

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: 25 (Education)
Title of case study: Enhancing positive educational and employment outcomes for ethnic minority students and refugees
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This body of regional, national and internationally commissioned research, alongside the development of outputs designed specifically for user groups, has resulted in: changes to training interventions with those who are long-term unemployed regionally and trans-nationally, including refugees; changes to policy and practice to enhance success in accessing higher education of refugees and asylum seekers regionally and nationally; development of a set of 'guiding principles' adopted by the Higher Education Academy in their funding of Strategic Development Grants focussed on enhancing ethnic minority student degree attainment; critical debate in national press and via other public platforms.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Stevenson and Willott's research with refugees began in 2003 when they were commissioned by Leeds City Council to track the impact of employment training interventions on marginalised, excluded and long-term unemployed individuals, as well as to identify and compare common themes and outcomes across different ESF/Equal-funded projects in both Leeds and Europe (2003-05, <i>Beneficiary Tracking Study</i>, EQUAL 1). The research highlighted the need for interventions to address personal, social and attitudinal barriers faced by refugees. The researchers were subsequently commissioned by Leeds City Council to undertake further research designed to explore best practice in enabling those who are long-term unemployed to access work or education (2005, <i>Overcoming the Barriers</i>, ESF/EQUAL 1; 2004-05), <i>Study Skills research</i>, ESF/EQUAL 1) and by Aimhigher Yorkshire and Humberside to undertake research specifically focussing on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers (2005, <i>Refugee Barriers to HE</i>; 2006, <i>Aspiration Raising for Refugee Children</i>; 2006, <i>Refugee research</i>; 2006, <i>Refugee project continuation</i>) [references 1 and 2]. The findings highlighted that many refugees viewed higher education as a route out of poverty and discrimination but that there was a persistent failure in both widening participation and local authority policy to meet their specific needs, including those of young unaccompanied asylum seekers. The researchers were subsequently commissioned to conduct research focussing on refugee women, funded by the then Yorkshire & Humberside Consortium for Asylum Seekers & Refugees (2006, <i>Refugee Women Access to Employment</i>, YHCAR) and to assess the effectiveness of the Refugee Council and Teacher Development Agency's national '<i>Refugees into Teaching</i>' project (2007). This research further evidenced the specific support needs of refugees and informed subsequent changes to policy and practice to enable successful outcomes.</p> <p>In 2004, Willott was commissioned to undertake ESF-funded research (2004-06) with four other HEIs designed to inform national institutional policy in order to enhance the degree and employability outcomes of black and minority ethnic (BME) students and, with Stevenson, in 2007-08 to survey policies and practices in English HEIs designed to enhance BME student attainment (Higher Education Academy funded), part of the nationally recognised HEA/Equality Challenge Unit national 'Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project' (2008). The work highlighted the lack of institutional strategies and/or practice addressing issues of differential attainment. Stevenson's work on BME degree attainment for the HEA continued with the commissioning of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research for the then HEA subject centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics: 2009-2010, <i>An exploration of the link between 'possible selves' and the attainment of BME students on social science courses</i>. • <i>Institutional Case Study research for Black and Minority Ethnic Student Degree Attainment project</i> (2012). • <i>A Synthesis of US literature relating to the retention, progression, completion and attainment of BME students in HE</i> (2012).

Impact case study (REF3b)

This research also evidenced the lack of specific HE interventions designed to address inequities in terms of degree attainment between BME and white students; the research led to the development of a set of guiding principles to underpin future work in the field.

The work also builds on an extensive body of research led by Clegg [3] exploring how students from diverse gendered, ethnic and classed backgrounds think about their futures, how this informs their participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities [4 and 5] and the implications for their post-graduate futures. In 2012 Stevenson completed research exploring *The 'Possible Selves' of BME students at Russell Group Institutions* (2102) which evidenced how a lack of congruence between hoped for, true and 'ought to' selves may be informing, and limiting, students' academic help-seeking strategies [6]. These combined projects have led to significant changes to policy and practice being adopted across the sector.

