

<p>Institution: University of Lancaster</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Education (panel 25, main panel C)</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>We have a distinctive, genuine commitment to and expertise in achieving impact beyond the academic community. We have always enhanced education through exchanging knowledge with users and achieve significant impact across a wide range of domains with considerable reach. Our three research centres have well-established links with a range of users, many of whom are actively engaged in the Centres' research activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing (SJWB) works with teacher educators, further education colleges, universities, schools, and policy makers internationally, nationally and locally. Beneficiaries include those 'at risk', 'disengaged', 'excluded' or in danger of becoming so as well as adults with limited literacy and numeracy in adult and further education. It has an established track record of working with policy makers in this area, including the development of civil society involvement in evaluative practice worldwide. 2. The Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) works with local councils such as Wolverhampton and Worcestershire, with NHS Trusts (for example in Preston) the BBC and with private companies such as <i>Espresso Education</i>. Beneficiaries include pupils, medical staff and company trainees. It works with policy makers both nationally and internationally through undertaking commissioned research and advising on policy development. 3. The Higher Education Research and Evaluation Centre (HERE) works with policy makers both nationally, such as the QAA and HEFCE, and internationally, for example the European Union. It conducts commissioned research for them and advises them on policy development. It advises the 'top teams' of universities worldwide, for example Queensland University on student engagement (2011). Through this work it has an impact on students, professional staff, policy makers and tax payers through more effective higher education provision. <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Overall approach: Our educational research is distinctive in tackling social and educational problems by building on theoretical enquiry, the analysis of empirical data and the development of practical solutions. We use the phrase <i>formal theory/real-world solutions</i> to sum this up. For example Hamilton's research on adult literacy, which helped to develop the New Literacy Studies canon, has pioneered new approaches to tackling the very kind of problems that informed the government's Skills for Life policy. Similarly Jackson's research in schools exploring pupils' motives for engaging with, or disengaging from, academic work challenged the myth that 'laddism' is the preserve of white, working-class boys, showing that many girls and middle-class boys are 'laddish' too, and explaining laddish behaviour in both sexes. These insights led to changes in government guidance to schools and to teacher training materials. We have also investigated the impact of research and evaluation outputs (Saunders) and this has made a significant contribution to shaping the approaches adopted by the EU which identify changes in practices as the core focus for impact studies. Based on this approach, we achieve the following types of impact:</p> <p>Enhancing teaching practices and decision-making through improved understanding: The TEL Centre has developed online training materials which have led to more efficient and better communication with employees as well as working with private companies and the NHS to develop a sophisticated software-driven manikin for training medical staff. The HERE Centre has worked with the QAA and universities to communicate the complex nature of student engagement in higher education as well as developing more robust quality assurance systems for PhD examinations in many universities through its work on doctoral examination practices.</p> <p>Influencing regional, national and international policies: The SJWB Centre has informed EU and UNICEF policies on approaches to evaluation as well as working with a government department on the national Skills for Life programme. The TEL Centre has worked with local councils to formulate and evaluate policies on the use of information technologies in schools and had an impact on teachers by influencing national guidance on boys' disengagement from schools. The HERE Centre was commissioned to review HEFCE's quality enhancement policies since 2005 and make recommendations for their future development as well as developing new indicators for enhancement in the Scottish HE system..</p> <p>Capacity-building: The SJWB Centre has led practitioner research involving Further Education</p>

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professionals and learners, which led to better engagement of learners and improved teacher support for speakers of other languages learning English. The HERE Centre engaged educational developers in universities from across the world in the outcomes from research on effective management, leadership and change agency. This developed their abilities to improve quality enhancement in their institutions and to undertake evaluations of the change process.

Developing models to enhance practices in classroom and professional environments: The TEL Centre developed networked learning models for emergency response and nuclear medical teams, enabling them to communicate and share expertise and lessons learned from research-based computer simulations. The HERE Centre developed a research-based workshop which was designed to develop understanding of student engagement and its enhancement. This workshop has been used in over 20 universities worldwide.

Providing prototypes, subsequently implemented on a larger scale: The TEL Centre developed data management systems in schools within one local authority, which were subsequently deployed in schools in neighbouring authorities. It also developed an online curriculum vitae creator for pupils in a local authority, which was then used throughout other local authorities. Both the SJWB and HERE Centres have been involved in the on-going use of RUFDATA (an evaluation planning tool) worldwide.

c. Strategy and plans

Turning formal theory and abstract ideas into real-world changes requires in-depth engagement with, and of, users. To support this, we have further developed our engagement plan as part of our research strategy. This has led to an extension of our interactions with and engagement of research users, including supplementing research project funding from Department R&D funds to enhance impacts and support user-oriented workshops. Our strategy involves working with users in the following ways:

i) Engagement with the media: Our Centres engage with a variety of media outlets to disseminate their research outcomes. The research of **Ashwin** and **Tight** is often featured in the *Times Higher Education*, whilst the research of **Jackson** has been frequently featured in the *Times Educational Supplement*. Television appearances by **Saunders** on *School Farms* have stimulated schools to initiate or enhance their farm projects.

