Welcome to The School of Education
Learner Voice Conference
26-27 June 2015

“Nothing about us without us”: Listening to the voice of our students!

LEARNER VOICE CONFERENCE
26 - 27th June 2015
“Nothing about us without us”: Listening to the voices of our students!
Room 3074 | Arts Building | Trinity College Dublin
Inclusion in Education & Society
IES Research Group

Creative art | Sarah Dempsey, Darren McPhail and Darren Byrne. A collaboration between students and their art teacher, Mr. Darren Byrne at St Joseph's Secondary School.
A very warm welcome to our Learner Voice Conference!

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Inclusion in Education and Society Research Group (IES) to welcome you to our Learner Voice Conference, “Nothing about us without us”: Listening to the voices of our students! The programme offers a broad range of presentations, reflecting current research and practice with respect to ‘voice’ in education, most especially, student voices. We are honoured to have Dr. Alison Cook-Sather as our keynote speaker, an esteemed and prolific author and researcher in the areas of student voice, engagement and partnership in educational research.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) challenged the treatment of children internationally by affirming their need for ‘special consideration’ and enshrining a number of rights, of which Article 12 is especially pertinent to this conference, i.e. the right of the child to express views in matters effecting her/him and have those opinions given due weight commensurate with age and maturity. The rationale for educational research in the area of children's/student voice is often based on this important and imperative right. However, it is also argued that respecting children's views is not just a model of good pedagogical practice, but a legally binding obligation and, that as a minimum, those working in the education sector need not only to know that Article 12 exists, but that it has legal force and applies to all educational decision-making (Lundy 2007).

Across the two days of this conference, the opportunity to discuss and interrogate the challenges and opportunities, especially pertinent to the ‘trajectory of student voice in educational research’ (Cook-Sather 2014) will be led and heard by a broad representation of stakeholders and interested parties. They include second and third level students, teachers, principals, parents, policy makers, researchers and academics. In total, we have 66 presenters contributing to the conference. This overwhelming level of active participation reflects a significant interest in the areas of ‘voice’ and narrative methodologies in the educational context and environment. The spectrum of topics range from ‘marginalised voice’ through to ‘tattoo as visual literacy’.

I have had the tremendous pleasure of conducting and co-participating in student voice research continuously since 2008 and as a result of my experiences, I am convinced that there is great potential for learning on the part of all participants who engage in or are impacted upon by this practice. Consequently, some of my recent studies have been conducted under the title of ‘Learner Voice’ to emphasise the community of learners that include, students, teachers, parents, policy makers and researchers involved in the process. Although the predominant theme of this conference is on the voices of students, it is also an opportunity to listen to multiple perspectives of learners who are interested in ‘education’ or ‘voice’ or indeed both!
There are several people I would like to thank for their support in preparation for this event. Sincere thanks to the artists who designed the wonderful symbol and iconic call to student voice artwork for our conference poster; Sarah Dempsey, Darren McPhail and Darren Byrne, from St. Joseph’s Secondary School, Rush, Co. Dublin. I would like to acknowledge the partnership and collaboration of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals in my recent and current research activity. I would particularly like to thank Ger Halbert and Fred Boss from NCCA, and Clive Byrne, the Director of NAPD for their constant support for those research endeavours and this conference.

I am very grateful to colleagues and research students at the School of Education for their interest and support in preparation for this event. In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge Mr. David Worsley and Ms. Valerie Kelly for their tremendous hard work, talents and patience.

Most particularly, I am very grateful to our conference administrator, Ms. Sinéad Burke, one of our Ph.D. research students in the area of student voice who has worked tirelessly and enthusiastically over the last few months in the organization and planning of this conference.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this event and I look forward to any comments or feedback you might have. If you would like to generate a twitter conversation during the conference, please use the hashtag #voiceconf15 and include the handle @SchoolofEdTCD and/or @paula_flynn

Warm regards,

_________________________
Dr. Paula Flynn, Assistant Professor of Inclusive Education

Inclusion in Education and Society Research Group
LIST OF PRESENTERS - (in order of appearance)

- Alison Cook-Sather
- Rory O’Connor
- Aaran Cahill Hand
- Paula Flynn
- Ger Halbert
- Fred Boss
- Feargha Clear Keena
- Aoibhinn Murphy
- Geraldine Scanlon
- Katherine Salvador
- Lauren Boath
- Colette Murphy
- Katriona O’Sullivan
- Lisa Keane
- Megan Kuster
- Peadar Donohoe
- John Kubiak
- Liam Wegimont
- Rebecca Dempsey
- Joanna Siewierska
- Jane M.Hayes Nally
- Art O’Mahony
- Helen Ryan

- Mhairi Beaton
- Aoife B. Prendergast
- Louise McAnarney
- Joanne Fitzpatrick
- John O'Reilly
- Tess Maginess
- Brian Murphy
- Jean Henefer
- Maeve Gallagher
- Dana Mitra
- Paul McCormick
- Finín Ó Seaghdá
- Ann Marie O’Brien
- Sinéad Burke
- Pauline Kerins
- Evelyn Deacy
- Patricia McCarthy
- Carmel Maginn
- Michael Quinn
- Michael Shevlin
- Emma Farrell
- Carol Ann O’Sioráin
- Jane O’Connell

