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Institution: Edge Hill University
Unit of Assessment: 25 – Education
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Beneficiaries of our research. The Faculty undertakes research which studies, informs and impacts upon social and educational inclusion, equity and access to educational opportunities. Research on literacy and reading development, special educational needs and disability, the wider school workforce, gender, social class and widening opportunities is conducted with, and disseminated to, teachers, tutors and school/college leadership teams. The Faculty of Education also works directly with stakeholders within the lifelong learning and higher education sectors, including public sector organisations (such as the Office for Fair Access), aiming to ensure that research projects are directly informed by users and funders.</p> <p>Types of impact. Impact is achieved through influencing national and institutional policy. Impact on practice is felt in textbooks and resources for educational practitioners; it is also achieved through working directly with teacher educators, teachers and school leaders, implementing research in schools and colleges in order to improve practice. In general, the research centre for <i>Schools, Colleges and Teacher Education</i> (SCaTE) impacts on schooling, the <i>Centre for Learner Identity Studies</i> (CLIS) on education beyond school and the <i>Centre for Literacy and Numeracy Research</i> (CLNR) on early interventions (see below).</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The approach to impact across the current assessment period consists of two interrelated strategic developments: (a) the Faculty has invested in staff with the background and vision to direct research impact; (b) the institution and Faculty have developed mechanisms to impact upon policy and practice. These have enabled the development of research conducted with colleagues in schools and colleges in response to problems and questions set by research users.</p> <p>Investing in staff in order to direct research impact: Since 2008, the Faculty has expanded and developed quality and experience of the research team in order to increase the reach and significance of research impact. Impact is evidenced in Ashley's research, which was used to develop the National Plan for Music; it also influenced choirs including the National Boys Choir of Scotland. Thomas's research in Widening Participation in HE informed policies in England and Wales; it also informed recruitment and retention policy in approximately 190 Higher Education Institutions. Cain's work in practitioner research with <i>Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje</i> (Croatia), resulted in collaborative action research projects with Advisers from the Ministry of Education, the development of the capacity for Croatian teachers and advisers to research practice, and written and verbal reports to the national Ministry of Education on these developments. Van Daal's research was used to inform teacher training, CPD, curriculum development and the specification of curricula in Norway; his expert reports were used as cornerstones in the development of the European Commission policy on promoting literacy in general and in particular outside the school across 26 European countries. His research in the field of learning disabilities has been used to develop reading methods (including computer-assisted instruction) and interventions in children with dyslexia. Appointing Professors with strong track records of impact, has given strategic direction to the Faculty research centres, opened up new networks for discussion and dissemination, and enabled new relationships between the Faculty's research, policy makers and practitioners. The strategic direction informs discussion between the Faculty's senior managers and key decision makers at, for example, Department of Education (DfE) and Sutton Trust, to understand their present concerns and to identify research opportunities. It has also enabled better advice and support about impact for novice researchers.</p> <p>Influencing policy: Impact on policy has been achieved by (a) an approach to dissemination which reaches beyond the academic community and (b) direct interaction with policy makers at national level. Dissemination beyond the academic community has involved the University's Media Centre, through which, for instance, Ashley's work was reported in the <i>Telegraph</i>, the <i>Daily Mail</i> and Radio 4's <i>Today programme</i>, and Putwain's work appeared in <i>Sky News</i>, the <i>Guardian</i> and the <i>Telegraph</i>. Liaison with policy makers at national level has occurred, for example, through presentations that Dunne and Woolhouse gave to the DfES in 2008, about the role and employment of Teaching Assistants; through Thomas's research for HEFCE, Ashely's engagement with the National Music Plan for the DfE/Department for Culture Media and Sport</p>

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and through **Graves'** work for the Teaching and Development Agency for Schools, which formed the basis of the criteria used by them for the endorsement procedure for programmes to be included in the Integrated Qualifications Framework.

Impacting on educational interventions: Our research has an impact on practice at a national level. A key element of our approach is to build in research strands to major educational intervention projects. The Faculty has been awarded a significant number of educational contracts to deliver such projects, including the Every Child Counts project (£2.8 million, DfE), the Mathematics Specialist Teacher Programme (£2.6 million, DfE), the National Award for SEN co-ordination (£5 million, NCTL), the Specialist Dyslexia Programme (£2 million, TDA), Lesson Study (£380,000, EEF) and the Learner Response System project (£1 million, EEF). Together, these projects have reached over 5,000 teachers in England. Our research has also informed the content of some of these projects. For example, **Hallett's** (2010) research established that Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators are often hampered in their ability to make the structural changes necessary to include all learners by hierarchical school structures. By engaging with the research findings, tutors on the National Award for SEN Coordination have designed assessment tasks that require SENCOs to conduct small scale research projects within their schools, to investigate ways in which they might develop greater influence. Our research also informs the Faculty's day-to-day teaching. For example, a series of research seminars around the theme of boys' identity work (in English, music and RE) has sensitized teaching staff to the complexities of the issues revealed by the Faculty's research. They in turn have taught their students to understand these issues, leading to informed discussions with trainee teachers, about the damaging consequences of teachers' stereotyping.

