Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Birmingham City University
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education

a. Context

The Centre for Research in Education (CRE) at Birmingham City University dates from 2009; Prior to this the school of education had a long history of work in educational research. The main beneficiaries of CRE's research include schools, colleges, Post-compulsory education (PCET), NGOs, Arts Organisations, and charities. Schools and colleges benefit from CRE research directly, recent examples being establishing and working with teacher action-research groups in secondary schools, and trialling and evaluating a new assessment scheme across a group of primary schools. There is also CRE's work in ITT, and it is especially noticeable in the range of publications produced for Postgraduate education students, as well as the long-standing work on student engagement. The centre has a long established role in creativity research, and there are many user-groups who turn to CRE as the go-to provider of research in this area; CRE has a history of working with NGOs, arts organisations and charities, including Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, London-based Sound and Music, Creative Partnerships, and *Education and Employers Taskforce*.

b. Approach to impact

Impact is the essence of the research activity undertaken. CRE's approach to impact arises from the fact that all of its research directly engages with user-groups. Staff engaged in research typically move from their ITT-focus and are now emerging as early career researchers, retaining their recent and relevant experience of educational settings. The scope of the impact is wide, as evidenced by work from Early Years to CPD. The reach of the impact is both to the specified user communities, and beyond, as implications from the research are disseminated – another key approach to impact – to the wider education community.

In order to support impact the CRE's research is clustered around four significant activity areas, known internally as clusters. These are: Early Years (EY); Creativities; Multi-literacies; and Policy and Curriculum. Alongside these *clusters*, we have identified four groups of research *users* on whom we feel we are able to impact, these being Policy and policy makers; Leaders (including people - Head teachers, principals, etc., but also charity funders, NGOs, EU); Teachers and educators, and the public. Each of these groups of users is worthy of discussion in terms of exemplification of reach, significance and approach to impact, building on the three-dimensional approach outlined above. We have chosen this three-dimensional approach as it allows us both to undertake research, and then maximise impact from it.

Policy
Impact upon policy is evidenced in the work of Le Gallais and Hatcher, who have been undertaking significant research into attitudes and practices with regard to work experience for school-age pupils. Impact from this has been significant in terms of reach. Le Gallais is an invited member of the influential *Education and Employers Taskforce*, and advises Government (DfE, Treasury) on the important area of work-experience for secondary school pupils. The director of the taskforce wrote to Le Gallais to note that "in large part because of your work, they [Governmental policy makers] have changed the way they think about work experience and how it can best be delivered to secure the most equitable outcomes".

In a different area of policy lies the work of Richard Hatcher, who, for the past decade, has been engaged in a sustained programme of research into structural changes in the school system in a period of historic change from a local authority system to a marketised and semi-privatised one. His focus has been on the development of Academies, the changing role of local authorities, and issues of power and democracy in local school systems. It has resulted in numerous academic publications and conference and seminar papers. It has also provided the basis for a sustained intervention in the public arena, making a major contribution to public understanding of the issues.

Hatcher is regularly called upon this regard, and has engaged with a number of significant user groups, recent examples include: *New Statesman* events at political party conferences, entitled 'What will our schools look like in 2016?' where Hatcher was a panel member at event on education, alongside a number of significant figures, including Sarah Teather MP, Sharon Hodgson MP, Dr Mary Bousted, Melissa Benn, and Gerard Kelly (then editor, TES).

Kane's work on student attitudes is well known in the field. He has built up a considerable corpus of work investigating the ways in which HEIs around the world conceptualise and operationalise their approaches to the student experience. He has achieved significant impact in this important aspect of work, and is regularly called upon to work with institutions, both at home and overseas.

Leaders
Impact upon leaders is evidenced from Fautley's work on creativity, detailed in the accompanying case study, likewise Aubrey and the EY cluster's work, also in a case study, evidences impact of management across many countries.
We have undertaken EU projects which influence policy directly. For example, Kendall's *Partnership Around Continuous Training of Teachers (PACTT)* is having a direct impact upon the ways in which CPD for teachers is operationalised in Bulgaria, Austria, and France. This work has led to partner countries rethinking the role of CPD as a significant aspect of in-service training to improve the quality of existing teachers.

