

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education
Title of case study: Co-constructing inter-professional working in children's services
<p>1. Summary of the impact Inter-professional collaboration to prevent social exclusion of children and young people is an emergent work practice, reflecting major changes in welfare policy in the UK and beyond. Research conducted at Oxford since 2005 on these systemic changes, and the new demands they have made on practitioners and services, has contributed to the reconfiguration of children's services locally and nationally, and to the analysis and planning of services beyond the UK. Knowledge exchange is built into the studies to produce immediate and long-term impact on practices and policies, and findings have been integrated into commissioned reports, teaching materials for service leaders, and practitioner and policy summaries.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research The research programme began in 2002 with the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (NECF), transferring to Oxford with Professor Anne Edwards in October 2005 [R1][S1]. Collaborations in Education at Oxford have been two studies with Dr Maria Evangelou (Lecturer) [S4, S10], and one each with Professor Ingrid Lunt (retired 2012) [R5] and Professor Kathy Sylva [S4]. Research staff were Apostolov and Kinti (2005-06); Boag-Munroe and Georgeson (2007-08); and Stamou (part-time, 2008-10). Three of the studies were also undertaken with Professor Harry Daniels who moved from Bath to Oxford in February 2013 [R2] [S2, 6, 8].</p> <p>The programme has comprised a series of research studies which include commissioned national evaluations – the NECF [S1], and an assessment of the Early Learning Parental Partnership (ELPP) [S4] - which were located within a major systemic reorganisation of children's services, and a commissioned review of European research and practice in service integration around schools [S9]. It has traced the emergence of inter-professional practice to reveal and label new ways of working, the expertise involved, and the associated systemic implications. The research encapsulates three strands, all focusing on relevance for practice:</p> <p>A substantive strand focuses on individual and systemic change through analysing (i) workforce development and leadership [S1-5, 7-10], and (ii) knowledge mobilisation and use [S3, 6-8, 10]. The attention to the workforce, which started with the NECF, was pursued in a parallel four-year Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) study of inter-professional working - Learning in and for Interagency Working (LIW) [R2][S2] and in the ESRC-funded Preventing Social Exclusion in Secondary Schools (PSE) [R5][S3]. The focus on workforce developed in NECF and LIW was central to Edwards' reports for the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) [S5]. LIW revealed that effective service integration required: a focus on the whole child in their wider context; responsiveness with both other professionals and clients; clarification of the purpose of work, and openness to alternatives; knowledge of how to know who (can help); a capacity for rule-bending and risk-taking to meet new demands; the development of processes for knowledge sharing; an understanding of oneself and of professional values; and the adoption of a pedagogic stance at work [R2][S2]. The systemic focus pursued in studies funded by the ESRC [S3], Local Government Association (LGA) [S6], National College for School leadership (NCSL) [S7,8], and Oxfordshire [S10], revealed, for example, the importance of leaders' attention to recognising and enabling the upward flow of knowledge and expertise from the front-line to strategy, to enable local bureaucracies and schools to respond to the new ways of working demanded by service integration [R4, 5, 6].</p> <p>A methodological strand has employed Developmental Work Research (DWR), the methodology of Activity Theory [S1-4, 6-7]. DWR enables researchers to work alongside practitioners to elicit, and help them refine, the concepts that are arising as they undertake new forms of work (i.e. inter-professional collaborations to support children and families). DWR</p>

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ensures continuous impact on practice through study design, as well as producing robust conceptual insights that reveal what needs to be done for effective inter-professional collaboration [R2, 4].

A conceptual strand, in which Edwards identified the new concepts of ‘relational agency’ [R3][S1, 2, 6], ‘relational expertise’, ‘common knowledge’ and ‘resourceful practice’ [R4, 6][S1-4, 6]. These concepts arose from detailed analyses of the expertise developed as practitioners created new ways of inter-professional working, which took them beyond their professional boundaries. Their work in new sites of intersecting practices called for a new ‘relational expertise’, mediated by ‘common knowledge’, which in this work is defined as an awareness of the motives shaping all the collaborating practices. These conceptual terms are now in repertoires of Directors of Children’s Services (DCS) via their use in NCSL reports and DCS training [S7, 8]. In addition, the LGA and the NCSL (now Virtual Staff College – VCS) employ ideas developed in the same systemic analyses, such as ‘rule-bending’ as a sign of the need for system change, and ‘resourceful leadership’ as the capacity to use local resources to advance change, to help strategists to conceptualise and work on developing children’s services [S6-8].

3. References to the research

Key outputs

[R1] Edwards, A, Barnes, M., Plewis, I. and Morris, K. (2006) *Working to Prevent the Social Exclusion of Children and Young People: final lessons from the National Evaluation of the Children’s Fund*, London, DfES Research Report 734.

