

Student-teacher dialogues to promote inclusion: implications for school leaders

Prof Kyriaki (Kiki) Messiou
k.messiou@soton.ac.uk

ESHA (European School Heads Association) Biennial Conference
"School Leadership 2020+: Trends and Challenges"
18-21 May 2022

Bus journeys



Bus journey incident

A secondary school student gets on the bus. Half asleep, half awake, he sits in front of me. At the next bus stop a secondary school girl comes on and sits next to him. They start chatting. The boy looks sad. The girl asks him if everything is OK. He starts telling her how his father beat his mother up again this morning and kicked her out of the house, and how upset he is about it. He asks the girl to promise that she will not say anything to anyone, that this will be their secret, and she agrees to that. She also tries to reassure him that things will get better...

Reflective questions

- What happened when the boy went to school?
- Is it possible that this boy was in a position to pay attention to his teachers and engage with learning on that day?
- How would his teachers respond to him being absent minded? Would they approach him and ask him sensitively what was wrong? Would they shout at him?
- If they knew, would they have any expectations from that boy on that particular day?
- How many students might be going to school with similar 'baggage' every morning?
- Do teachers truly give students the opportunity to express themselves and reveal such issues that have a bearing on their learning?

What more can schools do?

How can we develop more
inclusive and democratic
contexts through
student-teacher
dialogue?

Today's presentation

- How can we include all students in schools through an innovative approach, *Inclusive Inquiry*?
- What are the implications of using such approaches for school leaders?

Part 1: Key
concepts

Part 2: One
example from a
research
programme

Part 3:
Implications for
school leaders

Features of inclusion

- Inclusion is a process
- Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers
- Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students
- Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement

(Ainscow, 2007)

Inclusion, students' voices and dialogues

- Inclusion is about everyone having opportunities for choice and self-determination. In education, it means listening to and valuing what children have to say, regardless of age or labels. (Mittler, 2000)
- Students' voice movement - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Involving students as researchers/co-researchers
- Dialogue - "is more than conversation, it is the building of shared narrative....Dialogue is about engagement with others through talk to arrive at a point one would not get to alone" (Lodge, 2005)

Two interconnected studies

- Responding to diversity by engaging with students' voices: a strategy for teacher development (2011-2014) (secondary schools)
- Reaching the 'hard to reach': inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue (2017-2020) (primary schools)



“Reaching the ‘hard to reach’: inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue” (2017-2020)



Research agenda

To find ways of reaching out to all of our students, especially those seen as being 'hard to reach'