- Anna Huysmans
- Anna O’Neill
- Erika Larkin
- Danielle McKinley
- Esther Ozonyia
- Michael Furmaga
- Adeyinka Ayandeko
- Qadidja Magema
- Monta Jaffery
- Amber Hussain
- Shauna Dillon
- Emer O’Reilly
- Glenda McKinley
- Agnieszka Maczka
- Domnall Fleming
- Michelle Bartlett
- Conor McGuckin
- Colin McElroy
- Áine Lynch
- Anna Mae Rooney
# LIST OF PRESENTERS & AFFILIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adeyinka Ayandeko</td>
<td>Member of ‘4th Class Students and Parents of St. Philip the Apostle National School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle Bartlett</td>
<td>Intern q22, University of Notre Dame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Mhairi Beaton</td>
<td>Joint Director of the Inclusive Practice Programme, University of Aberdeen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Booth</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fred Boss</td>
<td>Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum &amp; Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Dempsey</td>
<td>Student Engagement and Development Officer, Irish Second-Level Students’ Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shauna Dillon</td>
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<td>Joanne Fitzpatrick</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, Department of Education &amp; Professional Studies, University of Limerick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Domnall Fleming</td>
<td>Senior Inspector, Department of Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Paula Flynn</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, Director of the Centre for Inclusion and Intellectual Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Furmaga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maeve Gallagher</td>
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<td>Ger Halbert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane M. Hayes Nally</td>
<td>Education Office, Irish Second-Level Students Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean Henefer</td>
<td>Researcher at National Behaviour Support Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amber Hussain</td>
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<td>Anna Huysmans</td>
<td>Member of ‘4th Class Students and Parents of St. Philip the Apostle National School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monta Jaffery</td>
<td>Member of ‘4th Class Students and Parents of St. Philip the Apostle National School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Lisa Keane</td>
<td>Post-entry progression and alumni development, Trinity Access Programme, Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Pauline Kerins</td>
<td>Lecturer, Department of Education, St Angela’s College, Sligo.</td>
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<td>Erika Larkin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Áine Lynch</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, National Parents Council Primary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qadidja Magema</td>
<td>Member of ‘4th Class Students and Parents of St. Philip the Apostle National School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15’</td>
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<td>Anna Mae Rooney</td>
<td>National Parents Council Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Tess Maginess</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Queen’s University, Belfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carmel Maginn</td>
<td>Author and facilitator, South Dublin County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louise McAnarney</td>
<td>Lecturer in the Department of Humanities at the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Patricia McCarthy</td>
<td>Post-Doctoral Research Associate, School of Education, Trinity College.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul McCormick</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, Penn State College of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colin McElroy</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Dana Mitra</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Educational Theory &amp; Policy, Penn State College of Education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aoibhinn Murphy</td>
<td>Student from Mount Temple Comprehensive College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Brian Murphy</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University College Cork.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Colette Murphy</td>
<td>Associate Professor, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role/Extracurricular Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane O'Connell</td>
<td>4th Class Teacher, St. Philip the Apostle National School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rory O'Connor</td>
<td>Student from St Joseph’s Secondary School, Rush, Co. Dublin</td>
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<td>Campaigns and Communications Officer, Irish Second-Level Students’ Union.</td>
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<td>Dr. Finín Ó Seaghdá</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Katriona O’Sullivan</td>
<td>Research &amp; Impact - Trinity Access 21, Trinity Access Programme, Trinity College, Dublin.</td>
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<td>Senior Lecturer, School of Education Studies, Dublin City University.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Michael Shevlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joanna Siewierska</td>
<td>Deputy President, Irish Second-Level Students Union.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liam Wegimont</td>
<td>Principal of Mount Temple Comprehensive School</td>
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### FRIDAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session/Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 09:30</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30 – 10:00</td>
<td>Conference Introduction: Dr. Paula Flynn &amp; Ms. Sarah Dempsey</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>Key Note Speaker: Dr. Alison Cook-Sather</td>
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<td>11:00 – 11:30</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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| 11:30 – 1:30 | **SESSION 3074.1**  
Michael Shevlin  
- Rory O'Connor & Aaran Cahill Hand  
- Paula Flynn  
- Ger Halbert, Fred Boss & Paula Flynn  
- Feargha Clear Keena & Aoibhinn Murphy |
|               | **SESSION 3105.1**  
Jillian Kellogg  
- Geraldine Scanlon  
- Katherine Salvador  
- Lauren Boath & Colette Murphy |
|               | **SESSION 3098.1**  
Carol Ann O'Sioráin  
- Katriona O'Sullivan, Lisa Keane & Megan Kuster  
- Peadar Donohoe  
- John Kubiak |
| 1:30 – 2:30   | Lunch                                                                           |
| 2:30 – 4:30   | **SESSION 3074.2**  
David Worsley  
- Liam Wegimont  
- Rebecca Dempsey, Joanna Siewierska, Jane M.Hayes Nally, Art O'Mahony, Helen Ryan  
- Mhairi Beaton |
|               | **SESSION 3105.2**  
Ger Halbert  
- Aoife Prendergast & Louise McAnarney  
- Joanne Fitzpatrick & John O'Reilly  
- Tess Maginess |
|               | **SESSION 3098.2**  
Emma Farrell  
- Brian Murphy  
- Jean Henefer  
- Maeve Gallagher |
**‘NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US’: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF STUDENTS**
LEARNER VOICE CONFERENCE – INCLUSION IN EDUCATION & SOCIETY RESEARCH GROUP, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

**SUNDAY**

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<th>3074</th>
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<td>09:00 – 09:30</td>
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| 09:30 – 11:30 | **SESSION 3074.3**  
FRED BOSS  
- Dana Mitra & Paul McCormick  
- Domnall Fleming  
- Flinn O’Seaghdha | **SESSION 3105.3**  
STANFORD KINGSTON  
- Ann Marie O’Brien  
- Sinéad Burke  
- Pauline Kerins & Evelyn Deacy | **SESSION 3098.3**  
KEARA EADES  
- Patricia McCarthy  
- Carmel Maginn  
- Michael Quinn |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | **COFFEE BREAK** |  |
| 12:00 – 2:00 | **SESSION 3074.4**  
MAIJA SALOKANGAS  
- Michael Shevlin  
- Emma Farrell  
- Carol Ann O’Sioráin | **SESSION 3105.4**  
DEAN MCDONNELL  
- Jane O’Connell et al.  
- Domnall Fleming  
- Pauline Kerins | **SESSION 3098.4**  
PATRICIA MCCARTHY  
- Colin McElroy  
- Aíne Lynch & Anna Mal Rooney  
- Michelle Bartlett & Conor McGuckin |
| 2:00 – 2:20 | **CLOSING COMMENTS: DR. MICHAEL SHEVLIN, DIRECTOR OF IES** |  |
TITLE: *Student Voice in Research across Educational Contexts: Early Childhood through Tertiary Education.*

Over the last couple of decades, educational research that embraces “student voice” has proliferated. With this increase in attention to and production of research that embraces principles of student voice, the concepts and practices associated with this work have multiplied to address the particular philosophical, methodological, and ethical issues involved. Drawing on an article recently published in the New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies called “The Trajectory of Student Voice in Educational Research,” this keynote offers an overview of the key developments in educational research with young people. It reviews early efforts from the 1990s to elicit student perspectives regarding their learning and then moves to more current approaches to working with students as partners in or as leaders of research projects. Encompassing reference to student voice in research in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and tertiary educational contexts, the keynote touches upon the various meanings of “student voice”; the relationship among voice, rights, respect, and power; research methods that have evolved to integrate student voice and participation; the diversification of voices included in student voice research; and changes in (re)presentation of students in educational research.

Alison Cook-Sather is the Mary Katharine Woodworth Professor of Education, Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, and the Jean Rudduck Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge in England. Supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Dr. Cook-Sather has developed internationally recognized programs that position students as pedagogical consultants to prospective secondary teachers and to practicing college faculty members. She has published more than 70 articles and chapters on how students can become partners with teachers and scholars to make education a mutually engaging and empowering process, and she has given over 100 keynote addresses, other invited presentations and workshops, and papers at refereed conferences in Brazil, Canada, Italy, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and throughout the United States. Her books include Engaging Students as Partners in Learning & Teaching: A Guide for Faculty, co-authored with Catherine Bovill and Peter Felten (Jossey-Bass, 2014), Learning from the Student's Perspective: A Sourcebook for Effective Teaching (Paradigm Publishers, 2009), International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School (co-edited with Dennis Thiessen, Springer Publishers, 2007), and Education Is Translation: A Metaphor for Change in Learning and Teaching (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).
SESSION 3074.1

Rory O'Connor & Aaran Cahill Hand: The *Great Minds Programme*.

This programme was devised in St. Joseph’s Secondary School, Rush, by Ms. Ann Marie Caulfield and in conjunction with Dr Paula Flynn from Trinity College Dublin. The Programme has three elements: Student support groups; Research & Presentation; and Ability Awareness Week.

