of research rather than contributors to research. This CRI research instead places these people and their perspectives at the centre of the research, working in collaborative ways with them to co-construct knowledge through shared research agendas and to develop more inclusive practices in varied contexts, such as in schools, families and homes. The ultimate aim is to improve their lives.

Professor Kiki Messiou's research has focused on working collaboratively with students and teachers to develop inclusive thinking and school practices. A distinctive emphasis is placed on engaging the views of students to address issues of marginalisation. In 2011-2014 she led an EU-funded collaborative action research project involving five universities and eight secondary schools in Portugal, Spain and the UK [**Grant A**]. Joining Southampton in 2012, she continued leading the project and supporting the research in the participating schools in Hull, which led to the development of an approach for teacher development. The study found that the most important factor for responding to student diversity is listening to students' voices [3.1, 3.2]. Messiou applied the core concept of student voice in another EU-funded project [**Grant B**] led by Oxfam Italy with partners in Spain, Cyprus, and Poland. The focus was on enabling secondary school students with migrant backgrounds to become mentors to support newly arrived students in each country. Messiou led the work in three schools in Hampshire and highlighted the positive impacts for students who became mentors [3.3]. Her most recent EU research [**Grant C**] extends in new contexts the use of *Inclusive Inquiry*, an innovative approach for the development of learning and teaching [3.4]. The study involved five countries: Austria, Denmark, England, Portugal and Spain, with five universities and thirty primary schools working collaboratively to reach those seen as most 'hard to reach' through dialogues between children and teachers. *Inclusive Inquiry* is the refinement of the approach that was developed in the earlier EU project [**Grant A**] but with the innovative feature of children taking the role of researchers, collecting their classmates' views and designing lessons collaboratively with their teachers, moving the idea of students' voices to a different level. Also, by focusing on primary schools it addressed a gap in student voice research being done mostly in secondary schools.

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Messiou was invited to Stanford University in 2019 to present *Inclusive Inquiry* and is exploring possibilities for expanding the work in schools in California.

Professor Melanie Nind's research focuses on facilitating the involvement of adults with learning disabilities in research dialogues and projects to benefit them and the research. The theme of her ESRC-funded *Quality and capacity in inclusive research* study (2011-2012, [3.5; Grant D]) was how to do research in ways that include people with learning disabilities without compromising quality. This resulted in the identification of different models of working together placing different stress on support, negotiation and interdependence as well as practical guidance distributed through the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM). Research in the related seminar series [3.6; Grant E] further interrogated quality participatory research, showing the need to create new flexible spaces for people with learning disabilities to work together with academic researchers in mutually supportive ways.

Professor Sarah Parsons' research forms collaborative research partnerships between researchers and schools in autism education to co-construct the evidence base. The lack of collaborative, innovative, and authentic research that combines rigour with important qualitative and contextual information from the perspectives of all key stakeholders, including autistic children and young people, was identified and reported within an initial research-practice partnership (PLASN-R). This partnership included ten special and mainstream schools across London, Guy's Hospital and five universities, including Parsons at Southampton who led the initiative [3.7]. This initiative demonstrated that building collaborative partnerships between researchers and school practitioners is central to achieving improved understanding of, and outcomes for, pupils on the autism spectrum. Parsons extended this collaborative approach through securing funding from the ESRC [Grant F] to develop creative Digital Storytelling methodologies in collaboration with practitioners that prioritised the views of autistic children and young people. Digital Stories are short films or narrated sequences of slides and images that convey experiences and practices with or around innovative technologies. The co-creation of Digital Stories enabled teachers to find their voice in critiquing the usability, usefulness, efficacy and flexibility of the technologies [3.8]. In November 2016, with initial funding from the University of Southampton's Public Engagement with Research Unit, Parsons, in collaboration with the School of Psychology, developed the Autism Community Research Network @ Southampton [ACoRNS], which built directly on earlier experiences with PLASN-R [3.7]. Her recent research, funded by The Froebel Trust [Grant G] has focused on the co-construction of Digital Stories with young autistic children, parents and nursery staff, as the children prepare for transition to primary school.

