

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of York</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 25, Education</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Our vision and primary focus is to conduct research that is applied, which generates knowledge and insights to practice and policy, in addition to any contribution it may make to the development of educational theory. Education is a key lever of change and improvement in societies. The role of research is to generate and evaluate evidence that allows education providers and systems to respond more effectively to changing demands and contexts, by (1) monitoring and exploring the effects of current practices; (2) critically analysing new proposals and approaches; (3) developing research-informed interventions and evaluating their outcomes in a manner that provides useful information to those who make decisions and choices about practical action. This primary research is then supported by systematic reviews and syntheses of existing research findings on specific issues and questions.</p> <p>All four research centres in the Department of Education (DoE) (Centre for Innovation and Research in Science Education (CIRSE), Centre for Language Learning Research (CLLR), Centre for Research on Education and Social Justice (CRESJ), and Psychology in Education Research Centre (PERC)) – and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) – undertake primary research with all three of the aims above. Both the DoE and the IEE have established expertise in carrying out systematic reviews of research and in disseminating the findings to practitioner and policy audiences, as well as within the academic community. Furthermore, since late 2013 the Cambridge Primary Review Trust (CPRT), the successor to the Cambridge Primary Review, has been based in the DoE.</p> <p>The mission of the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) is focused on practice and policy. The IEE was founded in 2007 to contribute to the improvement of education internationally by synthesising and disseminating research evidence on the effectiveness of educational interventions (courses, teaching approaches, etc.), and by developing, evaluating, and disseminating educational programmes and practices for which there is strong research evidence of effectiveness in raising the attainment of pupils from pre-school to secondary school level. During the review period, the IEE has focused on knowledge exchange, building partnerships and collaborations.</p> <p>The principal non-academic beneficiaries of our research are: <b>schools and education practitioners</b> (teachers, head teachers, school managers, governing bodies, school inspectors and advisors, CPD developers and providers, counsellors and psychologists); <b>students and families</b> (at primary, secondary and higher education levels); <b>national and international policymakers and agencies</b> (e.g. government departments, local authorities, ministries of education, donor agencies, non-governmental organisations); and <b>educational resource developers and designers</b> (e.g. curriculum designers, developers of educational technology).</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The impact of research ultimately depends on its quality and its relevance to current concerns. Our fundamental approach is to undertake research that is rigorous and methodologically robust, and adds to knowledge of education. We also encourage all staff to develop their research programmes with an awareness of the issues and questions of current and potential future interest to education practitioners and policymakers. Our focus on societal impact has been a key factor in our success in securing research funding, particularly from charitable organisations who share our vision (e.g., Astra Zeneca Science Teaching Trust, Bowland Charitable Trust, Education Endowment Foundation, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Save the Children, Salters' Institute, UNICEF, and the Wellcome Trust).</p> <p>Our main strategies for achieving impact have been:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. allocating significant resources to knowledge transformation activities, to enable the transition from dissemination of ideas to practical impacts on the practices and actions of teachers and others, and hence on policy;</li> <li>2. disseminating research findings and insights through outlets that are accessible to practitioners and policymakers, and other potential users of research, as well as through refereed academic journals;</li> <li>3. maintaining and developing close links with educational practitioners, policymakers, and funding agencies, both in the UK and internationally, to improve our understanding of issues and problems of current concern and of areas seen as priorities for action, and to develop networks of key contacts with education practice and policy;</li> <li>4. providing on-going development opportunities for all staff on issues related to research impact, including the three strategies above.</li> </ol>

**As examples of these strategies:**

**Strategy 1:** The DoE and IEE have a commitment to the central importance of knowledge transformation within the research and development cycle in enabling research to have practical impact, through the development of research-informed teaching interventions as a means of improving practice and informing policy. Examples during the review period are the science curriculum development work of CIRSE, which includes three A-level specifications (in biology, chemistry and physics), one suite of GCSE specifications and a major Key Stage 3 project; the development in CRESJ of teaching, Initial Teaching Training (ITT) and CPD materials; courses in citizenship, of second/foreign language teaching materials and approaches in CLLR; and developing the York Informed Practice Initiative (YIPI) which is a knowledge brokerage service to help schools make use of proven interventions in education practice.

**Strategy 2:** To improve dissemination of research outcomes to potential users, the IEE produces:

- the *Best Evidence Encyclopaedia*, an online resource, which aims to present reliable, unbiased reviews of research-proven educational programmes for practitioners, policy-makers and school administrators, currently with over 3,000 visits each month.
- *Better: Evidence-based Education*, a magazine published three times a year aimed at getting education research into the hands of head teachers, teachers, governors and local and national policy makers. The articles in the magazine explain, in plain English, the state of the research evidence in order to inform practice in education.
- a fortnightly e-newsletter entitled *Best Evidence in Brief*, (joint with Johns Hopkins University, USA) identifies research items of interest from the education news that explore the evidence behind the headlines. This e-newsletter has more than 1,200 subscribers; most are education practitioners with only 16% identified as academic.

The DoE has developed a repository of language research materials (<http://www.iris-database.org>), disseminated nationally and internationally to teachers and teacher trainers in collaboration with professional subject associations, to make research processes more accessible to practitioners; a third of the downloads are by practising language teachers.