Student support groups: Students with different educational preferences such as ADHD, Dyspraxia and ASD got together to share experiences and support each other. The students were given accurate information about their diagnosis and given time to share stories and strategies. Each student spent time researching and finding out more about their own diagnosis.

During ability awareness week the whole school were educated on topics such as Downs Syndrome, Autism, ADHD and Dyspraxia. The “Great Minds” students acted as leaders when they made presentations to their own classes and dispelled any myths that their peers may have had. It was a chance for these students to have a voice.

The group visited Trinity College Dublin with their teacher and co-ordinator, Ms. Caulfield, where they shared their experiences and acted as co-researchers as part of the Learner Voice Research Study in the School of Education were they were presented with “Great Minds” certificates.

Paula Flynn: *Speaking back through research; marginalised youth and the transformative impact of ‘authentic listening’!*

Students with labels that exemplify ‘difficult difference’ were responsible for positively affecting changes in attitudes towards them and presenting a model that fostered the development of relationality in care and leadership as part of a student voice research study which is the focus of this presentation.

This study involved consultation of 35 young people on their experience of school. The young participants had been identified as presenting with internalising or externalising behaviours associated with the classification of ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’ (SEBD). The rationale for this study is based in the understanding that students with SEBD represent some of the most marginalised students in school and are often the least empowered of their peers.
The findings of this research demonstrated that having the opportunity to be heard was significant to all of the participants. However, for some of the young people who were ‘silenced’ on important issues in other parts of their lives, the experience of this ‘voice’ process had less impact. For many of the participants, the opportunity to talk and encounter an ‘authentic response’ influenced their levels of enthusiasm for and participation in the research process. This study confirmed the potential relationship between ‘voice’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘transformation’ because participants actively contributed to improving relationships with their teachers and peers, while promoting and participating in strategies and activities that impacted positively on their experience of school. The evidence suggests that a ‘student voice’ approach to supporting young people is fundamental to the development of an inclusive learning environment for the benefit of all students.

Ger Halbert, Fred Boss & Paula Flynn: Student Voice: Accessing student insights on their learning to facilitate co-construction in curricular development.

This presentation outlines the rationale and design of a Student Voice research study which has been designed to elicit the perspectives of students in a number of post-primary schools on developments in Junior Cycle in relation to curriculum and assessment developments being currently undertaken by NCCA. The project is a collaborative research undertaking between TCD and NCCA supported by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). The purpose of this project to date has been two-fold:

• To consult students as experts on their own experience of learning and to incorporate their insights in this opportunity for curricular co-construction.
• To refine the way in which we consult with students to ensure that their experience of the process is empowering and their capacity to contribute in a meaningful way is maximised.

The overarching aim of this study is:

• To determine how to include student voice in planning such that there is an embedded culture of ‘shared language’, ‘co-construction’ and a strategy that will provide a sustainable structure and response to student voice:
  − For Schools
  − For the NCCA

Feargha Clear Keena & Aoibhinn Murphy: Student reflection from involvement in a learner voice research project.

My name is Feargha Clear Keena, I’m 17, and I’m going to be talking to you about my experience discussing educational changes, and why I think the Student Voice is important. When we were asked to give our opinions on changes that should be made to the science Junior Cert, we didn’t know what to expect. There were about 20 of us, of different years and ages, sitting in a circle. We were asked
questions, and though we were shy at first, it was clear after a while that we were full of ideas. It struck me how, even though the group was purposefully composed of people who would’ve had different experiences of the junior cert, some very studious, and some less, everyone was able to speak very genuinely and very positively about what they found helpful, and what they found interesting.

One of the first, and most interesting, questions they asked us was "Why Do you think learning science is important?" At first, we all answered with the obvious: "so we can pass our exams and get points, and study in nice universities and maybe become rich doctors". But we also discussed the joy of understanding the world around us- not for exams or careers- but for ourselves.

In many ways, we are taught to have a cynical view of education, to think it’s all about points and numbers. But when a student is in their favourite class, learning about the 2nd World War, or gravity, or Shakespeare, we’re not thinking about exams, or points, or percentages. In that moment, we’re only interested in learning. To me, that’s why the student voice is so important. The department of education know all about passing exams, and what works to achieve good grades. But students, we know about those moments where we're absorbed and focused, and entirely captivated.

Every student in my group, when discussing science, was talking about those moments, in one way or another. We talked about areas of science that should be on the curriculum because we were curious about them. We talked about things that confused us, things that interested us, and things we’d like to do projects on.

A lot of the time it feels like students have very little control over their education. Which is sad, because we have much more faith in it than people seem to think. And while we’re no experts on examination and learning techniques, we know about those moments of pure interest. We know about learning.

SESSION 3105.1

**Geraldine Scanlon: (Dis)ability and Choice: The dilemmas of young people’s transitions to further and higher education in Ireland**

Given the extremely competitive academic routes that currently dominate FE/HE progression in Ireland and the advantages such progression offers in gaining access to the perilous, yet necessary, labour markets through which risk and opportunity are distributed in the context of the 21st Century, the cumulative effect of the reduction in educational resources to support young people with disability in education is significant. In short, it affects their rights to exercise autonomy in relation to the choices they face to progress to acquire the necessary skills to attain the forms inclusion that are highlighted within materialist social models of disability, models to which critical disability studies owes a debt (Goodley 2013; Oliver 1990). This presentation will draw on research conducted in Ireland which examined the pre and post transition experiences of forty-two students with special education needs (SEN) moving to FE/HE in both rural and urban settings across four geographical areas. The participants presented with a variety of disabilities including attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder;
Asperger’s syndrome; dyslexia; mild or moderate general learning difficulties; apraxia; dysgraphia; physical disabilities; hearing impairment; visual impairment; cerebral palsy/epilepsy; speech and language difficulties, and severe and profound learning difficulties. However, for the purposes of this chapter only the pre-transition experiences of the forty-two students (including one parent who was interviewed as a proxy for one student who had severe and profound needs) and the 28 educational professionals who supported them in their schools will be presented to explore the ambiguous nature of educational ‘choice’ in the transition of Irish young people with disability/SEN through FE/HE and into the risky labour markets of the globalized context.

Katherine Salvador: Parental Voice – Case study with a child with SEN.
Parents play an important role in educational research at the moment of giving or denying consent for their children’s participation but it should not be the only way to get them involved. In participatory studies, students’ voices are valued as they are considered experts on their own lives and experiences yet peripheral voices are also important to be heard especially when particular groups or sensitive themes are studied. In qualitative research involving children with special education needs, time can be a limitation as data is mostly obtained from observations of the researcher and the children's (participants) teachers during relatively short periods or sessions. Therefore, parental involvement in research as informers would contribute to enhance collection of data based on longer term observations and their own narratives. This paper presents the case of a parent whose participation in a study contributed to inform a description of good practices to expand the school community around her children with special learning needs and also to give her awareness of the nature of the progress of her child.


The Scottish Government document “Building the Curriculum 3” (2008) defines the curriculum in Scotland as the “totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people throughout their education, wherever they are being educated”. In the Education Scotland “Science 3-18 Curriculum Impact Report” (2012) this agenda of recognising learning where it happens and ensuring that partners effectively support and progress the learning of children and young people was identified as being of increasing importance in Scotland.