Sue Clegg: Leeds Met 2006 - 2012 (Professor).

Jacqueline Stevenson: Leeds Met 2002 (Evaluation Manager, Senior Research Fellow, Principal Lecturer, Reader).

John Willott: Leeds Met 2002 (Bidding Manager, Access Institute Manager, Research Manager, Principal Lecturer).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Stevenson, J. and Willott, J. (2007). The aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees in the UK. *Compare: A journal of comparative education* 37(5): 671 - 687. doi: 10.1080/03057920701582624.
2. Willott, J. and Stevenson, J. (2013) Attitudes to employment of professionally-qualified refugees in the UK. *International Migration*, 51 (5), pp. 120 – 132. doi: 10.1111/imig.12038.
3. Clegg, S. (2010), Time future - the dominant discourse of higher education, *Time & Society* 19 (3), pp. 345-364. doi: 10.1177/0961463X10381528.
4. Clegg, S., Stevenson, J. and Willott, J. (2010) *Extending conceptualisations of the diversity and value of Extra-curricular activities: A cultural capital approach to graduate outcomes*. Final report. Higher Education Academy. Available from the institution.
5. Stevenson, J. and Clegg, S. (2011) Possible selves: students orientating themselves towards the future through extracurricular activity, *British Educational Research Journal*, 37 (2), pp. 231-246. doi: 10.1080/01411920903540672.
6. Stevenson, J. (2012) An exploration of the link between Minority Ethnic and White students' degree attainment and views of their future 'Possible Selves', *Higher Education Studies*, 2 (4), pp. 103-113. doi: 10.5539/hes.v2n4p103.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research funded by ESF/EQUAL [corroborating source A] highlighted the need for employability interventions to move away from skills based initiatives to incorporate strategies designed to support the personal, social and attitudinal barriers faced by the long-term unemployed, including refugees. The research led to changes, both before and since 2008, to the provision of employability training initiatives in the city to incorporate such strategies. Research with refugee women helped to fill the gap between the employability skills needs of refugee women and existing training and development opportunities and led to changes to policy, practice and provision to support refugee women being implemented across the region both before and since 2008. The researchers were invited to sit on the steering committee of the Refugee Women: Access to Employment (RWAE) project managed by the Yorkshire and Humberside Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees which helped to further inform strategies to best meet the needs of refugee women. Willott also represented Higher Education Institutions on the Regional Integration Network (other partners included Local government; UKBA; Voluntary sector agencies; Housing providers; Employers' organisations; Job Centre Plus).

As part of their research [B] Stevenson and Willott worked directly with young unaccompanied asylum seekers to write and produce a Guide to Higher Education for Refugees and Asylum

Seekers - 1000 copies of which were distributed to refugees, asylum seekers and supporting organisations across the Yorkshire and Humberside region. They produced an 'Admissions Staff' toolkit which was made available to all HEIs in England and which laid out clear guidance on the rights and entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers to access higher education. Willott also contributed to the Refugee Council Information Service guidebook on accessing HE. This work helped to inform subsequent briefing papers developed by the Refugee Council on generic rights and entitlements, whilst Stevenson and Willott's research for the Teacher Development Agency/Refugee Council 'Refugees into Teaching' project informed subsequent briefing papers disseminated across the UK to schools and teacher recruitment agencies detailing the rights of refugees to undertake teaching work.

The impact of this work is evidenced by James Lee, former Policy Adviser for the Refugee Council. Lee [C] writes that:

"My time of working with Jacqueline and John while on secondment to Leeds Metropolitan University from the Refugee Council continues to inform my policy work. More immediately, it led to be applying for and being appointed as the national lead for refugee employment and skills policy at the Refugee Council in London. I held this post until 2011. The discussions with J&J, and their subsequent research on refugee employment and higher education, were formative in developing my policy focus. Higher education formed a key part of this work and led to better recognition of overseas qualification for refugee overseas trained teachers, clarification of national guidance on eligibility for student support and raising the profile of distinct barriers to HE for refugees with previous Level 4 or above study outside of the UK. The latter included articles in the national and specialist press (e.g. Runnymede Trust's Spring Bulletin, 2011)".