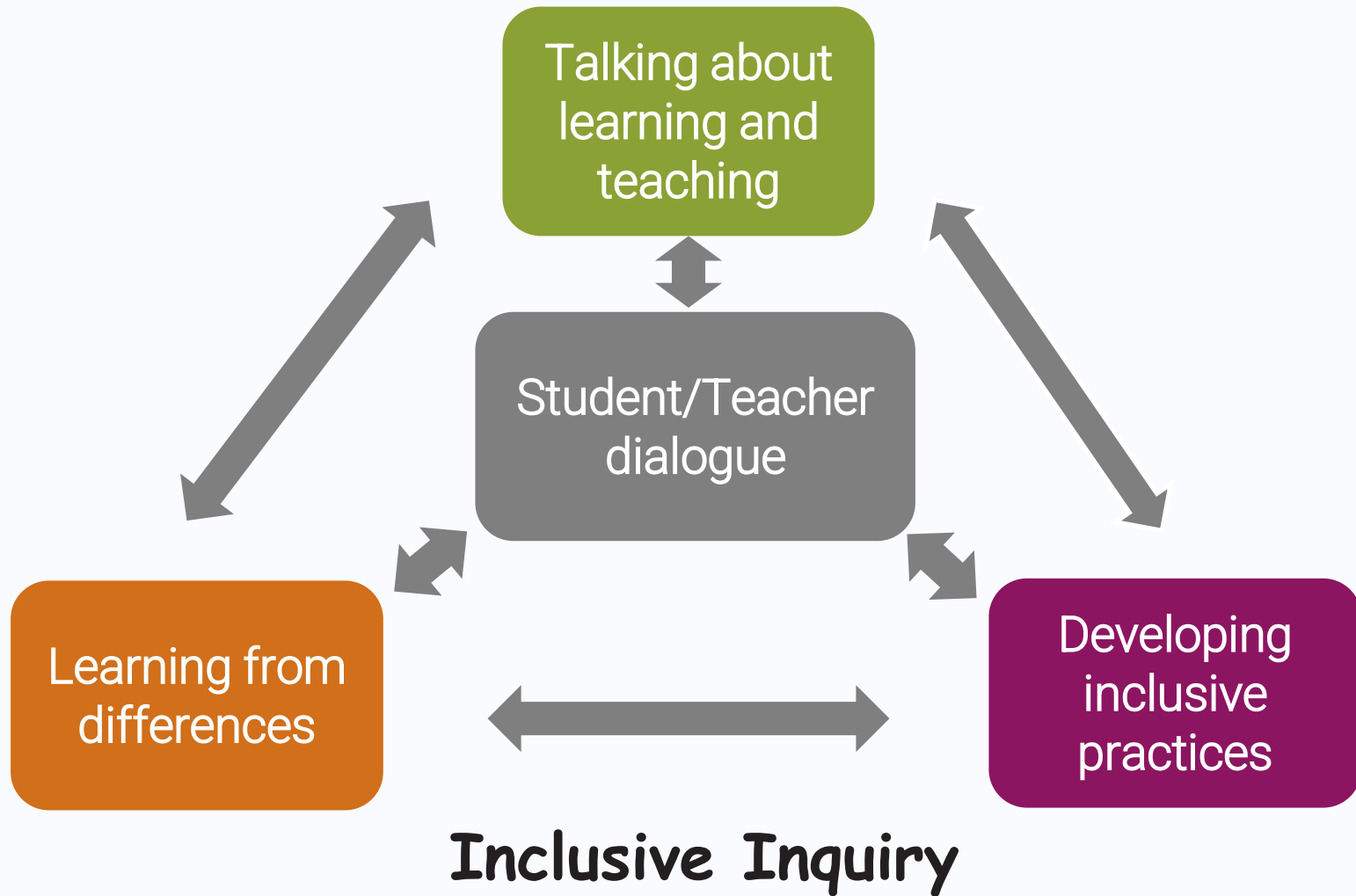


Who are the 'hard to reach'?

- Any child can be seen as 'hard to reach' at some point in school
- Through *Inclusive Inquiry* we focus on how lessons can be hard to reach sometimes, rather than blaming 'hard to reach' children
- We aim to develop more inclusive lessons through dialogues between children and teachers

What did the project involve?

- Three cycles of collaborative action research
- Researchers supported and monitored the developments in schools
- Impact on teachers' thinking and practices
- Impact on all children's engagement, particularly those seen as 'hard to reach'



Phase 1: Plan



Phase 2: Teach



Phase 3: Analyse



An example of *Inclusive Inquiry* in practice from one English school



**Wordsworth
Primary School**
Bringing out the best in everyone



Training children researchers: Observing lessons – What do we need to look out for?



Which photo
shows the best
learning?

Are they
learning?

How do we
know?



Training student researchers



"I saw people talking but I realised when I saw them for a bit longer they were talking on task, because I realised that from far away because they were talking with their heads down writing. That kind of tells me they can't be talking about something that's not what they are supposed to be talking about"

Student researcher



**Gathering the
views of our
classmates**

Planning the lesson together

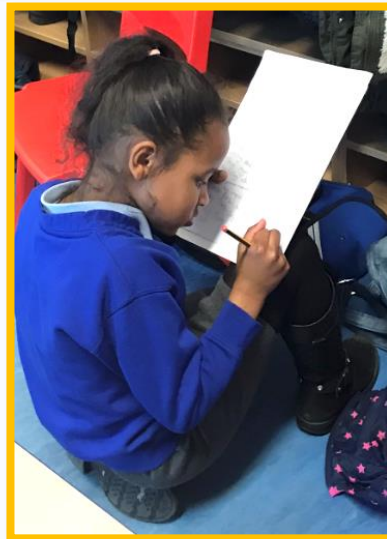


The lessons



Teaching the lesson

Student-
researchers
and
teachers
observing
the lesson



Time to analyse
and adapt the
planning!



Being a student researcher...



With the support of the
Erasmus+ programme
of the European Union



Impacts include:

On students:

- Engagement in lessons
- Improvements in confidence
- Including children with history of difficult behaviour

Improved relationships:

- Between children
- Between teachers
- Between children and teachers

Teacher development:

- Focus on details of practice
- Becoming more sensitive regarding individual pupils
- Sharing techniques

What are the implications for school leaders ?

Fullan (2001) describes five mutually reinforcing components necessary for effective leadership in times of change:

- moral purpose;
- understanding the change process;
- **relationship building;**
- **knowledge creation and sharing;** and
- coherence making.

Inclusive Inquiry can facilitate such efforts but it needs the commitment and support of school leaders, not least for addressing challenges of implementation

Change in organisational cultures

'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.'

Headteacher

Key question for school leaders

- What kind of school do you wish to create?
- Schools as a way to the development of democratic and inclusive societies
- “If democracy matters, it must be seen to matter” (Fielding, 2015)
- Inclusive Inquiry can support such efforts

Final thoughts

... practitioners and students embark on journeys all the time. Those collaborative journeys can be seen as ways of reaching out to all learners and creating schools that are all the more inclusive.