The authors will provide an overview of an innovative approach to exploring children’s views on science experiences outwith normal lessons. It will provide an insight into working with children in upper primary school, within a framework informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the
Child, and explore the development of a research instrument for use with children aged 8-11. Children in a primary 5 class formed a Children’s Research Advisory Group, participating in a range of activities to engage in thinking about science. Through this, the children identified key themes which they felt should feature in a science experience and developed a questionnaire to explore the thinking of other children in primary 5, 6, and 7 around these themes. We will discuss the process of engaging children in this research, the developed instrument and next steps for the project.

SESSION 3098.1

Katriona O’Sullivan, Lisa Keane & Megan Kuster: 'Now I know I can!' - The student’s voice in a widening participation initiative.

In 2014 the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) partnered with the US non-for-profit organisation, College for Every Student (CFES), to address under-representation in higher education by students from lower socio-economic groups (SEGs) in 11 schools (1100 students) across greater Dublin. CFES organises school-college partnerships that support the development of three core practices: pathways to college, mentoring, and leadership - all of which aim to support Academic Capital Formation (ACF), consisting of increased human, social and cultural capital in students from lower SEGs. Since its inception in 1991, CFES has demonstrated over 90% progression rates to further and higher education in students who complete the programme.

The TAP and CFES partnership involves a three year implementation of the three core practices of CFES with 1100 students starting in 2nd year continuing through to 5th year. The students complete surveys throughout the three year which focus on academic development, aspirational change and college knowledge. Focus groups and interviews have been employed to establish the student’s views on their life, on what they value, and how CFES, school, family and wider networks can support them to achieve their goals. This paper will present the research plan to-date, discussing the themes which will be examined in relation to students views on college, their own potential and students perceptions of a ‘good life’. It will discuss the importance of the student voice in the development of school based initiatives.

Peadar Donohoe: Role-play as a Method to Empower Student Voices in bullying prevention.

This presentation will review the student feedback that followed from the implementation of a Role play centred bullying prevention resource entitled the Bullying Prevention Pack (BPP). The BPP has been designed as a systematic bullying intervention resource that puts learners’ first hand experiences, voices and knowledge about bullying incidents at the forefront of activities. Role-play and Drama elements, along with information about bullying behaviour, typology, participant players and
discussions have been designed to actively engage learners in metacognition. The aim is to create opportunities for discussion and awareness of what bullying is, foster empathy about the harmful effects of bullying on those targeted and for learners to create methods to help prevent bullying in their school.

The researcher, Peadar Donohoe, employed quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment to positive effect. According to the self-report surveys, the research school realised a 73% reduction of bullying while at the control school there was 20% increase in bullying over the same time period. Interviews with focus groups at the research school revealed a substantial increase in knowledge of what bullying is, an enhanced understanding of its effects on peers, increased levels of empathy and a strong desire to prevent bullying incidents in the future.

John Kubiak: **Using Concept Mapping as a learning tool for college students with an intellectual disability.**

This presentation outlines how college students with intellectual disability (ID) used concept maps as a learning and research tool in higher education. Concept mapping is described as a graphical tool used for organising and representing relationships between concepts and has been shown to have a positive impact on the quality of student learning, especially in higher education. This research outlines how concept maps were used in one Irish university as a learning tool in an inclusive education college programme for people with ID. Examples are provided from a small group of students who used concept maps as 1) as a learning tool for gaining a greater understanding their own learning processes, and 2), as a research tool for eliciting information and gathering data. Further research is needed to better understand how college students with ID can be supported both individually and collaboratively to develop and progress their learning skills through the use of concept mapping.
‘NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US’: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF STUDENTS

SESSION ABSTRACTS

TIMESLOT: FRIDAY 14:30PM – 16:30PM

SESSION 3074.2

Liam Wegimont: *Moving from Listening to Student Voices, to Empowerment, Engagement and Structural Change: One school’s experiment and an immodest proposal*.

The national policy framework for children and young people goes some of the way towards reversing Ireland’s historic neglect of the rights of children and young people. Nevertheless, when it comes to schools, it does not go far enough, and is impeded by existing mind-set and legislation.

In this paper the author – the principal of a school in Dublin, with a practice, policy and research background in global education, youth work and school change – tells the story of journey that the school travelled as its student council and other student-led structures emerged. From meagre beginnings, through a process of democratic decision-making, and later with substantial input from Trinity’s Paula Flynn in a process of representation and empowerment, the Council has moved, according to the author, from being listened to, to being representative and empowered, to starting to become involved in critical engagement with structures towards more long-lasting change.

Rebecca Dempsey, Joanna Siewierska, Jane M. Hayes Nally, Art O’Mahony, Helen Ryan: *Youth Consultation; positive engagement or box ticking exercise?*

In second-level and higher education we see often that students are recruited as part of forums, panels and workshops. Questions are put forward, a room is arranged and someone takes notes, but what happens next? A report, booklet, presentation is created but to whose benefit? If young people are consulted at the beginning of a process, and they provide the basis for discussion and debate then they should be a part of the ongoing discussion. One question often asked is why are the youth usually consulted separately? Where is the communication plan and why are they not usually made aware of other stakeholder’s opinions and/or experiences? Often it seems that the voice of the student/young person is often required as a part of box ticking exercise and we want to change this.

In the ISSU we are working hard to change this pattern. We will discuss how we have cemented an equal presence within our education stakeholders and discussions, explain how we are not just a box to be ticked and discuss our ideas that we have to achieve a new pattern across many different platforms.
**Mhairi Beaton: 'Engaged Voices': the educational researchers’ challenge?**

Much has been written about learner identity within schools but fewer studies have explored children’s own perceptions of learner identity. The ethnographic project described in this paper explored the complexity of primary school pupils’ identities (Pollard, 1985). Underpinned by a symbolic interactionist view of identity (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969), data collection included observation, video recording of classroom interactions and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of these rich data explored the constitution, construction and function of the pupils’ learner identities. The project highlighted an issue faced by many educational researchers. As many were once classroom teachers, they may unconsciously bring the assumptions of the classroom teacher to the research process; potentially making it challenging to hear the pupils. The interrelatedness of the various phases of the research and subsequent comparison of the different data, including an insider’s emic conceptual framework through the pupils’ use of ‘flip’ cameras, permitted the researcher in this project to hear the pupils’ authentic voices. This permitted the demonstration how the pupils drew from hidden messages conveyed through the structure, culture and organisation of the school to construct their learner identities. Pupils claimed agency in whether they accepted or rejected these messages from their interactions with people and activities in the classroom. The messages identified by the pupils as being used to construct their identity were surprising to the researcher; perhaps in her role as a former classroom teacher.

The paper concludes with a discussion of resultant implications for those wishing to authentically enact student voice.