A further, direct consequence of this body of work with refugees was Willott's successful bid to the AHRC/ESRC Religion & Society Programme PhD Studentship (Bereket Loul: "Deriving meaning in transition: the role of religion for young refugees and asylum seekers"). Willott's work with female refugees was instrumental in his successful funding bid to UN Women to undertake research with Acid Survivor's Trust International, designed to change policy and laws, and facilitate improved medical and psychosocial support for survivors of attacks in Uganda, Cambodia & Nepal (2011).

Following Willott's ESF-funded research designed to inform national institutional policy to enhance the degree and employability outcomes of black and minority ethnic students [D], Stevenson and Clegg's work on inequalities in post-graduate outcomes has also led to policy and practice recommendations being adopted across the sector. Stevenson's *Institutional Case Study research for Black and Minority Ethnic Student Degree Attainment project* (2012) culminated in a set of 'guiding principles' underpinning further recommendations designed to specifically address the key question: "how can the curriculum enhance the retention and success of BME students in higher education?". These guiding principles have subsequently informed the HEAs approach to funding eight Strategic Development Grants. These projects, running between 2012 and 2013, directly aim to improve BME student retention and attainment [E]. Stevenson is a member of the Strategic Development Grants advisory group and her work on this project has led directly to her being commissioned to deliver a Learning and Teaching Summit in Northern Ireland funded by the Higher Education Academy (May 2013) to provide leadership in the area of student retention and success of local students in higher education in Northern Ireland, and to participate in HEFCE/OFFA's joint roundtable discussion (2103) to discuss equality and diversity and widening participation. Stevenson's research into degree attainment at Russell Group universities [F] was the subject of critical debate on Radio London and in the Voice newspaper (<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/black-students-reluctant-approach-lecturers-help>), the Turkish newspaper Zaman (http://www.weeklyzaman.com/en/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=8098) and the Times Higher (24th January, 7th and 14th February 2013) [G]; Stevenson has also been invited to undertake a public lecture for the University of Oxford public seminar series: *Resilience and retention in higher education: why do some students stay?*. This seminar resulted from wider research projects with Clegg exploring the resilience of students, including those from BME backgrounds, who remain in HE and how students think about their post-graduate futures. User guides drawing on the research findings have been made freely available on-line and have been accessed locally, nationally and internationally [H].

The combined impact of this work is encapsulated in the ARC Network (2013) Report to HEFCE and OFFA: Literature review of research into widening participation to higher education, commissioned to inform the national strategy for access and student success which the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) are developing, wherein seven of Stevenson's works are cited [I].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Refugees and asylum seekers

- A. Corroborating contact for ESF projects: Development Manager, Yorkshire Universities,
- B. Corroborating contact for work with refugees: Manager, Migration Yorkshire
- C. Corroborating contact for work with the Refugee Council Senior Policy Officer, Immigration and Asylum. Greater London Authority

Black and Minority Ethnic students

- D. Corroborating contact for Ethnicity, Education & Employment project: Head of Continuum, University of East London
- E. Corroborating contact for HEA projects: Former Senior Adviser for The Higher Education Academy and Professor of Higher Education, Edge Hill University.
- F. Corroborating contact for work with Russell Group Universities: Head of Equality and Diversity, University of Manchester.
- G. Times Higher Education <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/black-students-loath-to-see-aid/2001086.article>.
- H. Stevenson, J., Anderson, L. and Clegg, S. (2010) The Leeds Met Book of Student Futures, Leeds: C-SAP and Leeds Met, ISBN 978-1-907240-18-8. Available online at https://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/publications/files/101109-7567_Student_futures_booklet_LoRes.pdf.

Combined

- I. ARC Network (2013) Report to HEFCE and OFFA: Literature review of research into widening participation to higher education, <http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Literature-review-of-research-into-WP-to-HE.pdf>.