Messiou, K. (2012) Confronting marginalisation in education: A framework for promoting inclusion. London: Routledge.

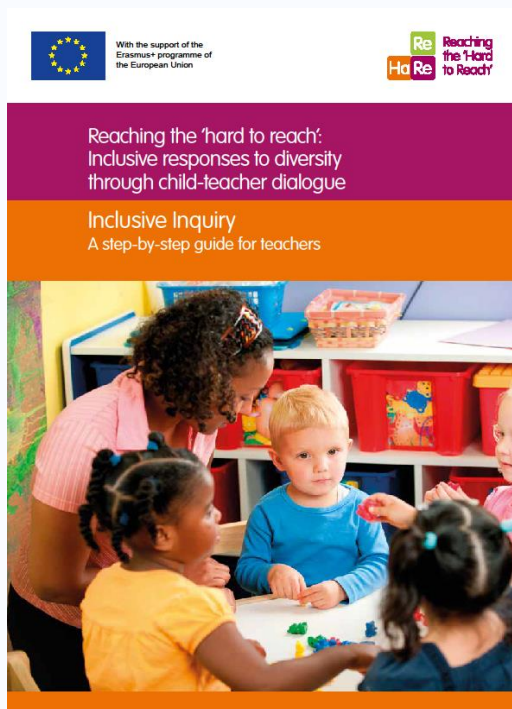
Make sure no child misses the bus




Getty/istock image

Booklets (free download in five languages)

