

Institution: Newman University

Unit of Assessment: 25 – Education

a. Context

The main non-academic user groups/beneficiaries/audiences for our research are local government departments and agencies, schools, charities and voluntary organisations in the UK, the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice, the Children's Commissioners' for England and Wales; the Archbishop of Canterbury's office and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and the National Association of Pastoral Care in Education.

The principal type of impact relevant to our research has been a concern to raise, through empirical evidence, awareness of exclusion, victimization, oppression, special education and early years practice, and the exploitation of young people. As a direct outcome, we are able to evidence examples of where we have been influential in shaping: policy and professional practice; processes of curriculum design; and pastoral support in schools. Our work has focused on educational and social experiences, institutional structures and relationships, and management practices.

These principal types of impact relate to the spectrum of research activity in the unit in the following ways:

- We have used 'voice-focused' research methodologies/methods to directly elicit the views of children and young people;
- We have foregrounded our research activities within a framework that stresses the centrality of promoting social justice and the human rights of the young;
- The UOA has been directly commissioned to undertake international research into the experiences of children and young people who have been victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and human trafficking, and special educational needs. Alongside this, we have undertaken regionally commissioned work into school exclusion, risk and vulnerability;
- Through the establishment of a Children, Young People and Families research centre we have promoted the work of the UOA to external organisations, government departments and faith-based organisations;
We have worked closely with inter-school networks and alliances to promote research informed practice and curriculum innovation.

b. Approach to impact

The unit's approach to interacting with non-academic users/beneficiaries/audiences during the period 2008-2013 has been underpinned by the systematic distribution of peer-reviewed articles, published research reports and research summaries to key organisations, institutions and agencies within the United Kingdom. We have also engaged directly with the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice as part of our dissemination strategy. An international dissemination event was held in Birmingham on 22 February 2011 (a total of 94 delegates attended) to mark the publication of our first Daphne-funded report into violence, exploitation and human trafficking. The event was simultaneously streamed to the European Commission and partner education and social care organisations in Germany and Romania.

The UOA has looked for opportunities to influence policy making and practice at a national level. For example, following a request from the Children's Commissioner for England, a research report commissioned by the Titan School Partnership, Birmingham, on pupil behaviour and school exclusion, was submitted as evidence to the Schools Exclusion Inquiry Year 2 (Children's Commissioner for England, 2013, Appendix B). We have also used our established contacts with faith-based organisations and voluntary organisations as a vehicle for disseminating the UOAs research outputs. We are able, for example, to cite evidence from correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury's office and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on

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the impact of our work in helping to shape their safeguarding and their child protection policies and practices.

We have worked with secondary schools in Northwest Birmingham's most economically and socially deprived communities to support them in reviewing current policies and practices in relation to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people facing school exclusion.

Our work with school alliances in the Black country has focused primarily on approaches to developing research-engaged schools through programmes of research mentorship and support. This has specifically concerned the encouraging of practitioner research and researching with children and young people in response to institutional interests and priorities, e.g. the National College for School Leadership's Connecting Professional Learning programme (2012)

Staff in the unit have been proactively encouraged to achieve impact from their research by engaging with external groups and bodies, and through membership of trusts and school governing bodies. Such opportunities have provided an important catalyst for new research and have proved to be a conduit for dissemination of research outcomes. As a consequence, members of the unit have become 'preferred providers' of education related research grants generated by partner institutions.

We have developed a strategic approach to maximizing the impact of research. This has been shared and discussed with personnel within the UOA as an important element of the unit's staff development plan. It has also proved fruitful for more experienced academic colleagues to work alongside early career researchers in order to explore approaches that will lead to the securing a good level of impact for research.

In undertaking these activities the UOA has made use of the institution's support facilities in: the Graduate School, Partnerships Office and International Office.

Our expertise in education; early childhood education and care; youth and community; children, young people and families research, means we are well placed to respond to contemporary issues and challenges facing people and organisations working in these sectors.

The Unit's approach to impact is aligned with Newman's overall mission, which states that as an institution we seek to make a positive difference to individuals and communities through the contribution of our staff, students and graduates. Over the majority of the census period this has shaped our wider HEI strategy on impact, which in turn has been indebted to the government's November 2009 publication 'Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in the knowledge economy'. As such, our strategic approach has been aimed at strengthening our contribution to social justice, regional development and community cohesion. Commitment to the world outside our campus is axiomatic for Newman University, with its foundation in Catholic social teaching and its roots in teacher education. In particular, the notion of community is central to this tradition, embracing wider ideas of fellowship, openness and collaboration alongside more practical and specific responsibilities to our partners, especially with regard to the distinctive role which Newman can play in its locality and region.

c. Strategy and plans

Our plans to support impact from the unit's research in the future include:

- Undertaking an evaluation of our current impact strategy – involving internal UOA members, the Pro Vice Chancellor – Research and Scholarship at Newman University and key international, national and local partners;
- Discussing with partners how they would like to see research findings presented and ways to improve our presentation of recommendations for practice;
- Extending our relationships with external bodies in order to secure 'preferred partner' status. This will allow us to prioritise research activities targeted towards meeting their

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specific needs;

- Using our established school and community networks, media connections and international, national and local partnerships to disseminate (through for example the development of case study materials) examples of how research has positively impacted on policy and practice developments;

Our goals for impact from the unit's research in the future are to extend our sphere of influence by proactively developing new partnerships and increasing participation in appropriate networks. We also want to strengthen, within the UOA, professional academic development opportunities through the provision of training seminars and pairing opportunities with experienced colleagues.

The unit is developing its strategy for impact through the on-going implementation of approaches prioritised by the need to build strong partnerships and relationships at international, national and local levels. There is a need to extend the range of our activities through the development of appropriate marketing strategies and the production of artefacts that present our research record, case studies, testimonials from partner organisations and media reports outlining the impact of our work.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies relate to the unit's approach to achieving impact, as described in b above, in that they present citable evidence of how the use of specific strategies can influence and shape organisational, management, pedagogic and pastoral policies and practices. They show that impact can be achieved in a variety of ways: through written correspondence, via formal and informal contacts, through major dissemination events and the building of collaborative partnerships based on trust and respect. They demonstrate a willingness on the part of international, national and local organisations to engage with research and academic institutions in response to specific issues or problems facing them, provided that the research is rigorous, credible, evidence-based and accessible.

The case studies exemplify aspects of the approach by presenting a coherent and strategic plan to ensure purposeful impact at the level of the individual UOA. They point to the need to identify organisations, groups and schools who might be potentially receptive to research. They demonstrate the value of creating strong external networks and partnerships. At the level of the individual organisation they demonstrate that a significant commitment is required on the part of an individual HEI if policies and practices are to be evaluated, influenced and, where appropriate, changed.