**SESSION 3105.2**

**Aoife Prendergast & Louise McAnarney: Can you hear me? I am listening to the transformative voice of the non-traditional student experience.**

The transition from the social care practice environment to a third level academic institution for the first time as a mature age student can be much anticipated, exciting and stimulating but also fraught with feelings of self-doubt, unease and difficulty. These feelings override for many mature age students the realities of commencing undergraduate study. Before commencement, most mature age students neither give much thought to issues pertaining to transition, nor believe that such issues are relevant or likely to affect them. The presence of part-time, work-based undergraduate degree programmes in social care has continued to grow stronger in recent times. However, student satisfaction with the transition has never been systematically evaluated and the quality of this learning and the evidence base to support it has not been established.
This study primarily investigates the transformative experiences of mature, work-based social care students within a third level academic education setting in Ireland. This research aims to explore this transition and the transformation as a concept and the complex difficulties, with the aim of potentially identifying the means of overcoming the challenges, specific to this group of learners. The results of this qualitative research will support academics in developing programmes which will enhance the overall quality of the pedagogical learning environment.

Joanne Fitzpatrick & John O'Reilly: Integrating the Curriculum: Negotiating meaningful learning to support learner agency.

A Negotiated Integrated Curriculum (NIC) involves teachers inviting students to help construct and enact their learning journey by negotiating a curriculum around their concerns in an environment where engagement, exploration and reflection form the basis for the negotiation process. NIC is a curriculum design that is concerned with enhancing the possibilities for personal and social integration through the organisation of curriculum around the needs and concerns of students, collaboratively identified by educators and young people, without regard for subject-area boundaries. Learner voice and learner agency play a central role in the negotiation process. This research has seen NIC enacted in Irish schools for the first time and will serve as a demonstration initiative for the rest of the country and internationally. NIC has been practiced with the 6th class students of two Limerick primary schools for a 4-month period and has been underway with the 1st year students in a feeder secondary school since September 2014 allowing for transition findings. Initial findings show an increase in engagement levels, meaningful learning and agency for learners when given a voice and a choice around what they wish to learn about at school.

Tess Maginess: Sagaciating: Learners as voicers, shapers, researchers.

The desideratum of learner voicing’ has been impelled from many disciplines, including the Social Model of disability, where the hideously labelled ‘user’ movement has ‘written back’ and researched back to the power that be, to the ‘reflective turn’ in Anthropology, where researchers have finally ‘got’ that people are not always keen on being ‘subjects’ to Postcolonial perspectives especially in literature, to Community Development, to the implications of technology in decentering the classroom, to the emergence in the field of Education of ‘Constructivism’. All, in their myriad ways, proclaim the importance of voicing what has been salient, subjected.

However, documentation and analysis of how learner voicing is enacted is less common. Three cheers, Pip, for this here conference. This paper tells the story of a number of action research learning projects facilitated through Queen’s University’s Open Learning Programme. These include the creation of education in the community courses designed with local groups, often ‘non-traditional learners’,
where the meaning, curriculum and mode of delivery and pedagogy were largely determined by participants, to projects where learners produced tangible ‘learning products’ including a book, a film, a play a training kit, around ‘hard’ or ‘sticky subjects like disability and mental health, to the involvement of learners in these projects as active researchers and co-creators, using arts based methodologies, to a project with older learners within the university.

The paper concludes with some questions about we might truly register the ‘learner voice’ and how, in a marketised environment, we might value it.

SESSION 3098.2

Brian Murphy: Changing experiences and understandings of literacy development at post primary level: The voices of student teachers before and after the publication of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Reflecting rising expectations for school students, improving literacy achievement has become a focus for educational policy makers internationally. In tandem with this trend, in Ireland literacy across all subject areas in post-primary education has emerged as a policy priority largely due to the attention afforded literacy by PISA results and concerns emerging out of whole school and/or subject evaluations. This paper based on the findings from the DES-funded Learning to Teach Study 1 (LETS1, 2008-09; Conway et al, 2011) undertaken prior to the National Numeracy and Literacy Study and the Irish Research Council-funded Learning to Teach Study 2 (LETS2, 2012-13; Conway et al, 2013) undertaken after the publication of the Strategy, provides a voice for and unique insight into student teachers’ changing understandings and experiences of literacy between 2008 and 2013.

Findings from LETS 1 (Murphy et al, 2013) revealed a student teacher voice which generally saw literacy in a very traditional way as not the remit or responsibility of the post-primary subject teacher. Findings from LETS 2 (Conway, et al, 2013), while echoing some of those of LETS 1, do reveal a student teacher voice which acknowledges the increasing salience of literacy as a school wide concern and responsibility, and their adoption of particular strategies to reflect the increasing pedagogical attention to literacy development in post-primary schools. Findings are discussed in terms of highlighting the changing perceptions of and practices in literacy in initial teacher education and in post-primary schools in Ireland.

Jean Henefer: Listening to the voice of marginalised young people: A survey of students with SEBD in Ireland.

While Student Voice has increasingly featured as both a research approach and a methodology for
educational review and reform, it risks portraying, inadvertently, a homogenised (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014), and therefore incomplete, version of young people’s experience. Children and young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, both in the short and long term, are academically and socially more likely to be at risk of marginalisation (Bradley, 2008; Carter & Lunsford, 2005; Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013). Equally, in contrast to their peers, children and young people with SEBD are given fewer chances to be heard (Macleod, 2013; Nind, Boorman, & Clarke, 2012; O’Connor et al., 2011; Tangen, 2009).

Creating opportunities for them to share their views can encourage students to take greater ownership of their education and build resiliency and a sense of self. Research (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Flynn, Shevlin, & Lodge, 2013; Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001) has shown that Student Voice can have a significant impact on the engagement, achievement, self-esteem and empowerment of students, particularly those with SEBD. This paper presents the findings of a Student Voice research study conducted by the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) with post primary students who had received individualised, intensive (“Level 3”) behaviour for learning support. An online survey was completed by 662 students in 50 schools. The instrument aimed to capture, from the students’ perspective, what they found challenging in school with regard to behaviour, had they benefitted in any way from the Level 3 support and whether they would be able to sustain their progress once the intervention was completed.

Maeve Gallagher: “Making the transition to third level – different voices and different experiences” – a review of findings from a conference held in TCD

Student Learning Development (SLD) services from Trinity College Dublin hosted a conference in 2015 funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning exploring transitions into third level from different perspectives. A key aim was to incorporate the student voice into discussions to understand what helped or hindered students in successfully making the transition to college.

Presentations were given on Peer Support (Athlone Institute of Technology) and an Orientation Programme for direct-entry students (Maynooth University). Student Learning Development (TCD) spoke about helping students to become independent learners and also presented the interim findings of a research study on the needs of international students at TCD. Students from Maynooth and Trinity College Dublin, including Student Union Officers and Student Mentors, contributed to discussions.

Main factors identified which help students to adjust to college included: a sense of belonging, realistic expectations of academic requirements and timely support at all stages of the students’ academic cycle. The themes which emerged from the conference confirm priorities identified in TCD Strategic
Plan 2014-19 around student engagement, transition, progression, employability and experiences. The main aim of this current session is to discuss in more detail the findings of this conference and look at ways to incorporate the voice of students and other stakeholders into the design and delivery of programmes aimed at helping students to successfully make the transition into third level education.
‘NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US’: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF STUDENTS

SESSION ABSTRACTS

TIMESLOT: SATURDAY 09:30AM – 11:30AM

SESSION 3074.3

Dana Mitra & Paul McCormick: Youth Participatory Action research in a democratic school.

