

Institution: UNIVERSITY of WEST LONDON
Unit of Assessment: 25 EDUCATION
Title of case study: Supporting the development of children's socio-emotional well-being
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study represents the work of the Pyramid research team within the INSTIL Education Research Group (INSTIL ERG). Research at the University of West London is characterised by an ambition to promote 'useful knowledge' and this case study, with its focus on providing evidence to inform and direct practice, fits within this approach. The case study describes the first rigorous evaluation of the impact of Pyramid after-school clubs that aim to improve the socio-emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children. The work of the Pyramid research team provides an empirical evidence base to support the work of a range of stakeholders including: practitioners; policy makers and researchers in the field of children's socio-emotional well-being, and the children and their families. Drawing on the evidence base, these impacts include the securing of funding for the continuation of Pyramid clubs in schools and informing future development and extension of the Pyramid club intervention for delivery to other age groups.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research outlined in this case study represents the first peer-reviewed evaluation of the impact of Pyramid clubs: a short-term school-based intervention to improve the socio-emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children. The research, which is on going, involves comparison of children who did or did not attend Pyramid clubs on measures of their socio-emotional health. These measures were made before and after the children had attended the Pyramid Clubs and were compared with similar measures from matched children within a 'control' who did not attend the Clubs. In addition, the research programme has examined the use of Circle Time as a technique for obtaining children's views on service provision.</p> <p>Evaluations have focused on examining the evidence of Pyramid's impact on children's socio-emotional wellbeing. The research team's development of an evidence base demonstrating the efficacy of the Pyramid primary school intervention has led to the following key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of the positive impact of Pyramid to practitioners and policy makers through presentations at peer-reviewed conferences and similar events; • generation of research interest in Pyramid at other higher education institutions e.g. University of Ulster and University of Manchester; • use of the evidence base for future development and extension of the Pyramid intervention for delivery to other age groups i.e. children in secondary schools; • use of the evidence base to secure funding for the continuation of Pyramid clubs in schools; • supporting public awareness of the importance of early intervention in children's socio-emotional well-being; • supporting employability skills in undergraduate students and other stakeholders. <p>Key individuals involved in the programme of research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Madeleine Ohl, Acting Dean of Students (2004-present) • Dr Pauline Fox, Associate Professor (1993-present) • Professor Kathryn Mitchell, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (2003-present) <p>In 2013 and following the research team's evaluations, Pyramid and the University of West London strengthened their long-standing collaboration with a successful joint application for a funding grant to expand the reach of the intervention to primary and secondary schools in Brent, Harrow and Westminster.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Key Pyramid staff i.e. Pyramid Project Lead, Bronach Hughes, is now at the University of West London.

This research has made a significant contribution to the area of what practitioners and policy-makers recognise as effective primary school-based socio-emotional wellbeing initiatives. This is an area that was identified as being lacking, in recent guidance from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2008).

3. References to the research

1. Ohl, M., Mitchell, K., Fox, P. & Cassidy, T. (2006). *Investigating the role of multi-agency screening in primary school-based interventions*. Presentation at the Faculty of Children and Young People Annual Conference, University of Hertfordshire, September 2006.
2. Ohl, M., Mitchell, K., Cassidy, T. & Fox, P. (2008). *The Pyramid Club primary school based intervention: Evaluating the impact on children's social-emotional health*. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. 13 (3). 115-121. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-3588.2007.00476.x
3. Ohl, M., Fox, P. & Mitchell, K. (2012). *Strengthening socio-emotional competencies in a school setting: Data from the Pyramid project*. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. DOI:10.1111/j.2004-8279.2012.02074.x
4. Ohl, M., Fox, P., & Mitchell, K. (2013). *The Pyramid Club elementary school-based intervention: Testing the Circle Time technique to elicit children's service satisfaction*. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*. 3(2). DOI: 10.5539/jedp.v3n2p204

4. Details of the impact

The research makes a contribution to policy and practice for all Pyramid club stakeholders. These stakeholders include: Pyramid at the University of West London (part of the *ContinYou* community learning organisation until June 2013); local authority commissioners; funding bodies; schools; Pyramid club leaders; and the children themselves, and their families (service users).