3. References to the research

3.1 Messiou, K., Ainscow, M., Echeita, G. Goldrick, S. Hope, M. Paes, I. Sandoval, M., Simon, C. and Vitorino, T. (2016). Learning from differences: a strategy for teacher development in respect to student diversity. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27(1), 45-61.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.966726>

3.2 Messiou, K. and Ainscow, M. (2015). Responding to learner diversity: Student views as a catalyst for powerful teacher development? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 51, 246-251.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.002>

3.3 Messiou, K., & Azaola, M. (2018). A peer- mentoring scheme for immigrant students in English secondary schools: a support mechanism for promoting inclusion? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(2), 142-157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1362047>

3.4 Messiou, K., & Ainscow, M. (2020). Inclusive Inquiry: student-teacher dialogue as a means of promoting inclusion in schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(3), 670-687. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3602>

Funding for 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4:

A. Responding to diversity by engaging with the views of students: a strategy for teacher development, Comenius Multilateral Projects, European Union Agency, EUR231,903 (total grant) (Messiou PI), 2011-2014

B. Intercultural mentoring tools to support migrant integration at school, Comenius Multilateral Projects, European Union Agency, EUR333,463 (total grant), Oxfam Italy (PI) – (Messiou Co-I), 2013-2015

C. Reaching the 'hard to reach': inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue, Erasmus+, EU, EUR405,432 (total grant) (Messiou PI), 2017-2020.

Impact case study (REF3)

3.5 Nind, M. & Vinha, H. (2014). Doing research inclusively: Bridges to multiple possibilities in inclusive research, *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42(2), 102-09.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12013>

3.6 Seale, J., Chapman, R., Nind, M. & Tilley, E.K. (2015). Negotiating a third space for participatory research with people with learning disabilities: An examination of boundaries and spatial practices. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 28(4), 483-497.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2015.1081558>

Funding for 3.5 and 3.6:

D. Quality and capacity in inclusive research with people with learning disabilities ES/I029052/1 1.4.11-31.5.12 GBP78,673 (Nind PI) (rated Excellent by ESRC)

E. Towards equal and active citizenship: pushing the boundaries of participatory research with people with learning disabilities – Seminar series – ESRC GBP18,000 (Nind Co-I) 2012-14

3.7 Parsons, S., Charman, T., Faulkner, R., Ragan, J., Wallace, S. & Wittemeyer, K. (2013). Bridging the research and practice gap in autism: the importance of creating research partnerships with schools. *Autism*, 17(3), 268-280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361312472068>

3.8 Parsons, S., Guldberg, K. Porayska-Pomsta, K. & Lee, R. (2015). Digital stories as a method for evidence-based practice and knowledge co-creation in technology-enhanced learning for children with autism. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(3), 247-271.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2015.1019852>

Funding for 3.7 and 3.8:

F. 2012-13 Shaping the future of technology use in the classroom, ESRC GBP 55k (Parsons co-I)

G. 2018-19: The voices and experiences of children with autism, and their families, in their transitions from nursery to primary school, Froebel Trust GBP 35k (Parsons PI)

4. Details of the impact

The societal impacts from these research programmes are based on their collaborative approaches. These involve work in partnership with stakeholders to solve problems together, drawing on each other's expertise. There are four main areas where impacts are demonstrated locally, nationally, and internationally.

(i) Educators' thinking and practices: In 2017-2020 Messiou led the pioneering collaborative work of the development of *Inclusive Inquiry* which has influenced the practices of thirty state schools (approximately 5100 students and 300 teachers) in five countries (Austria, Denmark, England, Portugal, Spain). All the schools served diverse student populations and through the approach teachers moved away from deficit thinking about students and focused on contextual factors to respond to diversity through valuing students' views and having constructive dialogues with them. As a headteacher in Austria testified: '*Since we have started to work with the Inclusive Inquiry many things in school have changed. Teachers work together more frequently and the whole school philosophy has changed from "I and my class" to "we and our school". It's a whole different spirit in our school now. We really work hard that all our children improve in their studies. The Inclusive Inquiry approach has benefitted all our students greatly because it enables all students to learn successfully.*' [5.1]. In addition, the Teaching and Learning Leader for a group of schools in Southampton said: '*[Inclusive Inquiry] has been amazing, it opened our eyes I think to what the children have to offer... We have really moved forward as a school and as teachers we have a different perspective now*' [5.2a]. The work is referenced in UNESCO policy documents, such as "A Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education", which has been distributed to most countries and focuses on ways for realising Sustainable Development Goal 4 of education. The Guide cites two papers [3.1, 3.2] and refers to the collaborative research led by Messiou in schools in Portugal, as examples of good practice which gave teachers '*greater confidence to experiment with different teaching practices*', and have informed key recommendations in the report [5.3]. In addition, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission recognises the collaborative work with Oxfam in Italy as 'a "success story", which is a finalised project that is distinguished by its impact, contribution to policy-making, innovative results and/or creative approach and can be a source of inspiration for others' [5.4].