In this United States case study, a student and teacher in a fledgling democratic middle school (ages 10-14) engaged in a class focused on YPAR—youth participatory action research. The larger goals of the course are to help encourage student agency and teach (directly and indirectly) qualitative and quantitative research methods. Written and presented from a practitioner’s perspective, this piece explores the opportunities that exist when student/teacher power structures are reconsidered and student voice is elevated within school discourse. We consider conceptual ways to structure such a course, as well as struggles with implementation.

We then focus on one project in the course—an effort to explore the school’s emerging dress code policy. The middle school student in this case study witnessed minor dress code violations that concerned her, because the existing dress code was not really a code at all—it was a broad statement of philosophy—so how could it be violated? (In her opinion) With the help and guidance of the teacher, this student set out to collect data from the small student body (~80 students) and conduct interviews, not only with students, but also with a similar magnet school in a neighbouring state. Upon collection of data and her thematic analysis, she made a presentation (at the urging of teacher) to the democratic body which governs school issues (comprised of students, staff, and parents). The issues of what kind of dress code is appropriate is now under consideration by that body and is the topic of conversation among students and staff.

Domnall Fleming: It’s all a contrivance’... Student voice and the student council.

The student council is the current central policy and practice construct for student voice at whole-school level in Irish post-primary schools. This research examines how student voice finds expression through the student council by exploring the policy discourse surrounding the council, and by engaging with the voices of council members, student council liaison teachers and school principals. The Education Act (1998) outlines the function of the student council as one that ‘shall promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school’ (27:3). This statement has defined the role of the council to date and places promotion of the interests of the
school as a primary function of the council, followed by the secondary role of ‘involvement of students in the affairs of the school’.

This qualitative research, based in three post-primary case-study schools, explores, through a social constructionist and post-structural theoretical framing, and from a rights-based democratic citizenship perspective, how the student council construct is bounded, controlled and subverted by a discourse of power and manipulation by school management towards tokenistic involvements for student council members.

The functional redundancy of the student council as a construct for student voice at whole-school level, and its partial redundancy as a construct to reflect pre-figurative democracy and active citizenship in Irish post-primary schools emerges from the research.

Finín Ó Seaghdá: ‘The Word was Made Flesh...A Quartet of Stories.’

The paper will take an initial look at some of the data generated about tattoos. These data were generated through public canvassing, opportunistic sampling and social media. Specifically it will look at narratives that give voice to the scripts that people choose to have visibly and invisibly inscribed on themselves, what Garcia-Merritt (2014) refers to as ‘body documents of identity.’

Social commentators such as De Castella (2014) talk about how the wearing of tattoos has not only moved from ‘subculture into mainstream culture’ but how it has been redefined as ‘tattoo art’ rather than a pedestrian craft.’ (McCabe, 1997) However, others believe that tattoos should remain anchored in the margins of such cultures and not in the mainstream. Kosut (2013) comments on the ‘commodification and popularisation of tattooing’ in the latter part of the 20th century, as bringing attention, even academic attention to tattoos and tattooing.

The presentation will look at the narratives generated around tattoos that mainly comprise of literacy. Being tattooed according to Chakraborty (2014) “can be seen as a form of permanent diary that cannot be taken away.” Atkinson (2003) notes “the tattoo possesses both communicative and performance aspects in its ability to be ‘read’ by others, and hence it is part of a person’s ‘doing identity’ by transmitting a definition of a person, who becomes the object of gaze’.

Through interview and dialogue, the paper will give voice to the performances of these particular identities and begin a dialogue on how tattoos can be viewed as a form of public literacy.
Ann Marie O'Brien: A case study of members’ experiences of participation in a Local Education Committee in a second level school in Ireland.

Local Education Committees (LEC) are a recognised structure within the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) in Ireland and operate in some primary and post-primary DEIS schools nationwide. The key purpose of an LEC is to identify and address issues in the community that affect children’s learning and life in the community, and that equally impact on parents’ lives. An LEC may comprise school personnel and representatives of voluntary and statutory bodies, marginalized parents and primary and post-primary students who may be drawn from school mentoring groups, student councils and transition year.

HSCL Coordinators invite parents to participate who are already involved in HSCL activities and provide them with necessary information and personal support in advance of their first meeting. This presentation focuses on the experiences of six parent members and three student members of an LEC operating in an urban co-educational community school in west Dublin. The experiences of these members were recorded as part of thesis work for a Master of Education (School Leadership) degree in 2014.

Group interviews were used to collect data from the members. The study explored parent and student members’ experience of participation in the school’s Local Education Committee, with consideration from members’ perspectives of how their involvement could be improved. Evidence from the study showed that the school’s Local Committee had promoted the democratic and meaningful involvement of these members. The parents suggested changes that could be made into the future to enhance the quality of members’ experience of participation.

Sinéad Burke: Feminist poststructuralist criticisms of power and voice.

Feminist research is contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, complete but not necessarily replicable, open to the environment and inclusive of emotions and events as experienced (Nielsen, 1990, p.6). Feminist research aims to create social change, strives to represent human diversity, includes the researcher as a person, frequently attempts to develop special relationships with the people studied and, finally, frequently defines a special relationship with the reader (Reinharz, 1992).

Within this presentation the concepts of power and voice will be critiqued through the academic feminist lens. Power will be explored through the categories of ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and most
relevant to the current research project, 'power as a systemic conception'. Foucault expressed interest in each of the three paradigms but at the end of his career, was particularly vocal about 'power as a systemic conception'.

'The multiplicity of force relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation; as the processes which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them;... thus forming a chain or system' (Foucault, 1979, p.92).

These relations of domination also imprint upon the concept of voice. Alison Cook Sather (2007) warns of the risk of essentialising student experiences and perspectives through elements of student voice work. Through the feminist perspective, Orner (1992) cautions researchers regarding certain forms of critical pedagogy, that one does not perpetuate relations of domination in the name of liberation (Orner, 1992, p. 75). The presentation will discuss the timeline of poststructuralist feminism regarding power and voice and will draw conclusions on the most apt concepts, frameworks and thinking appropriate to the researcher’s questions and study.

**Pauline Kerins & Evelyn Deacy: Training needs of special needs assistants: policy and practice in a time of transition.**

The early years of the 21st century has been a time of transition in the field of special educational provision. This transition from a policy of segregation and integration, to inclusion, has presented many challenges to policy makers and providers. Not least of these, is the challenge presented by the expansion in the special needs assistant (SNA) scheme, which has seen an increase in the number of SNAs from an estimated 300 in 1999, to over 10,000 by 2011. Although the increase in support personnel to schools has been welcomed (Logan, 2006), there have been some tensions evident between policy and practice in relation to the role of the SNA. While recent policy edicts (DES, 2014) attempt to address the role of the SNA, little attention has been paid to training of SNAs. While SNAs may be allocated to support students with diverse and complex special educational needs (SEN), there is, currently, no stipulation that they have any training relevant to their role. This paper presents findings of a study of the training needs of SNAs in 10 counties of the Border, Midlands and Western region. A range of training needs related to the role of the SNA, and the SEN of the students they support are highlighted in the post-primary context. Implications for policy are explored.

