

Christopher Robertson

Lecturer in Inclusive and Special Education

School of Education

Contact details

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About

Chris has worked in the higher education sector since 1992, lecturing at the Institute of Education (University of London) and Canterbury Christ Church University College before taking up his current post at The University of Birmingham.

Qualifications

- MA (Ed)
- PGCE
- BA

Biography

Chris has worked in the connected fields of inclusive and special education since 1974. His first job as a young postgraduate was as a nursing assistant in a hospital for children, young people and adults with learning difficulties/disabilities in County Durham (UK). He then worked for Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in Sri Lanka, undertaking informal education and community work in projects for disabled children and young people. Having completed an extended term of service as a volunteer, he returned to the UK and trained as a specialist teacher of children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) in Bristol. This course enabled him to work with Veronica Sherborne who introduced him to her pioneering work on inclusive educational movement and dance.

Following this period of training he worked at the Cheyne Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy in London, and learnt much about the role of orthodox and unorthodox therapies, and their application to education. His interest in educational movement was also enhanced through working collaboratively with physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. It was at Cheyne too, that he discovered the Halliwick swimming approach, and the contribution it could make to children's motor learning.

From this experience at the Cheyne Centre, he developed a particular interest in working with physically disabled children and young people. He taught in the special school sector throughout the 1980s, and for much of this period was involved in developing collaborative practice with local mainstream schools, seeking to ensure that physically disabled students were not unnecessarily excluded from education alongside their peers.

Teaching

He contributes to a wide range of programmes including:

- teaching on Diploma, MA, MEd campus taught courses in inclusive and special education
- co-coordinating Local Education Authority / University of Birmingham partnership courses for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) based on Teacher Training Agency National Training Standards
- taking lead responsibility for the MA (Inclusion and Special Education) pathway
- teaching on the MA/MAEd programme for international students, providing specific contributions on inclusive and special education
- teaching PGCE students (inclusion and special educational needs module)
- supervising MA and MEd dissertation studies
- co-supervising of MPhil and PhD students undertaking work on inclusive education, inclusive physical education and special education in majority world (developing countries)
- teaching and co-coordinating an EdD course on Disability, Social Justice and Education
- teaching a range of short courses on campus and offsite.

He also undertakes staff development and consultancy work in the UK (e.g. for schools and local authorities) and overseas (e.g. in Romania)

Postgraduate supervision

Development of inclusive educational policy, practice and provision; the role of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs); the changing role of special schools and support services; the education of pupils with physical disabilities and/or medical conditions; the role of support staff (teaching assistants); parent partnership pupil participation (person centred approaches); the development of special and inclusive education in majority world countries; comparative inclusive and special education.

Research

Education

He is interested in all aspects of inclusive education, its conceptualisation, and relationship to the tradition of special education. Other, related interests include:

- educational policy and the relationship between national, local and school approaches to policy implementation
- the role of special educational needs teachers and their professional development needs
- the educational needs of children and young people with physical disabilities, severe learning disabilities/difficulties and profound and multiple learning disabilities/difficulties
- the impact of disability rights legislation on educational policy and practice
- connections between disability studies, social justice and education
- international perspectives on inclusive education
- philosophy of education.

Disability and religion

He is interested in philosophy and religion, and Buddhist thought and early Buddhist conceptualisations of personhood in particular. He is currently undertaking research in this field of studies (based at The University of Bristol) and attempting to respond to the following questions

- How does the Theravada Buddhist tradition conceptualise and understand disability?
- What are the ethical and social implications of a Buddhist understanding of disability?

He is involved in the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability (IASSID) special interest group (SIRG) which takes a specific interest in disability and spirituality

Other activities

- Trustee and member of the education committee Acorns Children's Hospice Trust 2000-2005
- Member of education committee and educational research sub-committee Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH) 1995
- Member of the diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities steering group National College for School Leadership (NCSL) 2001
- University nominated trustee for the National Institute for Conductive Education 1999
- Member of the Special Education Consortium (SEC) policy group, 1999
- Member of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) returned volunteers support network, 1978
- Educational adviser to the Prithipura Children's Home, Sri Lanka, 1978
- Educational adviser to RENINCO Romania (parents special educational needs and inclusion support group) and consultant to UNICEF Romania, 2001
- Educational consultancy team member for the Welsh Curriculum Authority (ACCAC) advising on curriculum design and development (learning difficulties), 2004
- Educational adviser to RENINCO Romania (parents special educational needs and inclusion support group) and consultant to UNICEF Romania, 2001
- Educational consultancy team for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004

Editorial work

- Co-editor of SENCO Update a policy into practice focused professional newsletter
- Member of the editorial board for Educational Review
- Member of the editorial board for the Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland (REACH)

External examining

- External examiner for the MEd (special educational needs), MEd (special educational needs Europe) Oxford Brookes University (Westminster Institute of Education) 1999-2002
- External examiner for the Diploma in Learning Support and the Advanced Diploma in Special Education, St Patrick's College, Dublin City University 1999 – 2003. Reappointed (with additional responsibility for the Advanced Diploma in Autism) 2003
- External examiner for the Advanced Diploma in Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge January 2002
- External examiner for the Advanced Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education, Institute of Education, The University of London March 2004

Publications

[Full publication listing for Chris Robertson \(http://rab.bham.ac.uk/people.asp?uid=183c6c44-a72f-467e-bea7-d0cecdad2e26\)](http://rab.bham.ac.uk/people.asp?uid=183c6c44-a72f-467e-bea7-d0cecdad2e26)

Expertise

Inclusive and special education (UK and international); policy and practice; teacher training for inclusion; special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs); pedagogies for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities

Alternative contact number available for this expert: **[contact the press office \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/contacts/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/contacts/index.aspx)**

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