**Strategy 3:** During the REF period, we have built strong strategic partnerships and engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders. This approach has been supported by the appointment of Baroness Estelle Morris as Chair of both the Executive Group for the IEE (since 2007) and of the DoE's Advisory Board (since 2012). The membership of both bodies is strongly weighted towards users of research (head teachers, funding agencies, senior national figures in organisations responsible for ITT and CPD, etc.). The IEE has a dedicated dissemination and partnerships team, with the role of building strategic partnerships with stakeholders in education.

The IEE initiated and funded the Coalition for Evidence-based Education (CEBE), an alliance of individuals and organisations interested in improving the way research evidence is accessed and used across the sector. CEBE is the platform for the Education Media Centre and Evidence for the Frontline, which are developing initiatives to promote research use and knowledge exchange in education (see section c). The DoE has developed a large network of PGCE partnership schools, to engage teachers and other related practitioners with educational research. Our partnerships now also include three Schools Direct consortia (Ebor, Northern Lights, Red Kite) through which we contribute to the research arm of their mission.

We have initiated engagement with policymakers at the national and international level through activities such as face-to-face meetings and briefings with key individuals and organisations (e.g., Stephen Twigg MP, July 2012 and Arne Duncan, US Secretary of State for Education, September 2012). We have also contributed to regular think-tank roundtable discussions at Reform, Demos, Policy Exchange and Institute for Public Policy Research, and contributed to policy forums within DFID, Save the Children and UNICEF.

**Strategy 4:** Throughout the review period, termly training has been offered to staff to encourage the development of applied research that is relevant to the issues and concerns of education practice and policy. Training days have included sessions on ESRC Pathways to Impact, the use of social media to disseminate research findings to non-academic audiences, and developing an impact strategy. These training days have aimed both to raise the prominence among staff of the impact agenda and to improve skills in developing research grant applications with appropriate impact plans, and in evaluating the nature and the extent of the impact of our research. These bespoke events have been led by education staff, supported by the Research and Innovation Office at the University. Researchers are also encouraged to develop their research skills by attending professional development courses both at the university and beyond. Training

opportunities are publicised through the *Weekly Research Bulletin* distributed electronically to all education staff at York. A section of the annual research report written by staff in the DoE and IEE outlines the nature and the extent of their impact and dissemination activities during the year.

**c. Strategy and plans**

Our strategy over the next five years is to continue to focus on the four strands identified in section b. In 2013, we augmented staffing significantly in science education, to maintain and develop the nationally significant research-informed curriculum development work of CIRSE. We continue to support the development of research-informed teaching interventions in language learning and citizenship. We will continue to build links and relationships with organisations directly concerned with practice and policy in education, and will seek to increase the number and range of such links.

We will:

1. Play a leading role in the development of the Education Media Centre (EMC), a national body recently set up with funding from five major funders to make education research more accessible to the media;
2. Lead the development of a partner initiative to the EMC, to be called ‘Evidence for the Frontline’, which will support interactions and collaborations between researchers and practitioners;
3. The DoE in late 2013 will appoint a full-time dissemination and impact manager;
4. Develop a more targeted approach to non-academic beneficiaries and increase consultation with them in the preparation of research funding proposals, with the support of the dissemination and impact/partnership managers in the IEE and DoE, and the University’s Research Innovation and Social Science Research Development Officers;
5. Expand the impact of our language and learning research to inform the way in which foreign/second languages are taught in schools by developing teaching interventions to assist foreign/second language learners of English;
6. Work closely with our Advisory Board to broaden access to non-academic beneficiaries;
7. Develop further our partnership activities with schools (e.g., Schools Direct, PGCE partnership schools) to have a more informed understanding of their needs and concerns so that we can focus our research and research impact accordingly;
8. Develop a national alliance of high-performing primary schools to embed CPRT’s pedagogy of evidence and principle of working across the entire curriculum;
9. Work closely with our charitable funders to develop cost-efficient activities that have the maximum amount of impact on their beneficiaries. This can be achieved through using some of our pre-existing impact mechanisms (e.g., Better magazine) and resources (e.g., Communications office, Advisory Board);
10. Continue to support staff training in the area of research impact through the DoE and IEE conference and training funds and our internal bespoke training programme.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies on ‘Improving scientific literacy and engagement with science’ and ‘Citizenship education’ both highlight the importance we attribute to knowledge transformation in enabling and achieving impact on practice and policy. In both cases, research and scholarship on current practices and on issues of recognised importance to practitioners and policymakers led to the development and dissemination of research-informed teaching and teacher training materials. Both were disseminated through professional journals, conferences, and workshops as well as through academic routes, developing networks in which the voice of users was strong to support the work of knowledge transformation and the subsequent dissemination of its outcomes. The expertise gained from this work is now being shared with colleagues working in other areas, particularly languages education, where impact similarly depends on the development of research-informed teaching materials and approaches – an example of our fourth strategy.

The case study on ‘School-based In-service education and training in Kenya and Tanzania’ illustrates our long-term strategy of developing close and effective relationships with key funding agencies and policymakers that provide more detailed insights into their interests and concerns, and develop trust. This case study is also an example of our work with agencies and governments in developing countries, particularly in Africa. This work has been disseminated to professional bodies and groups, as well as to other academics.