<https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/publication/>

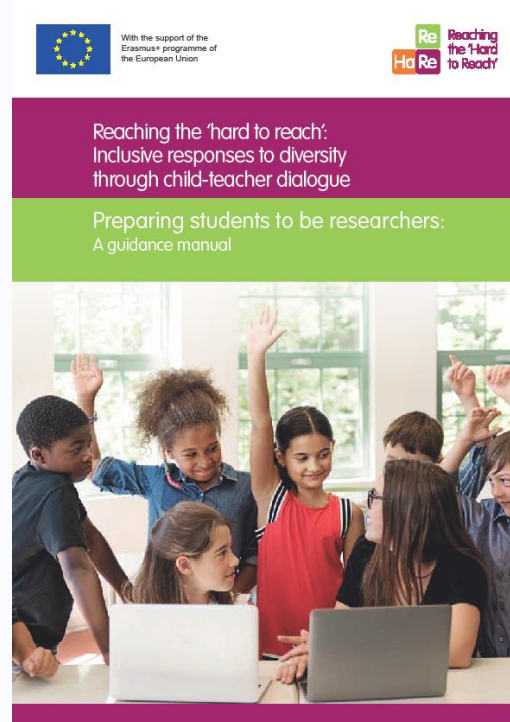



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union




Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

Inclusive Inquiry
A step-by-step guide for teachers

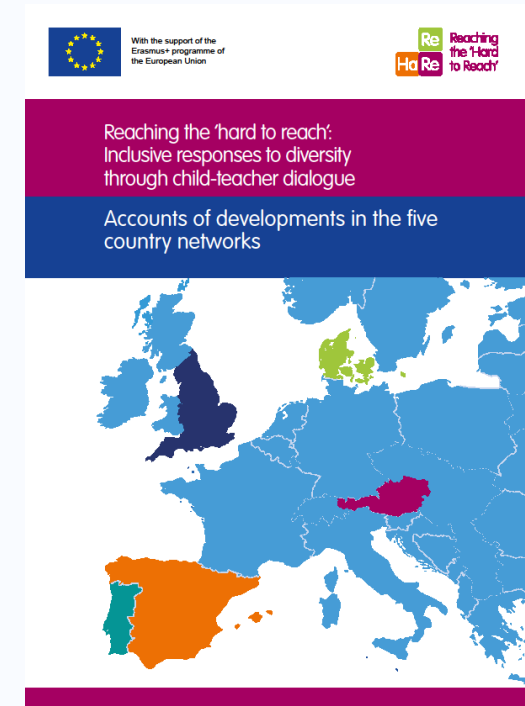



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union




Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

Preparing students to be researchers:
A guidance manual

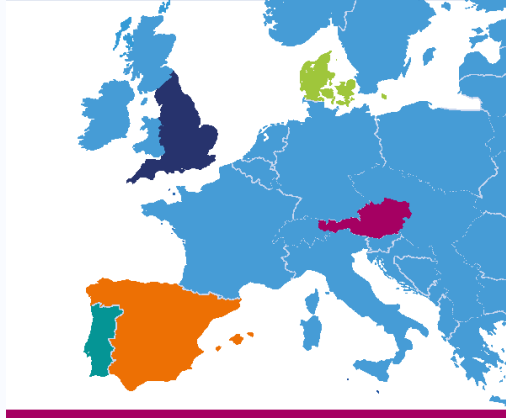


With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union



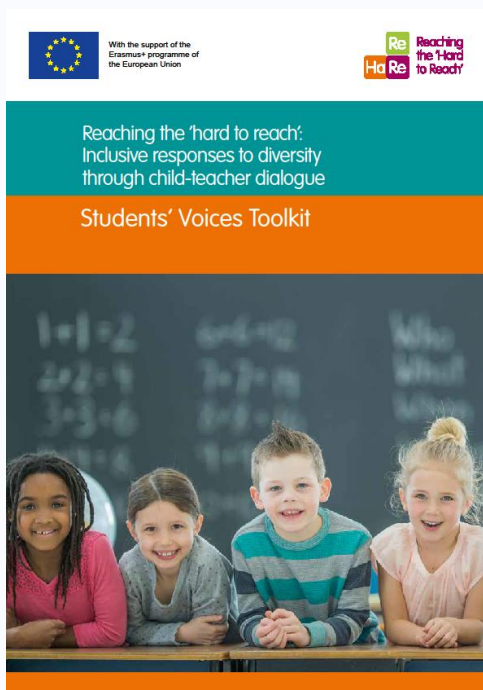
Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

**Accounts of developments in the five
country networks**




Booklets (free download in five languages)

<https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/publication/>

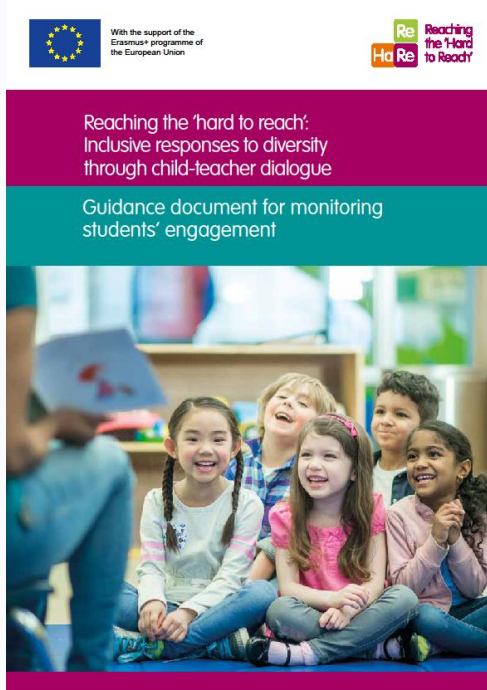



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union




Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

Students' Voices Toolkit




With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union



Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

Guidance document for monitoring
students' engagement



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union



Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity
through child-teacher dialogue

Guidance document for monitoring
teachers' thinking and practices



For more information:
<https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/>

Video:
<https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/video/>

References

- Ainscow, M. (2007) From special education to effective schools for all: a review of progress so far, in L.Florian (Ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*. London: SAGE.
- Fielding, M. (2015) Student voice as deep democracy, in C. McLaughlin (Ed.) *The connected school: A design for wellbeing*. (p.26-32) London: Pearson NCB.
- Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lodge, C. (2005) From hearing voices to engaging in dialogue: Problematizing student participation in school improvement, *Journal of Educational Change*, 6(2), 125-146.
- Messiou, K. (2012) *Confronting marginalisation in education: A framework for promoting inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Mittler, P. (2000) *Working towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts*. London: David Fulton.
- United Nations (1989) *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UN.

Relevant publications

Messiou, K., Ainscow, M., Galbally, L., & Page, R. (2020) Primary school children becoming researchers: The use of Inclusive Inquiry, *Impact*, <https://impact.chartered.college/article/primary-school-children-becoming-researchers-inclusive-inquiry/>

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

Messiou, K. (2019). [The missing voices: students as a catalyst for promoting inclusive education](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. DOI: [10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326)

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](https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.966726). *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27(1), 45-61. DOI: [10.1080/09243453.2014.966726](https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.966726)

Messiou, K., & Ainscow, M. (2015). [Responding to learner diversity: student views as a catalyst for powerful teacher development?](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.002) *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 51, 246-255. DOI: [10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.002)

Messiou, K. (2018). [Collaborative action research: facilitating inclusion in schools](https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1436081). *Educational Action Research*, 1-13. DOI: [10.1080/09650792.2018.1436081](https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1436081)

Messiou, K., & Hope, M. A. (2015). [The danger of subverting students' views in schools](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1024763). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(10), 1009-1021. DOI: [10.1080/13603116.2015.1024763](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1024763)