[R2] Edwards, A., Daniels, H., Gallagher, T., Leadbetter, J. and Warmington, P. (2009) *Improving inter-professional collaborations: multi-agency working for children’s wellbeing*. London: Routledge. (80% AE – based on the TLRP study and short-listed for the 2009 NASEN academic book prize)

[R3] Edwards, A. (2009) Relational Agency in Collaborations for the Wellbeing of Children and Young People, *Journal of Children’s Services*, 4, 1, 33-43.

[R4] Edwards, A. (2010) *Being an Expert Professional Practitioner: the relational turn in expertise* Dordrecht, Springer.

[R5] Edwards, A., Lunt, I. and Stamou, E. (2010) Inter-professional Work and Expertise: new roles at the boundaries of schools, *British Educational Research Journal*, 36, 1. 27-45.

[R6] Edwards, A. (2012) The Role of Common Knowledge in Achieving Collaboration Across Practices, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 1(1), 22-32.

Studies since 2005 (Edwards’ arrival in Oxford)

[S1] NECF - National Evaluation of the Children’s Fund (DfES)- 3.5 year award ended March 2006 (Director: Edwards) £6m

[S2] LIW - Learning in and For Interagency Working (TLRP-ESRC) – four year award ended December 2007 (Edwards Co-Director with Daniels, Bath) £650k (rated outstanding and used as an ESRC impact case study)

[S3] PSE - Preventing Social Exclusion in Secondary Schools (ESRC) – 2007-8 (Edwards and Lunt) £90k (rated outstanding)

[S4] ELPP - Evaluation of the Early Learning Parental Partnership (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) -2007-8 (Edwards Co-PI with Evangelou, Sylva and Smith) £450k

[S5] Evaluation of the CWDC Social work Remodelling Pilot. (with CWDC) £48k to Edwards

[S6] DIW - Developing Interagency Working (LGA) 2010-11 (Edwards and Daniels) £65k

[S7] RL - Resourceful Leadership in Children’s Services (NCSL) 2010 (with Deloitte) £20k to Edwards

[S8] LL- Leading for Learning (NCSL/VSC) - 2011-12 (Daniels and Edwards) £55k

[S9] Alliances for Inclusion: cross-sector policy synergies and inter-professional collaboration in and around schools for EC/NESET 2011-12 £10k (Edwards with Downes- Dublin)

[S10] OPS - Evaluation of Oxfordshire’s Preventative Services - 2012-13 (Edwards and Evangelou) £50k

4. Details of the impact

Impact was facilitated: (i) methodologically through DWR, building knowledge exchange into research design (See Rickinson, Sebba and Edwards (2011) *Improving Educational Research through User Engagement*, London: Routledge); (ii) presentationally through reports for practitioners and local leaders, for UK policy makers, and for European policy communities; (iii) interactionally through membership of national advisory boards e.g. the CWDC research advisory group (2008-9), the LGA's expert groups on research and policy (2009 and 2013), Oxfordshire's task groups on workforce development and evaluation of preventative services (2010-2012); and (iv) pedagogically through workshops with practitioner and trainer groups from Cheshire to Osaka, and presentations e.g. to Directors of Children's Services, DfES conferences and to the European Commission in Brussels.

These methods led to the following types and geographical scales of impact:

Local – In Oxfordshire, the DIW project [S6] informed the configuration of the seven Hubs for co-located preventative services established in 2011. A senior manager in Oxfordshire Children's Services explains the impact of the ideas such as relational expertise, resourceful practice, and rule bending [R2-4, 6], on all of their Children's Services: 'The research team worked with all the key players in children's services in the authority, helping us shape the services that are now available to all children, young people and families in Oxfordshire. The ideas from their research [...] helped us enormously in planning our innovative approach to prevention. I have subsequently been in regular contact with Anne Edwards and Maria Evangelou, who have given research-based support [S10] to the development of inter-professional working in the Hubs.' [C1]. Edwards has also run research-based workshops for local authorities on inter-professional work (Cheshire, Oxford, SE England, SE Wales, NCSL).

National – The NECF [S1][R1] analyses of workforce learning through interagency working in the Children's Fund informed systemic service integration and third sector involvement in preventative services. The emphasis on what the childcare workforce needed to learn was also evident in ELPP [S4][R4]. These evaluations identified resourceful relational practice, making it visible and accessible to local and national policy communities and to service providers.