**SESSION 3098.3**

**Patricia McCarthy: Every voice counts: Including minority learners within education research.**

Until recently in Ireland the educational provision for blind/vision impaired children and young people occurred primarily within the special education system. Restructuring of the education system...
began in the 1990s, leading to changes in special education including a language of inclusive education within policy initiatives. This has resulted in blind/vision impaired young people being increasingly educated within mainstream schools. There has been a dearth of participation among disabled people within all realms of the research process. Therefore, disability research has not always accurately reflected the true experiences of this section of the population. A primary aim of this research was to give a voice to blind/vision impaired people; this was achieved by using a life history approach. Participants are the key players in life history research as their life stories are the primary data. Consequently, a salient aspect of this approach is its recognition of the importance of insider perspectives and allows the participant to be visible in the research process. Using excerpts from participant’s stories, this paper illustrates the importance of involving blind/vision impaired people at all stages of the research process to ensure that future education policy and practice is informed by the lived experiences of this section of the population.

**Carmel Maginn: Bridging the Gap – Power in Story Programme.**

Despite excellence in Educational provision, the premature ‘dropout’ rates before achievement, remain unacceptable. ‘Bridging the Gap’, a Story-based Social empowerment initiative, in conjunction with Formal Education and Community based programmes, aims to address through its non-threatening processes, deficits in confidence, self-belief and self-esteem, without which the sustainability of education to achievement level, are unsustainable.

Primary aims:

- Training provision in story-based strategies / processes for empowerment.
- Implementation of Story-based programmes in conjunction with the arts as a springboard to Literacy / Educational enablement in both formal and community education contexts.
- Addressing Social Inclusion issues through non-threatening story-based strategies.
- Promotion of positive attitudes towards Education Achievement of potential and successful outcomes in academic and life-skills.

Story’s universal nature represents a ‘gateway’ to personal and social empowerment, and the trigger for belief in one’s capacity to grow beyond perceived limitations. When applied with due care in conjunction with formal and community education programmes, Story’s transformative capabilities become a powerful springboard for personal growth, consolidation of self-belief, and a catalyst for the sustainability of educational engagement to achievement level. With Story as a springboard for enablement, possibilities override probability on the mind’s conceptual landscape. In consequence, a
belief in the power of ‘Self’ is triggered. Self-empowerment is the key element here, for power is never ‘given’. It is already present at the core of each individual and it is only our perceptions, often the constructs of society and not our own, that lead us to deny or doubt its presence in us.

**Michael Quinn: Embracing student voice in a ‘special school’**

Article Twelve of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) formally and explicitly recognises the rights of all children, and states that every child has a right to be heard and to be involved in all matters affecting him or her. This provision is particularly relevant in the context of students with special educational needs (SEN) as decisions are frequently taken by parents, teachers and psychologists concerning their education. Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, an individual education plan (IEP) is recommended for students with SEN. The IEP process provides a student-centred approach to assessing and meeting the learning needs of students.

It also provides the opportunity for students to have their voice heard in an environment controlled by professional adults. This paper discusses current practice when it comes to embracing student voice during the IEP process in an urban special needs school.
SESSION 3074.4

**Michael Shevlin:** *Including voices: the experiences of students with special educational needs in an Irish longitudinal study.*

This research describes a longitudinal study of special and inclusive education in Ireland. Data were collected from a national survey and field visits to primary, post-primary and special schools across the country. Illustrative case studies were developed in order to provide a picture of the influences of policy and provision on the experiences and outcomes for pupils with a diverse range of needs and abilities. This paper focuses, in particular, on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs. The research suggests that these children and young people are generally happy in school though some of the cohort who experienced ASD or EBD reported some ongoing difficulties in peer relationship. The implications of this research for understanding the experiences of these children and young people and how their voice can be included in decision making processes will be discussed.

**Emma Farrell:** *‘Know what I mean?’: Meaning structures in the narratives of young people who experience mental health problems.*

Narrative is the primary mode by which human experience is made meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). Through the construction of narratives, or stories, we organise experiences into temporally meaningful episodes. Research into meaning is the most basic of all inquiry. We continually strive to make sense of the world around us and those with whom we share it. However, meaning is one of the least explored facets of human existence. This is due largely to the challenge of accessing another’s consciousness, the realm in which the activity of meaning-making takes place. Polkinghorne (1988) argues that ‘the goal of research into the production of meaning is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of the structures and forms of the various meaning systems’ (p.10). While we may not have direct access to another’s meaning making process we can, through the collection of expressions of this process (interviews, the collection of artefacts, the writing of protocol etc.), access the structures they draw on to convert their experiences into meaningful units. These
structures help to reveal not only the meaning or the ‘sense’ people make of their experiences but how they make sense of these experiences.

This paper presents preliminary findings from a study which sought to examine the meaning third students level students ascribe to their experience of mental illness. By examining students’ stories a framework, or ‘plot,’ emerged by which the students’ structured their experiences of psychological distress. This framework, and what we can learn from examining the structures individuals use to create meaning, forms the basis of this presentation. It is proposed that we can learn, not only from listening to the content of the stories people tell, but from the very structure they use to create these stories.

**Carol Ann O’Sioráin:** *What did he say?* Echolaic / palilalia behaviour as communicative intent.

‘Enderman killed poor Steve! Enderman killed poor Steve! Enderman killed poor Steve!’

Echolalia is a pervasive disorder associated with autism and is regarded by many teachers and professionals as ‘meaningless, repetition of others words’ (Grossi, Marcone, Cinquegrana, & Gallucci, 2013). Buium and Stuecher (1974, p. 353) suggest that echolalia is ‘regarded as the environmental linguistic mirror’ drawing attention to the impact of stimuli on the language processes and development of the child with autism.

This paper seeks to provide emerging evidence of the challenges presented to class teachers in interpreting and understanding the communicative intent of ‘unconventional verbal behaviours’ (Prizant & Duchan, 1981) of pupils with autism. Further it seeks to answer questions;

- Does echolalic/palilalia behaviour provide us with insights into the child’s own language knowledge?
- Is it a literate behaviour and are teachers overlooking a valuable mode of communication for pupils with autism?

Literacy skills development in pupils with autism is an under-researched field and the use of qualitative observations in the natural learning setting of the classroom provides an opportunity to explore and inquire into this phenomenon (Palaíologou, 2012).

This project uses a ‘collective case study’ approach to explore and generate an understanding of how key skills in literacy are supported/developed for children with ASD in mainstream autism classrooms (Creswell, 2008; Stake, 2010). A collective case according to Stake (2005) is where a number of cases are considered to explore a general phenomenon. The focus of attention in this case study is literacy.
SESSION 3105.4

Jane O’Connell, Anna Huysmans, Anna O’Neill, Erika Larkin, Danielle McKinley, Esther Ozonyia, Michael Furmaga, Adeyinka Ayandeko, Qadidja Magema, Monta Jaffery, Amber Hussain, Shauna Dillon, Emer O’Reilly, Glenda McKinley, Agnieszka Maczka:

*Participatory Action Research: Engaging with student & parent voice to empower L2 learners in Irish.*

Harris (2006) has identified a significant decline in the level of proficiency of L2 learners of Irish in English-medium schools over a 17-year period. Murtagh (2007) also identified the lack of functional context for L2 learners of Irish which impacts on language use and motivation which is supported by Harris (2008) by maintaining that the Irish language is ‘sealed off’ in English-medium schools. What can be done to engage L2 learners of Irish and their parents to engage with the Irish language?

