

<p>Institution: Queen's University Belfast</p> <p>Unit of Assessment: 25 (Education)</p> <p>a. Context Queen's School of Education (QSoE) is uniquely placed as a centre of research excellence in education that influences policy and practice within Northern Ireland (NI); a society in transition. Such a context leads to close and effective relationships with local policy makers and practitioners, yet the unique circumstances of researching education in a divided society has also enabled QSoE to impact on educational initiatives internationally. Key areas of influence focus on: peace and reconciliation; human rights and social justice as they pertain to education specifically; and initiatives in curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. The overarching vision for QSoE is 'Education for Transformation' (www.qub.ac.uk/edu) and research during the period 2008-13 has been instrumental in influencing major education policy and practice developments as NI emerges as a devolved administration of the UK. These include: programme for a shared future including shared education; a revised programme for curriculum and assessment linked to 21st century education for children and young people; mainstreaming children's rights in education; and policy for disability and inclusion. The main beneficiaries and user groups include: Education policy makers: For the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DE) and the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) responsible for third level education, evidence used to effect change includes: research on children's participation in decision-making (Lundy, Emerson); improving evidence-based policy in education (Connolly, Leitch, Miller); and performance levels in further education colleges (Thurston). For the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and local NI Assembly politicians (MLAs), QSoE research has influenced the Programme for Government through, for example: effectiveness of promoting good relations and improving inter-group contact (Donnelly; Gallagher; Hughes); improving services for children with autism (Dillenburger); and human rights education (Emerson). For the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), it has used QSoE research on: thinking skills (McGuinness); assessment and qualifications (Elwood); science education (Jarman, McClune); and assessment for learning (Leitch). For health and social care providers, for example, the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency (with OFMDFM) have used evidence that is directly informing a ten year strategy for children and young people in NI, 2006-2016 through the Improving Children's Lives initiative (led by Connolly www.improvingchildrenslives.org). Education practitioners: have benefitted particularly from the: research-based Shared Education Programme (Gallagher; Hughes); early years increasing respect for diversity (Connolly); personal and social education programme (Leitch); and citizenship education (Emerson, Jerome, Niens). Parents and children: have benefitted from the development of multimedia training materials from behaviour analysis research to empower parents and train professionals (www.stamppp.com) (Dillenburger; Dounavi) and consulting pupils on assessment through animated film (Leitch). Non-governmental and third sector organisations: UNICEF benefitted from research on how to identify key means of implementing the UNCRC in law within 12 countries that is being used internationally to guide NGOs and policy makers (Lundy). Barnardo's used research to inform the development of their 'Ready to Learn' pre-school programme (Emerson, Lundy). Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) has used research on children's rights most specifically in their campaign to get the UNCRC into a Children's Rights Bill for NI (Lundy). QSoE has a long-standing national and international reputation for the successful impact and significant application of its distinctive research outputs. Four research centres (see REF5) now provide the basis for building upon and enhancing established international collaborations. Through the Centre for Shared Education (CSE), Hughes' research has influenced the Ministry of Education in Macedonia to engage with a shared education programme and McGlynn's work has effected integrated education in Israel. Within the Centre for Effective Education (CEE), the Una initiative is influencing early years programmes to reduce racial and ethnic divisions in Columbia, Indonesia and Kenya (Connolly). Through the Centre for Behaviour Analysis (CBA), Dillenburger's research has led to the development of multimedia training for autism in 8 European countries; and through the Centre for Children's Rights (CCR) research led to the use of Lundy's UNCRC Article 12 model as a basis for the implementation of Ireland's Participation Strategy.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact The QSoE approach to impact (2008-2013) acknowledges that knowledge exchange encompasses complex and diverse activities that can deliver various forms of educational research</p>

impact over a range of timescales and at different levels across various communities of practice. In order to support staff and build capacity the Impact Strategy is coordinated by the Director of Research ([Leitch](#)). The strategy guides colleagues on a wide variety of accessible and flexible dissemination and impact approaches and seeks to generate, evaluate and assure educational and societal benefits from the high quality educational research produced by QSoE. The research impact strategy has become more defined, proactive and visionary since 2008; drawing upon national and international indicators of quality impact, including: OECD (2005, 2007); Research Councils (UK); and the UK Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE). Queen's Research and Enterprise Directorate specifically supports links between QSoE researchers and external partners that strengthen and underpin the impact of its research base. This support is mainly through: hosting committees of the NI Assembly; facilitating showcase events and stands/tables at all local party political conferences; and producing press releases and research briefings. Specifically, the QSoE research Impact Strategy has achieved reach *and* significance by means of:

