

<p>Institution: Oxford Brookes University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 32; Philosophy</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Philosophy at Oxford Brookes University originated as a subject in the university's Institute of Education. Its location in a School of Education has had considerable effect on the way in which philosophical activity is envisaged by members of the UoA. Working with our colleagues in education has enabled the sense of an engaged philosophy to emerge which reflects the kind of connection of education has with its service users and providers. Philosophy as a way of interrogating and integrating the practice of other disciplines and groups in the public sphere is central to our understanding of the subject. It is this sense of why philosophy matters outside of the academy that runs beneath and supports our impact projects.</p> <p>The importance of enabling research to have impact is recognised in current University and Faculty research strategies at Oxford Brookes University. To support these objectives, the University makes strategic investments using HEIF funding and allocates time within workload planning for knowledge exchange activities. These strategies have supported the Philosophy UoA to develop significant, innovative, research with impact for civic society, cultural life, public discourse, education and policy-making. Examples of such audience reach include: Cain and Boulter's work with secondary schools which focuses on informing and influencing the choices that young people make about their relationship to further and higher education by challenging ingrained cultural values and social assumptions; Clack's work on well-being with a UK Labour Party think tank which aims to shape future Labour Party policies; and O'Brien's work on horticultural therapy in hospitals which works at enriching and expanding the lives of people with mental health issues.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our approach to impact is two-fold. On the one hand, we share the traditional vision of Philosophy as an applied discipline which can export valuable thoughts and practices to other fields. On the other, we are equally driven to move beyond this paradigm of knowledge exchange to a more integrated model which cultivates collaborations with practitioners and professionals such as teachers, psychotherapists, policy-makers, health professionals, and technology designers.</p> <p>Clack's approach to impact has been developed in a number of contexts which have involved from working with practitioners and policy makers. Initially, she was co-investigator on an ESRC-funded seminar series 'Changing the Subject' (2008). These interdisciplinary seminars invited policy-makers and politicians to engage with the kind of critical reflections on the philosophy of wellbeing from the academic disciplines of history, education and philosophy in order that they could develop richer public policy initiatives around the cultivation of wellbeing. This form of practice went beyond straightforward academic dissemination of ideas and challenged Clack's understanding of how philosophy could be practised. This transforming experience led to her distinctive work on wellbeing which links it fundamentally to the practical task of cultivating better, fuller ways of living. As a result of working with practitioners outside the academy, Clack organised a regular series of seminars which brought together philosophers, theologians and practising psychotherapists. Just as this seminar reflected a concern to develop a grounded and social approach to wellbeing, so it also informs the work of her case study, where she is working with a UK Labour Party think tank in order to develop practical policies for enhancing and enriching people's everyday lives.</p> <p>Cain and Boulter's impact study has grown out of their long-standing involvement with the School of Education as well as their commitment to the broader significance of central aspects of analytic philosophy. By applying metaphysical ideas on essentialism to the widening participation agenda, their work at High Wycombe School has influenced the form of secondary education by enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to question the inhibiting belief that university is 'not for them'. Early signs from this pilot project suggest that this philosophical intervention is challenging their ingrained attitudes about the prospect of a university education, which in turn can be expected</p>

to affect their life aspirations.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy has been to develop a model of research activity where we do not simply 'produce' research and then bestow it on the outside world; an important part of this strategy is to ensure that our work does not end with the creation of research and its sharing with non-academic communities. Instead we work with partners – therapeutic, political, cultural and educational - to enrich their practice and develop further applications of our research together. This overall strategy lies at the heart of our plans for the future.

Cain is writing a monograph on *Why Education Matters* for Bloomsbury Academic which builds on his and Boulter's work on the widening participation agenda. This publication will be accompanied by a conference (to be held at the Ashmolean Museum in May 2015) directed at head teachers whose schools would also benefit from the approach they are piloting, with the long-term aim of spreading their method to a wider range of schools across the nation. They have won university funding (of up to £2000) to assist them in this work by training philosophy students to deliver such projects to schools.

Clack aims to continue her work influencing the development of Labour Party policy. At the same time, her interventions in the field of practical politics are also being applied to establish a network for Feminist Academics and Feminist Activists. This network brings together women from the local Oxford Feminist Network, Fawcett Society and Ruskin College with women working in different areas of the academy. This co-created research is being applied with the explicit aim of developing better forms of campaigning e.g. by empowering women to critically engage with oppressive models of the body and sexuality and to consequently be in a stronger position to change the lives of themselves and others through the campaigns they develop. The next steps in developing this network are currently underway, with Dr. Louise Levees from Ruskin College applying to be a visiting researcher at Brookes in order to work more closely with Clack to develop a network, and with a bid to the ESRC planned to support this network.