Drawing on the latest research in the field of action research, student empowerment and her experiences of language learning and teaching, the presenter has responded to this situation by designing an action research study to explore students’ and parents’ attitudes and motivation towards the Irish language, and to identify what can be done collectively to empower students and parents to engage with the Irish language both inside and outside of the language classroom. A group of participating students and parents will co-present an overview of their experience of the language project to date which is now in its third action cycle. Agreed interventions include peer tutoring in the language classroom, the launch of an online learning zone for students and student-parent Irish language students. She will also highlight the value of ongoing reflection and evaluation during each action cycle with reference to a reflective journal, ongoing student and parent interviews, and student lesson evaluations. The initial findings of this participatory action research project which reflects on the role of student and parent empowerment, teaching pedagogy, a blended learning platform and student-parent Irish language tutoring shall be discussed.

Domnall Fleming: *Student voice in the classroom in Irish post-primary schools.*

Student voice in the classroom explores the expression of student voice in the relational and pedagogical classroom space occupied by students and their teachers, and how its affordance can impact on classroom experiences for students and teachers.

Student voice, in the context of this research, refers to the inclusion of students in dialogic consultation with their teacher on decisions that shape their experiences in classrooms. It is fundamental to a rights-based perspective that facilitates students to have a voice and a say in learning and pedagogy.
Theorised within socio-cultural (social constructivist), social constructionist and post-structural frames, the complexity of student voice emerges from its conceptualisation and enactment within the classroom. Exploring student voice in the classroom through this case-study research presents positive findings in the context of relationships, pedagogical change and students’ engagement, participation and achievement. The power and authority of the teacher and discordant student voices, particularly relating to examinations, presents challenges affecting teachers’ practice and students’ expectations. Current policy initiatives in Irish education have begun to situate student voice in pedagogy and as dialogic consultation at classroom and whole-school level. This paper endorses the necessity for and the sustainability of such a positioning with the author further arguing that it should not become the instrumental student voice of data source, accountability and performativity.

**Pauline Kerins: The perspectives of principals, teachers, parents and pupils on why some pupils transfer from mainstream to special schools.**

Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities represent one of the largest categories of special educational need in our schools (NCSE, 2010; Stevens and O’Moore, 2009). Despite a policy of inclusion, recent years have seen an increase in the number of pupils in this category enrolling in special schools, particularly between the ages of 12 and 15 (Kelly and Devitt, 2010). This presentation draws on findings from a broader study which explored the perspectives of a cohort of principals, teachers, parents and pupils on the reasons why some pupils transfer from mainstream to special schools (Kerins, 2014; Kerins and Day, 2012). The focus of this presentation is on the perspectives of the pupils who transferred. A multiple case study design was employed, with four special schools for pupils with MGLD participating as cases in this study. Pupils’ perspectives on the reasons for transfer and differences between educational provision in mainstream and specialist settings are outlined and discussed in the context of dilemmas of difference (Artiles, 1998; Norwich, 2008) which arise when social values underpinning a policy of inclusion appear to conflict with one another. The role played by pupils in the decision to transfer is also addressed in order to explore issues relating to the balance of power in the decision-making process. The findings highlight dilemmas of difference with regard to curriculum, placement, identification and participation.

**SESSION 3098.4**

**Colin McElroy: Inclusion and Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)- Parental perspectives.**

It is widely accepted that many challenges persist for governments in providing an educational system that truly caters for diversity. Inclusion as a policy is defined as a process based upon the presence, acceptance, participation and achievement of all pupils in mainstream schools. Since the EPSEN Act
(2004), increased numbers of pupils with ASD have been attending mainstream schools in Ireland. Despite these advances, there has been much discussion and debate on the overall effectiveness of inclusive provision. Definitional inconsistencies and differing viewpoints on the conceptual understanding of inclusion have resulted in varied outcomes for pupils with ASD. Many barriers to inclusive practices still exist on many levels, with many concerns being raised about pupils’ academic and social engagement in schools. In addition, pupils with ASD are at an increased risk of experiencing bullying and being excluded in schools.

In Ireland, parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children (Ireland, 1937). The important role of parents in the education of their children with special educational needs has been acknowledged in successive policy documents published in recent years. A multiple case study describes the experiences of inclusion for thirteen primary students with ASD across four primary schools in Leinster. Each school has access to an ASD special class. Parents’ experiences and viewpoints of inclusion will be presented here. Preliminary findings highlight the benefits and challenges of inclusive provision. The importance of stakeholder voice will be highlighted. Emerging themes and the implications for future policy and practice will be discussed.

**Áine Lynch: Partnership Schools Ireland – Supporting the parent, learner and community voice in primary schools.**

Partnership Schools Ireland is a joint initiative established by the National Parents Council and the Irish Primary Principal(s) Network. It was launched in 2014 by the Minister for Education and Skills and has been set up to co-ordinate, train and support primary schools in Ireland to work in an evidenced based partnership approach to improving outcomes for children.

Partnership schools follow a research-based approach which develops a programme of school, family and community partnerships to increase student success. It is an opportunity for teachers, support staff, pupils, parents and community members to work together to discuss the current work of the school as outlined in the school’s improvement plan and to find ways to enhance this work, from a variety of viewpoints ultimately for the benefit of students. This work is carried out in a school by an ‘Action Team for Partnership’ (ATP). The model for this evidence based programme originated in America and is coordinated by the National Network of Partnership Schools in Johns Hopkins University under the leadership of Dr Joyce Epstein.

Eight schools in Ireland are currently operating an Action Team for Partnership and there is a plan to expand this to 88 over the next 3 years as a more in depth pilot. The student and parent voice are key in ATP and have contribute significantly to curriculum, behaviour and partnership plans in the school.
Michelle Bartlett & Conor McGuckin: 22q: What’s that then? Using ‘voice’ to explore how inclusive we are of children with rare diseases.

The Salamanca Statement and the meeting of the World Education Forum in Dakar has set the agenda for inclusion in education and society for persons with special educational needs / disability. The Inclusion in Education and Society (IES) research group in TCD leads on the education of students and professionals working in this area of education. Whilst the National Institute for Intellectual Disability has been incorporated into the work of IES< further attention is required in relation to full inclusion of children and adults with a rare disease (e.g. 22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome). This paper reviews developments thus far and sets the agenda for a new body of ‘voice’ research that will aid the full inclusion of these marginalised persons. Employing novel theoretical and methodological approaches (e.g., crowd funding, crowd sourcing, nudge theory and methods, student voice, participatory, Delphi methodology), the importance of a psychological lens to educational policy and practice will be discussed.
FOLLOW THE CONVERSATION ONLINE

Over the course of the conference, please feel free to take to Twitter and post your questions, thoughts, comments and photos from the Inclusion in Education & Society Research Group’s inaugural Learner Voice Conference.

#VoiceConf15

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