Pyramid uses the team's research to support its programme management and communication with stakeholders e.g. providing decision-making information for local authority service commissioners, funding bodies, and other professionals e.g. social workers, teachers, educational psychologists. A lay summary of the Pyramid evaluation research is included in a guide for donors and charities in the area of children's and young people's mental health (New Philanthropy Capital [NPC], 2008). NPC, 'a consultancy and think tank dedicated to helping funders and charities achieve a greater impact' (NPC, 2008), uses the research to support anecdotal and qualitative evidence of the beneficial effects of Pyramid Club attendance. Similarly, the work has been cited (Cassidy, 2009) in the peer-reviewed journal - *Social Psychology of Education*.

The research findings were also important to schools in demonstrating that they were adopting evidence-based practice to contribute to Government initiatives such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TAMHS), and the Healthy School Standard (Health Development Agency, 2004). Pyramid stakeholders also include undergraduate volunteers who gain transferable employability skills, and schools support staff such as Teaching Assistants who enhance their practice by training to deliver an evidence-based intervention within the primary school system.

During the REF assessment period, the number of children who attended a Pyramid club peaked in the 2009/10 academic year at approximately 6,300 children. Through the commissioning process, the availability of a strong evidence-base arising from our research will assist growth of the number of Pyramid clubs operating and the number of children who can attend.

Impact case study (REF3b)

The research has also stimulated research interest in Pyramid, in other Higher Education Institutions for example the work of McKenna, Cassidy and Giles (2013) at the University of Ulster.

The research evaluations of Pyramid have supported successful funding bids to the following organisations which, in turn, have benefited and continue to benefit Pyramid's service users:

- The John Lyons's Charity (£72,000), Development of the Transition Project, London Borough of Ealing (2009).
- The John Lyons's Charity (£90,000), Rollout of the Pyramid project in the London Boroughs of Ealing, Brent, Westminster and Harrow (2013).
- John Laing (£24,000), Development of the Pyramid model and new materials to extend the reach to young people aged 11-14 in secondary schools (2011).
- Santander (£9,000), funding for a pilot multi-disciplinary project in Bradford, bringing together schools, Children's Centre and youth workers (2012-13).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**Use of the research evidence base to inform practitioners in education and well-being:**

- Children and Young People Now. (2012). *Mental Health Case Study: Scheme lifts quiet children's confidence*. June 26-9 July 2012. Pp 36-37.
- New Philanthropy Capital. (2008). *Heads Up. Mental health of children and young people: a guide for donors and charities*. London: New Philanthropy Capital/Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
- Pyramid Co-ordinator, Cornwall Council, Services for Children, Schools and Families.
- Chartered Educational Psychologist, Buckinghamshire County Council Educational Psychology Service.
- Development Director, Communities and Schools Together (CaST),
- CHUMS Child Bereavement, Trauma and Emotional Wellbeing Service.

Generation of research interest in Pyramid at other higher education institutions:

- Assistant Director, Barnardo's Northern Ireland.

Use of the evidence base to support funding for the continuation of Pyramid clubs in schools:

- The John Lyon's Charity: 45 Cadogan Gardens, London.

Supporting public awareness of the importance of early intervention in children's socio-emotional well-being

- The Independent newspaper, 13th September 2012: *A helping hand for the quiet ones: Pyramid clubs are giving shy children an after-school lifeline*. Hilary Wilce, education writer, reports on a club session at a Slough school, citing the research as well as the impact of the club on the selected children. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/a-helping-hand-for-the-quiet-ones-pyramid-clubs-are-giving-shy-children-an-afterschool-lifeline-8131181.html>.

Impact case study (REF3b)

- BBC Radio 4 *Woman's Hour*, 12th October 2012: discussion between presenter Jenni Murray and Bronach Hughes, Pyramid Programme Manager at *ContinYou* and Dr Lucy Willetts, clinical psychologist at Berkshire Health Care Foundation Trust and author of *Overcoming Your Child's Shyness and Social Anxiety* on the need for concern about shy children and how parents and others can support them.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01n6stc>

Supporting employability skills in undergraduate students and other stakeholders:

- Reddy, P., Lantz, C. & Hulme, J. (2013). *Employability in Psychology: A guide for departments*. York: Higher Education Academy (cited as case study 15 as a placement for volunteers).

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/disciplines/psychology/psychology-dept-employability-guide.pdf>