(ii) Beyond 'dissemination' to user engagement in research: Social practice theory permeates our work. It holds that transfer or dissemination of research outcomes between contexts is not effective alone. Engagement with users and contexts is central to ensuring that our research leads to changes in practices. The active engagement of teachers and students in research on motivation and technology-based learning has led to lasting change. We not only talk about our research in keynotes globally, but we organize local workshops to enable users to engage fully and apply it; for example with prospective university applicants in the LearnHigher initiative or with career advisors in our evaluation of Connexions. Methodologies and modelling of the use and usability of research and evaluation outputs are at the centre of our strategies for user engagement with our research outputs both nationally and internationally.

(iii) Consultation and work with policy makers and practitioners: We liaise very closely with commissioners of research and evaluation, often resulting in long-term collaboration. For example, internationally **Saunders'** contributed to the EU parliamentary hearing on Evaluation in Democracy in Brussels in 2013 as well as the work of EvalPartners (UNICEF and IOCE), which produced the Chiang Mai Declaration in 2012. This was instrumental in persuading the UN to designate 2015 as the Year of Evaluation. Nationally, our work over an extended period with *The Schools Network* led them commissioning an MSc which led to enhanced technology-related leadership practices in schools. Locally, **Saunders** became Chair of the *Barrow Education Action Zone* and of the *South Cumbrian Excellence Cluster*, which has continued evaluative research links with South Cumbria through the Inspirational Communities evaluation.

(iv) Organizing events: Collaboration with companies nationally and internationally, with the EU, government departments and agencies, regional agencies, corporations including the BBC, local authorities, local schools and practitioner research networks as well as universities (e.g. Gothenburg, Cape Town and Western Ontario) have all led to joint seminars and conferences with impact consequences. Our work on digital literacies led to an ESRC-funded seminar series. Our *Higher Education Close Up* conferences, run biennially since 1998, bring together higher education professionals of all sorts to share enhancement-oriented ethnographic-style research which makes a difference. Close involvement of South African researchers and managers in that series led to

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burgeoning applied research into higher education in South Africa. This led to impact on the detailed operation of their transformation agenda within the HE system and universities, for example influence on ministerial commissions, changes to syllabi and the development of learning materials. Through the leadership positions held as President of the EES and Vice President of the IOCE, **Saunders** has collaborated with international evaluators (UNICEF, UNEG and the IOCE) to design and host international evaluation fora in Portugal, Chiang Mai, Kathmandu and Brussels.

(v) Doctoral programmes: Each of our research centres has at least one doctoral programme (4 in total, recruiting around 80-100 students per year between them) which extend the impact of their research. Students and alumni are professionals in different contexts and apply their doctoral work there. All four programmes have the aim of making a difference more generally, not just to students. The assessment framework focuses their work on *enhancing* professional practice as well as researching it. For example, the doctoral research of Dr Michael Webster, a senior manager at the University of the Highlands and Islands, led to the growth of a research culture there and enhanced internationalisation. With almost 20 years of doctoral training there are very many such examples.

Mechanisms by which impact is supported at Departmental, Faculty and University levels:

At a departmental level, peer feedback on 'impact' and 'pathways to impact' is provided on all grant bids. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences has an overall 'Impact Director' who performs this function at Faculty level. Funding is also available through a number of Faculty and University schemes, such as the Faculty's Enterprise Centre which has funded two 'Knowledge Exchange Fellowships' for Department members (**Saunders, Passey**) and one of our PhD students (Burkinshaw). We have drawn on Departmental R&D funds and University HEIF money and the Impact Fund to support specific impact projects (e.g. impact studies of research projects; development of web pages). We incorporate impact into our training and review structures, such as PDR and Research Centre away-days. We work with the University Press Office to ensure the widest dissemination for research. To encourage public participation in our research, we utilize off-campus venues for events, in particular the *Work Foundation* premises in London, as well as other university premises in the UK and abroad.

Future Developments: The engagement plan involves further development in the post-REF period **firstly** by a strong focus on sustained international collaboration for impact. An example is research into and development of online doctoral study in the global South, with users being both PhD students and government appointed bodies charged with increasing the number of PhDs locally (e.g. South Africa's National Research Foundation). A **second** area is strategies for the development of alternative versions of research outputs aimed at different audiences and users. This builds on current examples such as the handbook for higher education leaders about institutional strategies for student engagement and a policy makers' guide on developing the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. A **third** area focuses to a greater extent on building user-engagement into our funding bids, for example through planning workshops on the findings of our on-going investigation into HEFCE's teaching and learning enhancement policies.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case study *Enhancing Learning by Targeting Learner Needs* demonstrates the types of impact outlined above and offers a graphic illustration of how the development of formal theory is translated into real world impact through high quality research. The development of the concept of '*MEGAcognition*' and the theory underpinning the *strategic evaluation* approach led to enhanced policies and practices. It also exemplifies the ways in which we interact with users through consultation, seminars and discussion events, including at the House of Commons and with groups of overseas education ministers. The case study shows how we effectively use University resources such as the FASS *Knowledge Exchange Fellowship* and exemplifies the way in which we offer bespoke solutions to users, based on analysis of need and context. The case study *Improving Educational Policy and Practice through Evaluative Research* offers a different mix of impact types, but again shows how quite abstract aspects of social practice theory were translated in specific contexts to yield valuable impacts on policy and practices in Scotland, Europe and beyond. This case study illustrates how the impact of our research permeates the practices of students, university teachers and managers and is used as a benchmark for national and international policy makers.