Partnering with practitioners: Our research impacts on practice at an institutional level. Our Teacher Researcher Associates Programme (TRAP) supports teachers in researching areas of their professional practice. Teachers in 15 schools are paired with academics who provide practical help in literature review, methodological design and the analysis and communication of findings. This programme has been running for four years with research questions being shaped by the teachers and, because of the numbers of teachers involved, TRAP has held its own educational conference for teachers and school leaders. The teachers' projects are often connected to the academics' interests – two TRAP projects (supported by **Ashley**) investigated boys' participation in singing and two (supported by **Cain**) involved action research into the teaching of gifted and talented students. This form of user involvement shapes research questions, the design of projects, ensures relevance and enhances impact via dissemination in schools and colleges.

A key development has been to organise research seminars within schools, considerably increasing the engagement with research of school staff unable to travel to university-based seminars. In January 2013, head teachers (from Evelyn Primary School, Tarleton Academy and Sutton Academy) and academics (from Edge Hill, Cambridge and Southampton universities) jointly addressed the title, 'How can universities work together with schools and colleges to generate educational research that benefits teachers and students?' The audience, including teachers and school leaders from 35 schools, generated ideas which continue to influence the mission of SCaTE. School leaders also contribute to the Faculty's annual, 3-day educational research conference, which includes contributions from educational practitioners and Head Teachers, as well as from researchers with national and international reputations.

Publishing for professionals: The approach to dissemination includes scholarly publications for professionals. Practitioner journals including *Primary Music Today* and *Teaching History* are edited from within the Faculty and, since 2008, faculty members have written more than thirty books for practitioners. These texts, informed by the authors' own research, synthesise existing knowledge, making it accessible and applicable in practice settings and also inspire the reflective engagement of practitioners with research. A second strand of publications uses the authors' knowledge of educational research methods to inform research processes, particularly for practitioners. These include, *Doing your Research Project in the Lifelong Learning Sector*, and *Applying Theory to Educational Research* and *Action Research in Education* (a BERA/Sage publication).

c. Strategy and plans

Research centres: Each of the Faculty's research centres, the *Centre for Learner Identity Studies*

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(CLIS), the research centre for *Schools, Colleges and Teacher Education (SCaTE)*, and the newly-established *Centre for Literacy and Numeracy Research (CLNR)* has a five-year strategy plan aimed at strengthening research and maximising impact by:

- Continued development of national and international links within and beyond the academic community so that research benefits from international collaboration and impacts more widely than hitherto;
- Where appropriate to our focus on inclusion and equity, the development of policy-focussed research projects (for example, the DfE's series, *Research priorities for education and children's services*);
- Further development of research that is associated with major funded educational interventions, by applying for educational contracts that match our research base and have the potential to generate further research opportunities that, in turn, impact upon policy in a feedback loop;
- Further integration of research in partnerships with schools and colleges, enabling staff in these institutions to undertake research jointly with academics, and to impact on educational provision, process and outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged students.

In order to facilitate our focus on impact and to develop the thinking of our researchers towards impact, we have introduced a requirement that bids for internal funding should name the potential beneficiaries of the research (external to the University) in general terms, and make reference to possible impact on those beneficiaries. Once funded, the progress of the research is monitored both through the research centres and institutionally, through the Annual Academic Returns, which track research projects from the proposal stage to publications and beyond. Internal funding is, and will continue to be, available for dissemination activities post-publication, where the research can be expected to increase its impact on policy or practice. The mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the five year plan for each centre include: termly reports to Faculty Research Committee and Institutional Research Committee; termly cross-centre evaluation of research impact and annual 'research user' evaluations across our partner schools and colleges.

Linking with I4P: The Faculty's research impact will be facilitated by the University's Institute for Professional Practice and Public Policy (I4P) which seeks to enable cross-disciplinary research and knowledge exchange initiatives. I4P explores opportunities for cross sector collaboration and co-operation, drawing on the experience of practitioners as well as academic researchers to inform new ways of working and learning. It undertakes commissioned evaluations and funded research projects which draw upon the skills and expertise of staff across the University, as a way of strengthening links between the University and its regional, national and international communities of practice.

Involving users in research centres: Regular formal and informal consultation with stakeholders ensures that research is relevant to the needs of users. SCaTE and CLNR have been created as a direct response to user consultation. SCaTE is managed by a steering group that includes school leaders from Primary and Secondary schools; this group has oversight of the research that is carried out in schools and colleges. For example, the Faculty has worked closely with Sutton Academy in St Helens, which was an early pioneer of the concept of the Teaching School. Researchers are working with Academy staff on several projects in this school, including investigations around the improvement of literacy and the Academy's 'Live to Learn' curriculum. User engagement throughout the research process will continue to impact on staff and students in schools, colleges and teacher education.

d. Relationship to case studies

Case Study 1 exemplifies the unit's aim of improving teaching and learning in schools through research into practice. Schools have engaged directly with the research through visits by the unit's staff members who have in turn benefitted from first-hand experience of the impact of their research in the classroom. **Case study 2** demonstrates the unit's approach to impact on policy and practice by involving people with strong links to communities of practice and policy-making circles. Findings have regularly been shared with a group of about 500 people who have engaged with, and used, the research findings to inform institutional policy and practice.