The TLRP study (LIW) [S2][R2] was selected as one of six high impact studies for an in-depth profile in the 2nd phase evaluation of the TLRP demonstrating impact on practice and policy [C2, pp. 2 and 52]. One example of impact was the LGA (DIW) study [S6], which took the TLRP LIW findings to local authority networks through practical long-term interventions in three authorities to inform and support change processes. It identified and scrutinised the knowledge that was mobilised locally to improve interagency collaboration, focusing on the systemic implications of rule-bending and the need to build relational expertise for interagency collaborations [R4]. DIW also created a LGA tool kit based on DWR, for UK children's services to use in developing services. The positive impact of this work is attested by a Lead Analyst from the LGA: 'The intervention work was timely as it was undertaken when most authorities were grappling with achieving the reconfiguring of services for children and families and engaging the whole workforce. The intervention helped senior teams in local authorities conceptualise the changes and the challenges and provided new intellectual resources for the LGA.' [C3]

Also at national level, findings from the ESRC-funded PSE study [S3][R5] on lack of training for school-based welfare workers, again emphasised in ELPP [S4][R4], led to two internal reports for CWDC [S5] to inform the social work remodelling exercise. A senior officer at CWDC, and later at the DfE, explains the impact of this research: 'Anne's work for the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) brought her programme of research on inter-professional working to the group of people best placed to use it to inform both policy and practice in the development inter-professional preventative work. As the social work remodelling project gathered pace the strategic team found ideas in the two commissioned reports and in Anne's wider programme of research to be very useful and integrated them into our thinking.' [C4]

Concepts such as resourceful practice, rule-bending, relational expertise and common knowledge [R2, 4, 6] informed between them *The Resourceful Leader* (2011) and *Leading for Learning* (2012) reports for the NCSL. *The Resourceful Leader* [S7, 8] was sent to all local

authorities, was the basis of a 360° evaluation tool used with almost 2,000 senior and middle leaders in the sector, and has informed work on systems leadership by the professional development arm of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Virtual Staff College. *Leading for Learning* expanded on *The Resourceful Leader* to show how seeing leadership as promoting learning helped DCSs use the human resources at their disposal to their best advantage. It too was distributed to all local authorities, and is used in leadership training for DCSs. A 'leading for learning' audit tool was produced by the VSC which drew heavily on the report and was published in the VSC *Leadership in Practice* series [C5]. Both reports are widely read by DCSs and have made important contributions to sector development, as a Senior Officer at the VCS explains: '[These reports have] been extremely influential in shaping thinking about the kind of leadership required in the complex world of children's services in which professional leadership is always shared with politicians and a range of other stakeholders and partners [...They are] regularly cited by DCSs as a significant influence on the way in which they have approached the challenge of leadership in the current financial crisis.' [C6]

International – References to Edwards' concepts of relational agency [R3, 4] and the development of professional practice are found in a New Zealand government study of early education [C7]; the creation of resources for the education of nurses and teachers in Denmark [C8]; and recommendations for developing collaboration in Victorian (Australia) early years centres [C9]. Relational agency is identified in the latter as an enabler of collaborative practice on a par with 'leadership and communication' and 'structures and processes' [C9]. Edwards is a member of the Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET), which commissioned her report *Alliances for Inclusion*, for the European Commission (EC), to inform children's service integration across Europe [S9]. Written for policy-makers and launched in Brussels in May 2013, it 'improves our knowledge base' for the implementation of the EC 'social investment package' for children [C10]. It was sent to relevant ministries across Europe and 700 hard copies have been requested or distributed at conferences by the Commission. There have been 1,249 views of the web version on the EC website and 263 downloads (18.10.13). Edwards has also summarised it as a 1.5k word contribution to the UK National Children's Bureau's autumn publication to inform pre-election party manifestos on policies for children.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[C1] Early Intervention Manager, Oxfordshire Children's Services (*letter on file*)

[C2] Parson, D. & Burkey, S. (2011) *The Evaluation of the TLRP 2nd Phase*. Report to the ESRC. HOST Policy Research. http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/TLRP_Impact_Evaluation_tcm8-17373.pdf

[C3] Lead Analyst, Local Government Association (*letter on file*)

[C4] Head of Research and Assistant Director CWDC (2007-2011) and Professional Advisor on Research and Evaluation at the DfE (2011-13) (*letter on file*)

[C5] Association of Directors of Children's Services - Virtual Staff College (2013) *Tipping Points and Step Changes*. Nottingham: VSF. http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Tipping_1-2-5_print.pdf

[C6] National Lead for Succession Planning, VSC (since 2012), formerly Strategic Advisor to DCS Provision at the NCSL (until 2012) (*letter on file*)

[C7] Clarke-Phillips, J. & Carr, M. (2009) *Strengthening Responsive and Reciprocal Relations in a Whanan Tangata Centre*. Wellington, New Zealand: Crown

[C8] Series of interview video-recordings with Anne Edwards (2012), by the Project Leader of Technucation Laboratory, University of Aarhus, Denmark.

<http://technucation.dk/laboratorieformer/x-change-lab-the-technological-turn-in-relational-agency/>

[C9] Wong, S. et al. (2012) *Collaborative Practices in Victorian Early Years Services*. A study commissioned by Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Australia: Charles Sturt University

[C10] Policy Officer, EC, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (*letter on file*)