

**Institution: The University of Northampton**

**Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education**

**a. Context**

The University of Northampton's strategic plan, *Raising the Bar*, places a commitment to 'purposeful research and social enterprise recognised around the world for its originality and impact'. This commitment has informed actions across the University's schools and departments, including Education, resulting in the recognition of the University as an 'Outstanding Higher Education Institution supporting Social Entrepreneurship' in 2011 and its status as the only UK institution to achieve Ashoka U Changemaker Campus designation. Research conducted within the Education Unit of Assessment promotes equality and reduces marginalisation, which has resonance with the policies of organisations that have either a conviction or statutory obligation to support educational and social inclusion. This has enabled the development of a research portfolio committed to principles of inclusive education, lifelong learning and participatory research and decision-making practices.

The impact of educational research conducted by researchers at the University of Northampton is recognised in a number of ways:

- Informing policy and practice at local, national and international levels through expert advice provided via evidence-based guidance on good practice, evaluation of existing systems and practices, representation on national and international groups and committees and the development of training programmes. Examples of this include evaluation and implementation of curriculum resources in Australia, the management of mental health issues within special schools in England and Wales and research into pupil participation in school (re)design.
- Provision of an overview and understanding of the impact and efficacy of national policy implementation, for example, Project IRIS, a longitudinal investigation of special education provision in the Republic of Ireland.
- Raised awareness of influences on educational performance and achievement in schools and post-compulsory education systems. Examples of work conducted here include investigations into the impact of specific needs and conditions, such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other aspects of child behaviours

**b. Approach to impact**

A strategic approach to impact is evidenced by members of this UoA in a range of ways. These include the maintenance of relationships with end users of research, membership of policy and advisory bodies, the maintenance of partnerships with stakeholders and policy makers and the dissemination of research and evidence-based guidance to a wide audience.

**Engagement with users and beneficiaries**

Engagement with the users and beneficiaries of the research undertaken within the Education Unit has occurred in three main ways; **1.membership of policy making committees, 2.engagement with practitioners and young people, and 3.public lectures.**

**1.** Educational researchers from the University of Northampton are members of a range of national and international committees. In addition they have contributed to government advisory committees and policy bodies. For example, Bell plays a leading role in the field of dyslexia and is a member of the Professional Association of Teachers Of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties national committee; Rose was a member of the government Salt Committee reporting on the training needs of teachers in relation to profound and multiple learning difficulties; and Garner is an Advisory Group member of the Department for Education-sponsored Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo) Forum. Armellini won an International E-Learning Association Award2010 in the Academic E-learning category.

**2.** Engagement with schools, stakeholders and young people is a feature of research as evidenced by many projects in which researchers have worked with schools in areas of need identified by these schools. For example:

- Research into the mental health needs of pupils with special educational needs undertaken by Rose, Howley and Fergusson was used in the development of an online training

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programme for the use of teachers and other professionals. This programme resulted from a partnership with NASS and has been well publicised by mental health organisations including Young Minds.

- Garner's expertise in behaviour has been sought by a number of professional and parent groups: for example, the National College for Teaching and Leadership study has been amongst the 10 most frequently downloaded professional development resources on the National College website between 2011-13<sup>1</sup>
- Through their work on pupil participation in school design and youth citizenship in newbuild communities, Horton and Hadfield-Hill have acted as advisors to North Northamptonshire Development Company (NNDC), and invited by the Department for Communities and Local Government to submit evidence to national reviews of housing supply and markets, priorities in provision for young people during large-scale house building in the UK.

3. Researchers have engaged with a broad audience through the presentation of public lectures and presentations in the UK and elsewhere. Examples of this include:

- Howley's input in support of the Northamptonshire Autism Society to whom she has disseminated the ways in which her research into structured teaching is applied for the benefit of children on the autism spectrum.
- Rose's research into the conditions for developing inclusive schools has been presented to parent groups in the cities of Bangalore, Trivandrum and Chennai in India.
- Pilkington has worked regularly with police forces in sharing his research and expertise in respect of equality issues with policy makers and approaches to young people.

