This Year’s Conference Papers
Oct 2013 - Sept 2014

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The new centre has been initiated by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, and will be jointly funded over the next three years by central strategic and HAS funds. Professor Sugata Mitra has been appointed Director and he will be supported by Associate Directors, Professor Liz Todd and Professor David Leat. A launch event is planned for 10 November in the Courtyard, Newcastle University.

The concept of Self Organised Learning Environments (SOLES) developed from Sugata Mitra’s ‘Hole in the Wall’ experiments carried out between 1999 and 2006. This research demonstrated children’s ability to learn independently using computers in groups. After joining ECIL in 2006 as Professor of Educational Technology, Sugata has worked alongside colleagues within and beyond CfLaT on a number of different projects. It is through this work that the concept of SOLES has emerged.
A busy summer of research

It has been a particularly busy summer for CfLaT members involved in research about supporting children and young people in and around school.

Liz Todd and Karen Laing have spent the summer in the West End of Newcastle interviewing practitioners from a range of professions (including education, NHS, social care and voluntary sectors) about the potential to come together to form a ‘Children’s Community’ (otherwise known as a Children’s Zone). This work is ongoing throughout the autumn as big public sector changes are taking place, and there are plans for an event later in the year to explore the findings and work out a way forward. For more information about Children’s Zones, please visit http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Developing-Childrens-Zones-summary.pdf or contact Karen by email.

Karen Laing has also been working with James Law and Cristina McLean and colleagues in North Tyneside Council to understand how schools work with other professions to address the speech, language and communication needs of children. This work has involved interviews with school staff, speech therapists, health visitors, children’s centres, educational psychologists and others to understand how people work together to address these needs.

In addition, Karen has been commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation to work alongside colleagues at Mentor UK to evaluate M-PACT+ (Moving Parents and Children Together). M-PACT+ is an intervention devised by Action on Addiction who are working with Place2Be to offer help through schools for families struggling with the effects of substance abuse. M-PACT+ is being offered in four areas of the country (including the North East) and Karen has been talking to family members, including children and young people about the impact of the course on them. This work will continue throughout 2015. Also continuing throughout 2015 is the evaluation of Thinking Differently in Scotland, a project looking at harnessing the skills of young people to address issues of all ability. This year involves Karen, Liz Laing, Liz Todd and Jill Clark from CfLaT, Dorothy Newbury-Birch from IHS and Ivi Papps from Tecls Ltd.

Liz Todd and Karen Laing have also recently been commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation, alongside NatCen, to look at the link between out of school activities and attainment. This work is in the planning stages, and schools will be recruited over the autumn to take part. Karen and Liz will be interviewing school staff, providers, parents and primary aged children in the North East to explore their experiences. This work will complement quantitative and qualitative work being carried out by NatCen in the South of England. This study is due to report in 2016.

From a busy summer, follows a busy and exciting year of research ahead!

For further information about any of these studies please contact Karen at k.j.c.laing@ncl.ac.uk.

SCHOOL SPACE AND DIAMOND RANKING IN GERMANY

Pam Woolner and Ulrike Thomas travelled to Koblenz, Germany, in July to take part in a symposium about school space.

Entitled Schools for the Future, this symposium was the second in a series focusing on the impact of school architecture on learning processes. The intention was to continue dialogue between education researchers, architects and teachers.

Prof Ulrike Studler-Altmann of Koblenz University gave the opening lecture. Constructed environment as a learning environment and CfLaT partner Anna Kristin Blumbergdottir presented on School buildings and classroom environment in Iceland.

In between these two talks, Pam and Ulrike introduced the audience to Diamond Ranking as a way to facilitate discussion and build understanding of the elements of a ‘good place for learning’. We talked through the theory and practice, drawing on our published research investigating learning environments in the UK. Then participants had the opportunity for to complete collaborative diamond rankings to explore their own ideas about learning space and experience directly the diamond ranking activity.

This also provided the mainly German-speaking audience with a welcome chance to talk together in their first language!

For more information, contact Pamela.Woolner@ncl.ac.uk

RESEARCH TEA TIMETABLE (Autumn 2014)

Research teas are an opportunity for staff, postgraduate students and other interested parties from outside of the University to get together to discuss current research, whilst also enjoying a cup of tea and a biscuit. Sessions are intentionally informal, with pre-parties from outside of the University to get together to discuss current research, whilst also enjoying a cup of tea and a biscuit. Sessions are intentionally informal...

Wednesday 19th November 2014

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The FaSMEd project has announced that three local comprehensive schools will be working with the project team:

St Thomas More RC Academy (http://stthomasmoreacademy.org.uk/) in North Shields has about 1700 students. It has Specialist School Status in Mathematics and Computing and the mathematics department has been a research partner for many years with Newcastle University using TI hand held and networking technology.

Park View School (www.parkviewonline.org.uk) has approximately 1400 students in Chester le Street, County Durham. The school was designated a Language College in 1997 and is a holder of the full International Schools Award with curriculum links to schools in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and China.

George Stephenson High School (www.gsghs.org.uk) in Killingworth has about 950 students. It is named after ‘the father of the railways’, George Stephenson, who came from the area and an engineer who designed and built the first passenger steam locomotive and the first railway in Britain (and the world). The school is one of the first in Britain to house the ‘school in the cloud’ developed by Professor Sugata Mitra at Newcastle University.

We are very pleased that there has been a great deal of interest from schools across the partner countries wanting to become involved in the research process that will take place between teachers, students and academic partners.

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