Parsons' Autism Community Research Network @ Southampton (ACoRNS) has made impact on the practices of teachers in special and mainstream schools and early years settings in Southampton and Hampshire. The impact on practices of ACoRNS partners is referenced in two

Ofsted reports for New Forest School in 2017 and Hill House School in 2020 (both graded 'Outstanding') [5.5]. The report for New Forest School states *'Excellent links with Southampton University ensure that the latest academic research about supporting pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder is put into practice. As a result, successful strategies are introduced so that pupils are increasingly well supported.'* Practitioners who used the Digital Stories methodology are working differently to support children in nursery schools. As a co-authored publication with Kathryn Ivil, Aviary Nursery Manager, attests: *'We did not have to wait to be told what was going to work for us; we could see it happening for ourselves. Digital Stories has become what we do now as one of the ways we show a child's interests and development to other professionals and parents. It is an important piece of evidence which shows research impacting practice immediately.'* [5.6] A new ACoRN@Sussex has been established with ESRC Impact Acceleration Funding as a direct result of Parsons' invited keynote by the Chartered College of Teaching in September 2018. The ACoRNS partnership model, and ACoRNS co-constructed research, has also been cited in the Autism Education Trust's (AET) 2019 Full Report and Case Studies of their Good Autism Practice Guidance [5.7].

(ii) Children and young people's engagement in schools: Through applying *Inclusive Inquiry*, groups of schools, teachers and children and young people in five countries, were brought together to explore the development of inclusive practices focusing especially on the contributions of children and young people. Children became researchers who collected the views of their classmates and designed lessons collaboratively with their teachers. The process led to the increase of children's engagement in lessons as well as increased confidence amongst students. As one student researcher said, his confidence grew *'massively, because I could not even talk in front of two people, unless they were like my close friends or family that I knew well and now I can talk in front of a lot of people, I can just talk in front of a million strangers like it was my best friends.'* [5.2b]

(iii) Learning disabled adults' contribution to research dialogue and quality: Nind's research about how to do research inclusively, and do it well, led her to produce guidance which she has shared freely [16,348 downloads of NCRM resource] and which has since impacted on how people with learning disabilities are supported to participate in inclusive research. One example is the development of a self-advocacy toolkit by All Wales People First in a Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (DRILL)-funded project. The 2018 learning report, *What Makes a Good Self Advocacy Project: The added value of co-production* states: *'Academic researchers, Melanie Nind and Hilra Vinha (2012) worked with over 60 inclusive researchers to create a list of essentials for inclusive, high quality coproduced research. We have used that list to help explain how coproduction made this research work better and give us better results than if we had used more traditional research methods'* (p.8) [5.8] Using Nind's qualities of inclusive research resource in the final report as a guide to co-production also sparked further opportunities for individuals to contribute with confidence to inclusive research. An individual with learning disabilities involved in the seminar series testifies: *'I got new skills from working alongside Mel, like doing fieldwork and making sure people understood what was going on before they agreed to take part in research...Working with her gave me more confidence'* [5.9]. Nind's research shared with People First Dorset and Choices Advocacy in Southampton led to adults with learning disabilities helping to form the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account funded Southampton Platform for Inclusive Research and Ideas Together (SPIRIT). This network acted on findings from Nind's research and kept people inside and outside the university connected between research grants. SPIRIT members worked together on ways to be 'user-led' and shaped the successful bid for Nind's ESRC Reclaiming social care study on life in the new policy landscape. Members with learning disabilities sat on the advisory group and worked on accelerating impact of that study by developing materials learning disability groups can use in collaborating on self-building meaningful lives. All this, they said *'enabled us to build bridges into each other's parallel worlds and to find our shared ground'*, with a *'domino effect'* across their work leading to *'the best outcomes'* [5.10].