Engagement with end users is exemplified through the work of The Northampton Centre for Learning Behaviour ([www.ncflb.com](http://www.ncflb.com)), which is one of two social enterprises that have emerged from the research activity undertaken within this UoA. The Centre conducts needs analyses and subsequent intervention work for UNICEF and Council of Europe in Turkey, Romania and China (Garner & Evans).

**Identifying impact**

Through a series of research projects funded by RCUK, local and national policy-makers and public, and voluntary and third sector organisations in diverse international contexts, researchers within the UoA have developed strategic approaches to planning, facilitating, monitoring and recording impacts. Research impact is closely monitored with reference to direct actions taking place as a result of research findings and recommendations. This includes the establishment of partnerships with local and national government departments, NGOs and charitable trusts with researchers contributing to both an evaluation of their existing procedures and the generation of new knowledge and understanding.

Positive feedback on educational research conducted from the University of Northampton is provided by a number of our beneficiaries. This ranges from formal evaluation of research focused workshops and events to the more informal feedback provided by research users.

Research conducted for several organisations have resulted in changes to policy or the implementation of new systems. Garner's work in Australia focused upon curriculum development, modification and implementation for learners with special educational needs was significant in the shaping of policy at both state and national levels. This is apparent in the guidelines issued to schools, teachers and policy makers within the country.

Bell and Devecchi's research with colleagues in Ireland investigated the challenges encountered by young people with disabilities during periods of transition from compulsory to post compulsory education. The report of this work is being used for the development of guidelines and exemplars of good practice to inform processes across Ireland and ensure better opportunities for young people who have previously been denied access to appropriate post-compulsory education.

Horton's research into pupil participation in school (re)design resulted in the production of good practice guides for architects/planners and headteachers undertaking school design, construction and refurbishment projects as part of the *Building Schools for the Future*, *Academy schools*, *Primary Capital Programme* and *Free Schools* programmes in England and Wales.

### c. Strategy and plans

In line with the University's strategic plan, researchers are enhancing engagement with external organisations and the wider public, both as partners in and beneficiaries of research. In doing this, we aim to increase the significance and reach of research impact regionally, nationally and internationally. Our plan addressing this ambition is founded upon the following:

1. Raise the University's external profile as a centre of research excellence by building upon work in the area of social and educational inclusion in line with the University's commitment to widening participation. Having established strong partnerships with other higher education institutions both within the UK and internationally (e.g. University of Birmingham, Trinity College Dublin, University of Shaoxing) and with NGOs working in the area of inclusive schooling (e.g. Brindavan Education Trust India), researchers are well positioned to broaden the research agenda and to impact upon the work of teachers and the inclusion of previously marginalised learners. Sharing research expertise with those who have professional teaching skills in these organisations has provided a platform for the development of research and teaching programmes and will be further developed in the immediate future. Several of our recent completing students are in management positions in schools and at the forefront of discussions related to the increased engagement between researchers and practitioners in the evaluation of teaching and learning.
2. Broaden partnerships and expanding into new areas of research. An investment in the development of researchers exploring the development of provision and curriculum initiatives in early years education over the period of the REF provides a launch pad for research in this area. New research funding has enabled a number of small scale projects in this area to be developed and these will be built upon by the strengthening of partnerships with schools and settings.
3. Expanding pedagogical research through the provision of funding to support the development and evaluation of innovative approaches to teaching and learning supported by the Institute for Teaching and Learning.
4. Supporting the development of early careers researchers. A successful research student programme is being built upon by enabling those completing their PhDs and new members of academic staff to consider the ways in which their research may feed back into school development and inform both policy and practice.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies illustrate the quality and range of work undertaken and the commitment of educational researchers to challenging the marginalisation of learners. The study of young people's participation in decision-making demonstrates the transformative impact of research on the design of spaces for children and young people by facilitating pupil opportunities for influencing their learning environment and thereby increasing their engagement in the teaching and learning process. The focus upon curriculum development in Australia ensured that the rights of pupils who have struggled to gain appropriate access to learning has been addressed at state and national level through modification of documentation and procedures. Both case studies demonstrate how the relationship between researchers, service users, policy makers and young people has been fostered by the educational approaches adopted by researchers and have challenged marginalisation and exclusion of young people from the education process. The case studies provide examples of the commitment made by educational researchers to investigate barriers to learning and support service providers in fostering a more inclusive learning environment for children and young people.