O'Brien is developing a project which raises the profile of therapeutic horticulture and the role it can play in the treatment of mental illness. This builds on his involvement with Clack in the ESRC seminar series on wellbeing and his edited book on *Philosophy and Gardening* (Wiley Blackwell, 2011). Having organised a workshop in July 2013 at the Ashmolean Museum (with faculty funding of £2000) he plans to set up an interdisciplinary network of therapeutic horticulture practitioners and theorists; a UK equivalent of the *American Horticultural Therapy Association*. Working with Lucy Russell at Moseley Hall Hospital, he set up a therapeutic garden at the hospital's Mental Health Unit in Spring 2011. The aim of this practice is to help patients orientate themselves to their future through fostering another living form and thus coming to the realisation that self-nurturing is possible and fruitful. This is to be achieved by professional practices to include timetabling sessions into the weekly life of patients. The final impact is to be evaluated via reports from nurses and certified patient and staff questionnaires. These will use the Peterson method with some assistance from a social scientist.

Sandis is also building upon his previously published work and keynotes on Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, by collaborating with various Museums and NGOs, including the Ashmolean Museum and the Royal Institute of Philosophy, with the ultimate aim of enhancing the public understanding of various controversies surrounding issues as diverse as art theft, forgery, and restitution. In addition, Sandis plans to further extend his impact on cultural life by continuing his work with the Royal Shakespeare Company (whose Playwright's Circle he addressed in Spring 2013) and Microsoft Research (Cambridge) who have invited him to collaborate on a project on communicative action. In the former case, his ambition is to create cultural capital by inspiring playwrights to think differently about the description of actions, including speech acts. In the latter, the medium-term aim is to develop an account of why we communicate that will inform the design and manufacture of new tools and devices at Microsoft. Sandis has also been collaborating with the risk-management author Nassim N. Taleb (whose 2007 book *The Black Swan* was described by B. Appleyard in a *Sunday Times* article on 'Books that Helped to Change the World' [19/7/09] as

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one of the twelve most influential books since World War II). Their soon to be published collaboration ('The Skin in the Game Heuristic for Protection Against Tail Events') which has had over 20,000 views and 4000 downloads (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2298292) and has already been cited in relation to policy innovation by the Carnegie Council: http://www.policyinnovations.org/innovators/people/data/constantine_sandis. They have also written a related essay for Oxford University Press' *Handbook on Professional Economics Ethics* and are currently working on a new paper which applies their original idea to ethics in leadership. They are also seeking ways of increasing the impact of their earlier work on public discourse and policy making (e.g. via Taleb's *EconTalk* interview about their paper: http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2013/09/taleb_on_skin_i.html).

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies are situated within our wider strategy of working closely with partners from different sectors to co-develop the impact of our research. As evidenced below, this is achieved via ongoing involvement with both the communities we are serving and the bodies who assist us in doing so.

Clack's work on wellbeing introduced her to the way in which philosophy can be shaped through thinking and working with practitioners and policy makers, as well as influencing and shaping their practice. It is this engaged approach to research that is a fundamental part of her impact study with a Labour Party think tank. In this setting, she is engaged with politicians, activists and policy makers in formulating principles for the creation of political policies explicitly aimed at providing the context for the good life. Her case study on political policy reflects the general approach to impact of the unit: namely, it applies philosophical ideas to the area of lived-experience. A philosopher of religion who considers her subject in relation to ethics and the question of how best to live, her work with Labour Left is enabling the development of policies that aid human flourishing and that emphasise solidarity and an ethical politics.

In their groundbreaking work with High Wycombe School, Cain and Boulter have employed our two-fold approach to impact with the aim of empowering children in order that they might reject the debilitating assumptions about their lives that have been shaped by social and class backgrounds. Cain and Boulter's work grows out of their work on the essentialist doctrine. They argue that the claim that an individual's surface features are caused by hidden essences is fallible; and as a result it is possible for something to *appear to be* something that in reality it is not. This idea has helped school children from disadvantaged backgrounds to alter the sometimes negative conceptions they have of their lives and abilities. Working with these school children and exploring such claims helps them to consider possibilities for their lives that they might otherwise reject: in this case the possibility of entering higher education.

Both of these cases highlight our belief that philosophy can make a difference to lived experience: both social and political.