

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE

Digest

Here begins the digest comprising all the components presented below. 8-12 lines roughly

Key words:

Autism; special education; inclusion; disability; communication; diversity; teaching

Description

I am a Senior Lecturer in Special Education at the University of East London and Principal Investigator of the Autistic School Staff Project (ASSP), funded by the John and Lorna Wing Foundation. I was originally a teacher, and then completed my PhD at the University of Birmingham, where I was also Project Manager of the Transform Autism Education project which was funded by the European Commission. I subsequently completed an ESRC postdoctoral Fellowship at King's College London. My book, 'Inclusive Education for Autistic Children', is published by Jessica Kingsley, who have also commissioned another book based on the ASSP. I have had a lifelong passion for language and communication.

My research concerns the inclusion of autistic children and young people in schools, with a particular focus on language and communication and theories of interpretation. More recently, I have turned my attention to autistic school staff in range of roles e.g. Head teacher, Teaching Assistant, Teacher. This is based on core principles of inclusion, disability rights and social justice in education, and incorporates, inter alia, the alternative socialisation and communication styles of autistic teachers.

[1] ISSUE / FIELD 1

Educational inclusion for autistic children and young people

Key findings:

- Autistic children are not often successfully included in school settings
- The focus is too often on their perceived deficits
- Interventions to support communication can result in a failure to recognise the children's own ways of communicating and interacting
- Respecting the learning styles of autistic children is more likely to result in educational inclusion, as well as making a positive impact on their well-being and outcomes

Issue further elaborated in:

Books/chapters

Wood, R. (2020) 'From Difference to Diversity in School.' In Milton, D., Murray, D., Ridout, S., Martin, N. and Mills, R. (eds), *The Neurodiversity Reader*, Shoreham-by-Sea: Pavilion.

Wood, R. (2019) *Inclusive Education for Autistic Children: Helping Children and Young People to Learn and Flourish in the Classroom*, London and New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Wood, R. (under review) 'From Disempowerment to Agency: Supporting the Communication of Autistic Children in Schools.' In Ryan, S. and Milton, D. (eds), *Handbook of Critical Autism Studies*, Abingdon: Routledge. (Invited author).

Wood, R. (2020) 'The wrong kind of noise: Understanding and valuing the communication of autistic children in schools.' *Educational Review*, 72(1): 111-130.

Journal articles

Wood, R. and Happé, F. (2020) 'Barriers to tests and exams for autistic pupils: Improving access and longer-term outcomes.' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603116.2020.1866685>

Wood, R. (2020) 'The wrong kind of noise: Understanding and valuing the communication of autistic children in schools.' *Educational Review*, 72(1): 111-130.

Eguiguren Istuany, O. and Wood, R. (2020) 'Perspectives on educational inclusion from a small sample of autistic pupils in Santiago, Chile.' *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 22(1): 210–220.

Wood, R. (2019) 'Autism, intense interests and support in school: From wasted efforts to shared understandings.' *Educational Review*, doi: 10.1080/00131911.2019.1566213

Guldberg, K., Achtypi, A., D'Alonzo, L., Laskaridou, K., Milton, D., Molteni, P. and Wood, R. (2019) 'Using the value creation framework to capture knowledge co-creation and pathways to impact in a transnational community of practice in autism education.' *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2019.1706466>

[2] ISSUE / FIELD 2

The experiences and needs of autistic school staff in the UK

Key findings:

- Autistic educators are working in a range of roles in schools
- They experience a range of difficulties, many of which are similar to those experienced by autistic pupils e.g. communication differences and a lack of support and understanding
- Autistic school staff do not always feel able to be open about being autistic
- The difficulties they experience can lead to them not progressing the profession, or dropping out altogether
- Some autistic school staff have had more positive experiences
- When the circumstances are right, autistic school staff can make a positive contribution to the education profession, and facilitate educational inclusion, particular of autistic children and those with other types of special educational need.
- We cannot expect to facilitate educational inclusion of children with disabilities if we do not support diversity and inclusion in the school workforce.

Issue further elaborated in:

Wood, R. (2020) *Pilot Survey of Autistic School Staff Who Work or Have Worked in an Education Role in Schools in the UK: Initial Summary Report*. University of East London repository: <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/87w2v>

Wood, R. and Milton, D. (2018) 'Reflections on the value of autistic participation in a tri-national teacher-training project through discourses of acceptance, othering and power.' *British Journal of Special Education*, 45 (2): 157-171.

Wood, R. and Happé, F. (under review) 'Do autistic children need autistic teachers? Findings from an online survey in the UK.' *Disability & Society*.

Wood, R., Crane, L., Happé, F., Morrison, A. and Moyse, R. (in preparation) 'Narratives and Perspectives of Autistic Teachers: Facilitating Diversity and Inclusion in Schools.' London and New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Project website: <https://autisticschoolstaffproject.com/>

[3] ISSUE / FIELD 3

Experiences of parents of autistic children and young people during lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic

Key findings:

- Parents' experiences are mixed
- Many experienced high levels of anxiety e.g. concerns about who would care for their child if they fell ill
- Many also experienced positives e.g. not having to deal with external agencies
- Some parents' felt that lockdown was a version of the social isolation they typically experience
- It is important not to generalise or make assumptions about the experiences of families with autistic children during lockdown
- Outside agencies must use the lessons learned from lockdown to improve support and understanding for families with autistic children post Covid-19.

Issue further elaborated in:

Pavlopoulou, G., Wood, R. and Papadopoulos, C. (2020) *Impact of Covid-19 on the experiences of parents and family carers of autistic children and young people in the UK*. Research report. University College London: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10101297/>