Teachers and Educators
This group are significant in terms of research impact.
The work of the *literacies cluster* is broad in scope, but far-reaching in depth. It goes beyond the historical view of literacy, and includes important new areas of digital literacies too. Kendall's study of young adult's leisure reading practices is the first of its kind and her 2008 paper relating to this has recently been re-published in a special collection by *Literacy*. Her work on digital literacies in, the *Just Gaming Project*, resulted in an invitation by the BFI and DCSF to run a national workshop for primary school teachers across the UK to help them develop their practice. The same work was subsequently presented as a keynote to the ESRC funded seminar series on digital literacies and has been disseminated in a range of books and journals and translated into Spanish by the International journal *Communicar*. Kendall has recently received a grant from the HEA (50k) to develop a framework to support the development of literacies for employability. French's work on academic literacies has had impact upon the way in which student writing for assessment purposes is both conceptualised and realised in the pedagogic situation. This work has led to the University of Wuppertal working with French in order to develop their own practice in this area. There is ongoing work taking place with regard to this.

Samuel's work on mathematics education is a prime example of the near-field nature of BCU education research, and how this impacts directly on the reach of the approach to impact. This corpus deals directly with teaching and learning in maths, and is impacting directly on end-users locally via pedagogic impact, nationally and internationally via dissemination. STEM subjects are a current meme in education discourse, and this work, rooted directly in classrooms, has helped with developing pedagogies in this important area.

Mogra's research into Muslims and Muslim education has had impact in terms of restating the significance of teaching from the point of view of Islam. This has led to many schools, teachers, and scholars building on his work in their own practice. In addition, it has provided confidence in relation to teaching as a career for British Muslims. Mogra's work has been recognised by the National Association for Multicultural Education with an award. The role and place of Muslims and Muslim education are important topics, and schools and colleges have welcomed this.

Fautley's work in ITT includes a series of books (Fautley & Savage (2007) Creativity in Secondary Education; Fautley & Savage (2008) Assessment for Learning and Teaching in Secondary Schools; Fautley & Savage (2010) Secondary Education - Reflective Reader, all published: Exeter, Learning Matters) have become standard texts in many ITT programmes. This process is continuing with his latest book (Savage & Fautley (2013) A-Z of Teaching, Maidenhead, Open

University Press).

The Public
Public impact of CRE's work is probably best exemplified by O'Connor's research, broadly in the field of creativity, which has looked at the 'The Cultural Significance of the Child Star' (Routledge, 2008). Her work looks at the figure of the child star in the creative arts, and the ways in which the image of the idealised child is both adored and reviled in contemporary society. This has impact upon both the popular press, and more serious concerns regarding childhood. Her subsequent research publications all explore different aspects of child stardom. From this starting point O'Connor has subsequently moved to consider the position of the gifted and talented child more generally, and the constructions of identity associated therewith. This impacts directly on popular perceptions of the child star.

c. Strategy and plans

The CRE has a seven point plan to address future impact:
1. All research undertaken by CRE will be near-field, where the impact will be direct, and will transform practice or policy.
2. Building on point 1, such work will also be disseminated in suitable formats in order to reach a wider audience. This is, and will continue to be, built-in to all activity.
3. All new and emerging researchers will be 'buddied' with a more experienced colleague who will help them consider the issues associated with research impact
4. Recognising that in an ITT-focused institution, research will often stem from everyday reality , and that impact support will help ECRs maximise this new aspect of their work
5. Recognising that impact arises from activity, and that activity can, should, and will be researched.
6. Building on extant and new networks with other education HEIs to facilitate broader access to research impact
7. Constant review of research and activity undertaken in education across the university, with opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration being exploited whenever appropriate.

It is important to note that, as with many other ITT-focused institutions, research is part of the 'package' of activities in which individual academics are involved. Since the last RAE significant work has taken place to nurture and embed research in education, and as a result of this conceptions of impact have matured considerably. This can clearly be seen in the approaches to impact outlined here, where impact *arises from* research, and that this has become an integral part of research planning, and, importantly, of research activity.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies in early years and creativity exemplify two strands of the work that CRE undertakes, and, as such, can be seen to representative of the sort of work which is undertaken. The case studies show that research done by the centre is, within the various clusters, eclectic and wide-ranging. However, the case studies show an approach to impact which exemplifies the approach outlined in the list above. This can particularly be evidenced with regard to points 1 and 2. As a near-field, networked, post-92 institution, funded research in education at BCU is often undertaken directly with end-user stipulations in place. The role of the CRE is to foster and encourage application of what has been learned from such funded research. Examples of this are to be found in the creativity case study, where funded research from The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music resulted directly in two peer-reviewed papers.
Future plans for the CRE involve building upon the now well-established foundations of the areas described herein, and, with the possibility of future investment, continuing to develop impact from our work as more ECRs come on stream, and more staff engage in research activity.
The reach and significance of this approach are an integral part of the ways in which the CRE operates, and the intention is to deepen this in future.