

Institution: University of Manchester
Unit of Assessment: 25 (Education)
<p>a. Context: Much of the impact of educational research at Manchester is grounded in the sustained focus of research groups, nurtured over many years. Recognition that our distinctive research has made a difference to policy and practice by policymakers, professionals and other groups has been evidenced with acclaim for our teams (see REF3b case studies) and individuals (e.g. Ainscow was awarded the CBE 2012). Indeed, approximately 70% of our research income comes from funders where the relationship between research and delivering a strategy for change is integral to the funding remit. This has enabled our research both to align with the needs of funding agencies/organisations, and simultaneously challenge thinking in ways that make a difference. We have research and impact expertise regarding the achievement of equity and social justice located within four substantive Thematic Programmes of Research: <i>Special Educational and Additional Needs; Disadvantage and Poverty; Mathematics Education and Critical Pedagogies; and Critical Education Policy and Leadership</i>. We work with five main non-academic-user groups: <i>workforce</i>: professional and support staff; <i>stakeholders</i>: students, parents, governors, and wider communities; <i>education service providers/ commissioners</i>: local authorities, academy chains; <i>governments/ agencies</i>: Department for Education, Department for Communities and Local Government; <i>companies</i>: publishers of curriculum materials. The main impacts can be seen through changes to: (i) <i>practitioner and professional services</i>: ways of thinking and enabling practices; (ii) <i>public policy</i>: debates and enactment strategies; (iii) <i>creativity, culture and society</i>: public attitudes and understandings; and, (iv) <i>economic, commercial, organisational services</i>: commercial partners. Impacts operate on different scales, from classrooms through to government. We work in partnership alongside and with professionals and policymakers, and so contribute to evidenced change. At the same time we recognise that some projects lend themselves more to impact than others, and so our portfolio of projects show major contributions to the production of data sets, conceptual models, and methodologies that may not be designed to have an immediate or direct impact for users. Nevertheless, we have developed a research culture where such projects are accessed and we look for links with impact-related activities.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact: strategic engagement with user groups is appropriately proactive and iterative, but at the same time we are mindful of serendipity. While proactive knowledge transfer is well established at Manchester, we recognise how impact plans and opportunities tend to be located in shared dispositions and experiences. Thus our portfolio of projects secures impact through (a) <i>transmission of research project findings</i> by participation in knowledge exchange events, with over 50 keynotes at professional conferences; (b) <i>commissioned projects</i> by responding to and enabling user initiated strategic plans, for example, staff have engaged in partnership work in over 12 Local Authorities; (c) <i>embedded projects</i> by working with partners on tough issues, where the way forward may not be obvious. Our research partnerships with users are based on enabling research engagement, not least through how talking, sharing evidence, and building experience enables new insights to be generated and used to inform change strategies. The design, delivery and reporting of research in partnerships builds confidence, skills and knowledge that underpins the translation of findings into practice. The scale of this varies: we have five full time doctoral students embedded in change projects in schools and consortia, for example, McGinity is researching in a school where Gunter has had a research partnership link for a decade. In contrast, Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and Kerr have built a 'Coalition of Research Schools' as a regional network of teachers working on negotiated projects focused on institutional change and close to practice professional development. Nationally research by Humphrey and colleagues has impacted on a wide range of schools through contributing to the cancellation of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and the roll out of Achievement for All (AfA) strategies by government. We put emphasis on knowledge exchange as a form of research legibility, where design and development can be read and understood by people who are not academics, and in ways that can be recognised and acted upon. Importantly we help achieve impact through the explicit use of change strategies that can be utilised by users. For example, 'instrumental' change is based on the communication of technical best practice strategies, with impacts on everyday professional thinking and practice. We communicate what can be learned from research, and so Kerr and West's Schools and Social Inequality BERA Insight report (2010) is a short accessible pamphlet that summarises the evidence base for users, and feedback has demonstrated that this is being used and valued. A second example is 'constructivist' change, and</p>

Impact template (REF3a)

this is based on the development of ideas about what change actually means for people in their working lives. Within partnership projects shared understanding is co-developed through researchers and users working on close-to-practice agendas. For example, in the Greater Manchester Challenge project led by **Ainscow**, research underpinned the idea and establishment of school-to-school partnerships in ways that are supported by local and national policymakers. We often use both change models as a creative 'hybrid', and so the Mathematics Education group led by **Williams** have used ESRC funding both to generate high quality social science evidence about adolescents' learner identities and transitions, and follow on impact projects with professionals and publishers to develop better tools for mathematics education. We have found that research evidence becomes persuasive for users not only through oral and written reporting but through how agreed change models enables connectivity with practice. Advances in the outlined approach to impact are taking place in two main ways:

(i) Recognition of the significance and reach of our research. Professional: staff give research based advice e.g. **Squires**: British Dyslexia Association; **Kerr**: Communications Trust *Talk of the Town* project; **Bond**: Autism Education Trust (Expert Reference Group). National: staff give research based advice to national bodies e.g. **Ainscow** is Specialist Adviser to the House of Commons Education Committee for its inquiry into *School Partnerships and Cooperation* (2013); **Humphrey** is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Autism; **Dyson** chaired the Early Years, Family and Education Task Group for the Marmot Commission on Health Inequalities in England (2010), and he is co-chair of WHO Europe Review of Social Determinants of Health and Health inequalities in Europe; **Jones** is a member of the Sutton Trust Research Group (2013); **Lupton** was a member of the Cabinet Office sounding board for the social mobility White Paper (2009) and gave evidence to the Parliamentary Task Force on Social Housing and Social Mobility (2012), and to the Mayor of London's Education Inquiry. International: staff give research based advice abroad e.g. **Raffo** is a member of the Migration Policy Institute National Center panel on immigrant integration (2010); **Squires** gave advice to the National Council for Special Education, Ireland (2012); **West** gave advice to the *National Networking Project*, Switzerland (2011); **Woods, K**, gave advice to the *School Psychology Programme* at the University of Ohio, USA (2011). Commercial: staff make research based contributions, e.g. **Humphrey** gave advice to Redrow Homes regarding the psychological impact of moving home on children (2012). Public: staff use research to generate public awareness e.g. talks at various public events including 'festivals' of education (e.g. **Emery, Jones**).

(ii) Research capacity building through developing impact capital and dispositions is a feature of our research culture. Many staff have professional biographies as research users prior to moving into higher education, and so have additional credibility or 'capital' for being able to understand the challenges of educational change. Visiting Professors (e.g. van Veen) and part time Professorial appointments (e.g. **Apple**), have been recruited precisely because they position themselves at the interface between research and action, and act as role models. Staff are at different stages in developing impact dispositions, and are supported through our strategy of undertaking impact-orientated research in research groups. Individuals are supported through the targeted allocation of resources e.g. mentoring, workload models and funding. This means that early career researchers rapidly gain experience of research-policy-practice relationships with and for users (including senior professionals and policymakers). Research standing and connections have developed through multiple inter-connected projects over time, not least with professionals undertaking full time and part time masters and doctoral work with researchers as teachers and supervisors. Reputation building is crucial to enabling users to respond and engage with our researchers with confidence (15 members of staff have appeared on TV and radio; and many staff use social media). The University promotion criteria rewards knowledge exchange and impact, for this is one of four criteria, and evidence of achievement in this area was presented in each of the 12 promotions since 2008 (6 senior lecturers and 6 chairs). Our impact achievement is supported by institutional expertise, for example, 'Policy@manchester' is a University network of public policy researchers, and links have been built with a range of users, developing new skills and insights. The Faculty has a dedicated impact support team embedded within the Research Support Service and a Research Support Officer in the MIE enables staff to have access to expert knowledge about impact funding and connection to the University media office.

c. Strategy and plans: Post REF2014 the co-ordinated aim of the groups within the four Thematic Programmes of Research will be to develop the MIE as a national and international centre of excellence for research impact in education. The major challenge for users is to deliver 'value added' student achievement at a time of a major equity gap linked to social and economic disadvantage. Users build partnerships with us because of our track record in this area and our openness to new ideas enables users to be involved in developing a shared approach. We envisage that users responsible for educational provision will continue to access the opportunities located in MIE research projects and researcher reputations, and we would want to contribute to normalising and extending education as a research informed service. We are mindful that the interface between policy, practice and research is complex and often contested, but we have made gains in spite of this, and so remain ambitious for our impact agenda. Our strategic goals are to maximise the gains from the approach already outlined, by:

- sustaining the 70% proportion of research income on impact focused projects;
- requiring each of the four thematic groups to annually report on and evidence examples of ongoing and/or newly developed impact case studies;
- using the impact resources that we have built within our staff and PGR community as a platform to extend and deepen our impact pathways, not least through public events such as the new *Manchester Education Debates* series from 2014;
- developing the internal planning and evaluation of research projects through appointing impact champions in each Thematic Programme of Research, and an impact co-ordinator to secure coherence and share best practice;
- continuing to access the Faculty of Humanities impact and knowledge exchange resources: an *Impact Support Team* (providing opportunities to build user engagement; and expand the scale and reach of public engagement and media work); a *Business Engagement Manager* who manages relationships with a range of private, public and third sector collaborative partners; a *Faculty Strategic Investment Reserve Fund* supporting investment in research impact activities; and applications for *Simon and Hallsworth visiting professorships* in social sciences and political economy

Goals are formulated, monitored and evaluated by a Research Co-ordinator and Research Strategy Committee in the MIE, and are coherent with the impact objectives that are presented in the Faculty and University strategic documents. Operationally, goals are delivered through the Thematic Programmes of Research groups, where convenors and project leaders use them to support review and planning. The *Research Matters* internal seminar series is used to build on training and development in regard to impact issues. The MIE is located in the School of Environment, Education and Development, where a Deputy Director of Research with an impact brief has now been appointed.

d. Relationship to case studies. All four case studies show inter-relational links with users in the workforce, stakeholders, providers and government, with examples of significant and evidenced changes to professional practice and public policy decisions. We have learned from 'doing impact' about the need to improve research legibility by users, not least through how projects inter-connect over time with user agendas. The four case studies confirm the importance of transmission, but impact achievements have mainly been through commissioned and embedded research engagement models. Impacts are emerging from our embedded researchers, and we are using these to think about how localised gains inter-connect with regional and systemic opportunities for change. In summary, the case studies are enabling (a) clearer articulation of planned and emerging impact; (b) more informed staffing and project investment decisions; and (c) effective deployment of impact dispositions into project planning in a more proactive way. Importantly the case studies illuminate that the strategy is well developed at Manchester, and that we take impact seriously in regard to project design and staff capabilities.