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through research*

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## **Scottish Educational Research Association Annual Conference**

**18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**“Education as (if) the whole earth mattered”**

**University of Aberdeen**

## Symposium S003

### Education as if Research Mattered

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### Presenters:

Nikki Gauld, Jane Green, Robbie Huxtable, Ruth Johnson Leigh - Dumfries and Galloway Council

### Outline

The purpose of this symposium is to provide an opportunity for four Teacher Researchers from Dumfries and Galloway to present their findings from research undertaken during a period of secondment. The secondments were funded as part of a successful partnership bid to the Scottish Government Initiative to Facilitate an Increase in Masters-Level Learning (submitted by Education Services D&G, led by Brydson, and the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Glasgow Dumfries Campus, led by Odena). After the Teacher Researchers were recruited through an open competition they organised themselves in a self-directed community of practice calling on the support of others when needed. The Teacher Researchers designed and carried out their educational research autonomously, based on their own professional interests but also local authority priorities concerning vulnerable learners and reducing barriers to learning. Presenters discuss topics including additional support needs, barriers to parental involvement, looked-after children, and an early intervention programme. The symposium will provide the opportunity also to consider the broader questions of the role of research in professional and vocational development and how small scale action research might impact on policy and education locally and further afield. Addressing the conference call, the symposium papers and their authors are living examples of '*new research possibilities...new types of collaboration among academics and practitioners*' (Call for Papers, p. 1). The discussant will offer a critique of the symposium as a whole, using as a background the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Donaldson, 2011) which is the focus of her doctorate, due for Viva examination before the SERA conference.

## **Paper 1**

### **Teacher Researcher Case Study: Additional support needs of young children, Primary 1-3, in Kinship Care and in mainstream education**

Nikki Gauld, Dumfries and Galloway Council

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**Keywords:** Case Study; Kinship Care; Phenomenology; Free Association Narrative Interview

Existing research suggests that young children in Kinship Care, like other categories of 'looked after' children, are more likely than the general population to exhibit a level of social and emotional and behavioural difficulty and to have poorer educational outcomes. These 5 case studies, based on interviews with each child's carer/s (F.A.N.I approach) and at least 1-2 teachers and support for learning assistants working with each child, as well as observations of (5 hours of each child in school) and a semi-structured interview/ creative conversation with each child, allow for a detailed comparative analysis of the experiences and needs of a small sample. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is used to identify the issues and themes; the findings will be linked to relevant theories of child development and neuroscience in order to consider impact on learning and implications for practice locally and further afield.

## **Paper 2**

### **Parental Involvement: Barriers and Benefits**

Jane Green, Dumfries and Galloway Council

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**Keywords:** Parents; Achievement; Involvement; Barriers

This project aimed to examine the impact on children's learning and identify the barriers to parental involvement. This was done by the use of 10 semi-structured interviews and 4 focus groups to gather opinions from parents across, Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools, and how they see their role in their child's education. Epstein's framework of six types of involvement was used as a basis for discussion with parents to ascertain whether they could identify and had opportunity for all/some of this involvement in their child's education. Research is still in progress but findings to date show parents are keen for involvement and wish to reciprocate. Barriers include: not knowing how to achieve increased involvement and feeling that they lack skills; schools are perceived as middle-class institutions and can appear unwelcoming to working-class parents; schools feel unfairly criticised when parents are involved in decision making. Interim findings show parental involvement has a positive effect, yet significant gaps exist between home and school. Schools are striving to fill the gaps, but need to look for new methods to reach these parents.

### **Paper 3**

#### **Successful Learners: Views of 'Success' from young people who are Looked-After**

Robbie Huxtable, Dumfries and Galloway Council  
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**Keywords:** Looked-after; Success; Framework; School

This study aimed to investigate what looked-after young people, between the ages of 12 and 14 in Dumfries and Galloway, think success is. Existing research in this area suggests looked-after children link being successful with stability, high standards and feeling cared for, however previous projects have predominantly focused on young people who have left care. This project is intended to give classroom practitioners an insight into the way these young people, who are currently looked after, interact with our schools and their views of success within it. The data was gathered through the use of 8 semi-structured interviews in conjunction with the local Listen2Us group who work with looked-after children across the region. The initial findings of this project suggest similar themes to prior research but with particular emphasis on the role and influence of the teacher. The resulting data was analysed using Framework Analysis to produce a descriptive account of the data. Implications for practice will be considered, which may be of relevance for professionals working with looked-after children locally and further afield.

### **Paper 4**

#### **Chatter Matters: Kelvin Stop Head Butting My Bottom!**

Ruth Johnson Leigh, Dumfries and Galloway Council  
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**Keywords:** Talking; Listening; Intervention; Collaboration

This study aimed to explore the phenomenon of children entering Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) with impoverished language skills and to investigate the effects and relevance of an early intervention speech and language programme. This study will also look to examine if there is a contradiction between current play-based pedagogy and early intervention strategies when it comes to tackling the issue of language delay. A narrative intervention programme called Talking, Listening, Questions (Nursery Narrative, 2007) was used with a group of children from within an ELCC setting and compared with another school of similar social deprivation. Five children were selected from each setting and assessed by the Speech and Language Therapist and then again after two terms. The findings will come to light later in the year but it is hoped that results will mirror both the language gains from a Talking, Listening, Questions Pilot study with Primary 1 in Dumfries and Galloway (2013) and the existing evidence (I CAN, 2007) which is positive about the use of this narrative intervention programme.

#### **Abstract of the critique of the symposium as a whole**

Recent policy discourse in Scottish education positions teachers as "reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals" (Donaldson, 2011, p. 14) and as 'key actors' in shaping and leading educational change. Anna will discuss the four papers in light of this specific policy agenda and the wider context of educational reform in Scotland. In doing so, she will consider the complex relationship between teacher education policy and teacher research, and raise key questions around the development of a research culture in Scottish schools. The discussant's own research is concerned with the implementation of the recommendations from 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Donaldson, 2011), and the work of these Teacher Researchers, and indeed the development of this symposium, could be seen as a good illustration of policy intentions being put into practice.