- (i) **the four QSoE research centres** providing fora for sharing good practice, challenges and potential solutions to impact as well as dissemination and knowledge exchange events e.g. *Educational Research at Queen's: How We're Making an Impact*, was attended by over 50 key policy-makers and practitioners (see: <http://bit.ly/1bQWyMW>).
- (ii) **capacity building opportunities** with research staff that lead to increased understanding of the critical import of planning for impact from the outset of a research project. This is undertaken with academics, contract researchers and support staff as well as doctoral students by means of: regular workshops (approximately 4 per year); QSoE research away days (2 per year); publications (website, student handbooks and so on).
- (iii) **Queen's providing training and workshops**, and other facilities, such as the Research Enterprise Directorate and Media Services.
- (iv) requiring a **systematic and ethical approach to relationship-building with key stakeholders** throughout the lifetime of research projects: setting up advisory groups as well as formal steering groups is standard QSoE practice. These include invited beneficiaries and representatives from relevant sectors, including the public, who are actively engaged from the design phase of a proposal and will meet regularly to consider how to maximise dissemination and impact of potential outcomes. The 'From Prisons to Peace' project ([Emerson](#)) is a case illustration. QSoE leads the field in UK education research in setting up and working with children's research advisory groups, based on a children's rights model ([Lundy](#), [Emerson](#)), that ensure the involvement of children and young people as users and consumers of research.
- (v) **direct advocacy** of evidence-based outcomes that range from: preparing research briefings; presenting media statements; meeting key civil servants, community groups and MLAs; convening public meetings; and attending annual conferences of the main political parties. The research centres in conjunction hold showcase events and dissemination conferences usually opened by senior education officials. We also have direct advocacy groups, such as the Shared Education Learning Forum (over 700 attendees to date), which includes: members of the NI Education Committee; teachers and principals from primary and post-primary schools; other education stakeholders and academics.
- (vi) **active engagement with umbrella stakeholder bodies**. 'The Northern Ireland Education Research Forum' (NIERF), established in 2008, has held a series of seminars with key education stakeholders (DE, DEL, GTCNI, HEIs) opened by the Minister for Education, on the issue of evidence-based education policy. NIERF has produced three collaborative reports written by a QSoE researcher ([Leitch](#)) with a DE official (McCullough) for the UK Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE 2008-2010). These mapped research capacity and impact in NI and have influentially shaped local policy on the relationship between researchers and policy-makers.
- (vi) **creative forms of engagement and communication** are carefully and considerably tailored for differing user audiences, where research outcomes may be of benefit. For example, the CCR produced its NICCY report in three differing formats for children, young people and teachers in schools. Additionally, using online and multimedia approaches for dissemination is commonplace, including the use of specialist research project websites, Facebook, web fora and the use of Twitter. The QSoE newsletter is a user-friendly summary of current research sent biannually to every school and education stakeholder organization in NI as well as to national and international users and research networks (www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation/News/Newsletter/)

Impact template (REF3a)

c. Strategy and plans

The overarching goal in support of impact is to develop and promote a sustainable research impact culture that maximises both potential and opportunity for our quality research to have reach and significance and effect transformation. QSoE's strategic approach to impact is now well embedded in the research culture and activities of the School. We will build on productive elements of our current approach to impact but will also review priorities as well as reinforcing existing good practice, through careful monitoring and incentivisation. The impact strategy is co-ordinated and kept under review by the Director of Research (Leitch) and this is now a standing item on the agenda of the QSoE Research Committee which reports to the School Management Board. This ensures that effective impact is monitored and celebrated through the QSoE Newsletter, the main QSoE website and those of the four research centres and the QSoE Facebook page. Additionally, gaps and areas for development are identified and considered. The success of our strategy is not only borne out by the evident effects that a large range of QSoE research projects have demonstrated (see impact case studies) but also by one of our case studies being shortlisted for the Queen's Vice-Chancellor's impact prize in 2012 (Gallagher, Hughes).

Moving forward, we have identified the following specific objectives for our future strategy, namely that QSoE will: (i) continue to provide dedicated funding for impact-related activity through the research division and the four research centres (working independently and collaboratively) for impact events and networking and will encourage more staff to avail of financial support at Faculty and University level; (ii) embed a focus on impact within appraisals to provide mentoring and support for staff and particularly new staff and continue to include successful practices in research away-day programmes; (iii) extend international impact of the research arising from within existing research centres and their associated research programmes and also advancing international impact by strategically encouraging all colleagues to extend the reach of their research beyond dissemination through existing international collaborations; (iv) promote a more pro-active engagement with impact-driven opportunities such as cross-cutting research council themes and ESRC funding calls, including the Knowledge Exchange funding stream. This will be greatly facilitated by recent investment in the Research and Enterprise Directorate and the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice, where we have natural links through three of our four research centres; and (v) develop improved mechanisms to monitor our success and systems to ensure better paper trails to demonstrate the impact of our research.

d. Relationship to case studies

Each of the three case studies reflects the principles of the QSoE Impact Strategy but has tailored individual approaches to best suit the research outcomes and maximize impact for the relevant audiences and user groups in their field of education to ensure reach and significance:

(i) Improving Awareness and Understanding of the Government's Obligation to Involve Children in Decision-Making: reflecting work in the **Centre for Children's Rights**, this is a prime example of

the ways in which the QSoE envisions impact to be key to the whole research process. In this approach children's advisory groups are central at all stages of the research and key stakeholders, locally and nationally, have been influenced to change their practice and policy around children's participation and decision-making as a result. The case study also illustrates approaches to creative forms of communicating research that maximize reach and likely impact of research.

(ii) Promoting Respect for Ethnic Diversity in Preschool Children: based in the **Centre for Effective Education**, this demonstrates clearly the partnership approach adopted by researchers within QSoE with key stakeholders. It describes how ground-breaking baseline research on the nature and extent of prejudiced attitudes among preschool children provided the catalyst for work with local early childhood organisations to develop and evaluate a preschool programme aimed at reducing prejudice. The programme itself is now being made available to all preschool settings across the island of Ireland and, because of the evidence from the summative RCT evaluation, is also being piloted by the Department of Education for delivery at Key Stage 1 in primary schools.

(iii) Shared Education: Building Positive Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies: reflecting the work of **Centre for Shared Education**, this illustrates the vital role of a sustained approach to impact from the outset of the project across a number of differing levels and jurisdictions. It has drawn on a comprehensive approach to advocacy through: developing and assuring impact; liaising directly with politicians, policy makers, practitioners and the public; and ensuring high profile media coverage, web-based presence and high level engagement with social media.