Internationally, following Nind's presentation at the Nordic Network for Disability conference in Bergen in May 2015, an ongoing partnership supporting Norway to initiate and develop an inclusive research network for all people with learning disabilities and academics who conduct research together has been developed, launching in 2016 with a Nind keynote. This has led to social care/education practitioners and people with learning disabilities across Norway getting involved in doing impactful research there with annual seminars supported by Nind [5.11].

(iv) Parents' and educational professionals' thinking and practices: Parsons' 2018-2019 research funded by the Froebel Trust extended the Digital Stories methodology [3.6] to co-create short videos of autistic children, their families, and early years' practitioners at Aviary Nursery, Eastleigh as the children prepared for transition to primary school. Parents describe how they got to know their children better as a result of their participation [5.12]. For example, one boy's mother said: *'...for us it is really good [be]cause at home I don't see any of that. Like he does not do any messy play, he does not interact with anyone, he is completely opposite to what he is while he's here and what he'll be at school... when you see it, you actually start believing, actually he is improving. So, you get to see a reality of it which is better.'* The methodology has also changed thinking and practices for Educational Psychologists involved in assessments and transition planning, with one stating: *'I was particularly struck by the camera footage and the emphasis on individual perspectives. I've just written a statutory report for a 5-year-old with autism, and I'm now about to start my second such report of the day. With both...I've been thinking about the value judgements inherent in my statements (which I've just changed)... I much prefer the new way of thinking that came out of your session yesterday'* [5.13].

In light of COVID-19 and the closure of many educational settings, Digital Stories have become even more important. The Inclusion Team from Hampshire County Council emailed Parsons to say: *'We need Digital Stories more than ever before as traditional transitions are going to be difficult before the summer.'* In response, a set of web resources have been produced that will help local and national educational providers to create their own Digital Stories. These resources have been distributed locally to over 1500 early years settings in Hampshire, and nationally to educational psychology teams via EPNET (an online open and public forum for the exchange of ideas and information within educational psychology), with positive feedback. Staff at Hill House school have created Digital Stories to support during lockdown the transitions of older students with complex needs who are moving into further education, training or employment. A social worker who had viewed one of the stories said: *'this really shows who she is, that was my overarching feeling about it. It is the way forward. It is an innovative and creative way to show people differently, move away from a 1-dimensional written report, and showing a bit of a 360-degree view of somebody'* [5.14].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Testimonial from headteacher in Austria.

5.2 Video links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKXqQosklJI> a. Teaching and Learning Lead for a group of schools in Southampton: (minute 8:50 – 9:28) + b. Children talking about the impact that their involvement in the project had on them and in their school (minute 3:58 – 4:18).

5.3 UNESCO (2017) 'Guide on Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education' (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf>). Cites Portugal work on p. 37.

5.4 European Commission letter designating INTO project as a "success story".

5.5 Ofsted Reports from two ACoRNS partners <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2735111>
<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50143982>

5.6 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>

5.7 Autism Education Trust Good Autism Practice Guidance (2019)
<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/shop/good-autism-practice-resources>

5.8 DRILL Learning Report: What Makes a Good Self Advocacy Project?: The added value of co-production. <https://barod.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DRILL-Learning-Report-.pdf>

5.9 Testimonial from person with learning disabilities

5.10 Testimonial from Dorset People First

5.11 Testimonials from Norway on impact on people with learning disabilities internationally

5.12 Video of parents' views from the Froebel Trust Digital Stories project:

<https://autismtransitions.org/thoughts-on-digital-stories>

5.13 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>

5.14 ESRC Festival of Social Science ACoRNS event: 'Digital transitions – learning from lockdown', November 13th 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2WjuTDe-oQ&feature=youtu.be> (1:14:04 – 1:19:06).