

Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: C25 Education
Title of case study: Changing Early Childhood Education: Policy, Practice and Perceptions
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study describes the impact of a sustained programme of research conducted over more than 10 years, which has changed conceptualisations of young children's abilities and needs, and shaped national and local provision from birth to five. The research has influenced early years policy, secondary legislation, professional standards and training, curriculum, and the daily experiences of babies, children and practitioners in every childcare setting in England. It has produced innovative resources to enhance multi-professional practice, and significantly contributed to the deployment of high-quality, interdisciplinary research findings to improve provision, stimulate debate and challenge conventional wisdom about children and childhood.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The impact is underpinned by a sustained programme of research and development from 2001 onwards, by a team whose collective expertise spans early years education, language and literacy development, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, art and film theory. The underpinning research is distinctive for its disciplinary and methodological rigour. Key findings evidenced the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a holistic, interactive and positive view of young children's development; • national policy and provision for babies and toddlers; • a well-educated, well-trained workforce; • research-informed policy, practice and curriculum; • a multi-professional model of provision; • better understanding of classroom cultures and stereotypes of children; • interdisciplinary interventions to reshape public perceptions. <p>The research programme.</p> <p>The programme is anchored in a portfolio of externally-funded projects (total income almost £2M since 2001). It developed initially from Abbott's pioneering 'Birth to Three Matters' which inaugurated a major shift in policy, repositioning educare of the very young as a public concern. A suite of subsequent projects addressed training and qualifications (Abbott, with Holmes & Barron):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Birth to Three Matters (B-3M) (DfES, 2001-3). (2) B-3M Training Matters (Esmée Fairbairn, 2003). (3) B-3M Training Matters: FE & HE Awarding Bodies (DfES, 2004). (4) B-3M Training of Trainers (DfES/SureStart, 2004). <p>(See also Abbott and Langston (eds) <i>Parents Matter</i>, McGraw-Hill, 2006).</p> <p>Hall developed the B-3M focus on communication, providing a research-based developmental model, materials and training package. Lancaster further strengthened the research base, identifying precursors to grammar in the under-3s:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (5) Communicating Matters (Hall, with Lancaster and MacLure; DfES/Sure Start, 2004-5). (6) Grammaticisation in Early Mark Making: a Multimodal Investigation (Lancaster; ESRC RES-000-22-0599, 2004-6). <p>Children's creative development has been a continuing focus from B-3M onwards, leading to interdisciplinary research with museum and gallery curators, educators and artists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (7) Young Children in the Art Gallery (Abbott, Holmes; Esmée Fairbairn, 2004-5). (8) Imaginative Journeys: Museums Education Project (Holmes; Esmée Fairbairn, 2006-7). (9) The Secret Life of Objects: An Artist Residency in an Early Years Classroom (MacRae; AHRC, 2009-10, AH/H008403/1). <p>B-3M began the task of freeing the child from normative stereotypes. Subsequent projects investigated more fully the influence of classroom cultures and public expectations, informed by MacLure's work on discourse and language development, and with an increasingly interdisciplinary focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (10) Becoming a Problem (BAP): How Children Develop a Reputation as 'Naughty' in the Earliest Years at School (MacLure, Jones; ESRC RES-062-23-0105, 2006-8).

(11) Addressing 'Problem Behaviour' in the Early Years: An Innovative Film Resource (Holmes, MacLure; ESRC RES-189-25-01220, 2010) (Follow-on funding awarded to maximise the impact of BAP, in collaboration with users from a range of professions and disciplines.)

(12) Generating Alternative Discourses of Childhood as a Resource for Educational Policy Making (Holmes; ESRC Seminar Series RES-189-25-0122, 2010-12).

The programme has also included a range of Sure Start evaluations, LA-funded projects on young fathers and on children's talk in multicultural settings, and an evaluation of a prison mother and baby unit (Action for Children).

Key researchers

Lesley Abbott. Professor. Retired 31/07/2008

Nigel Hall. Professor. Retired 31/08/2008

Liz Jones. Appointed SL 01/01/2000; Reader 11/06/2006; Professor 01/08/2008

Maggie MacLure. Appointed Professor 01/06/2003

Rachel Holmes. Appointed SL 01/09/2000; Reader 01/07/2010

Ian Barron. Appointed SL 01/09/2000; PL 01/09/2001; HOD 01/12/2008

Lesley Lancaster. Appointed SL 01/06/1998; Reader 08/07/2009

Christina MacRae, PhD student 01/10/03-01/04/08; RA from 2006, left MMU 2011 to become 'lead teacher' for Foundation Stage in infant school.

3. References to the research

1. Abbott, L. & Langston, A. (2005) Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 13(1), 129-143.

2. Lancaster, L. (2007) Representing the ways of the world: how children under three start to use syntax in graphic signs. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 7(2), 123-154.

3. MacLure, M, Jones, L, Holmes, R. & MacRae, C. (2012) Becoming a problem: behaviour and reputation in the early years classroom. *British Educational Research Journal* 38(3), 447-71.

4. Holmes, R. (2007) East is East: using film to disrupt university classroom narratives around childhood and identity. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 15(3), 367-384.

5. MacLure, M, Holmes, R, Jones, L. & MacRae, C. (2010) Silence as resistance to analysis. Or, on not opening one's mouth properly. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(6), 492-500.

6. MacRae, C. (2011) Making Payton's rocket: heterotopia and lines of flight. *International Journal for Art and Design Education*, 30(1), 102-112.

The quality of the work is demonstrated by a range of indicators including:

Research Council and Foundation funding:

L. Lancaster. Grammaticisation in Early Mark Making: A Multimodal Investigation. ESRC RES-000-22-0599. Apr 2004-May 2006. £44,990.

L. Abbott (with R. Holmes). Young Children in the Art Gallery. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Jan 2004–Dec 2005. £19,400.

M. MacLure, L. Jones. Becoming a Problem: How and Why Children Acquire a Reputation as 'Naughty' in the Earliest Years at School. ESRC RES-062-23-0105. Sep 2006–Feb 2008. £137,400

C. MacRae. The Secret Life of Objects: An Artist Residency in an Early Years Classroom. AHRC. Nov 2009-Nov 2010. £24,735, AH/H008403/1.

R. Homes, M. MacLure. Addressing 'Problem Behaviour' in the Early Years: An Innovative Film Resource. ESRC RES-189-25-01220 (Follow-on Funding Scheme). Oct-Dec 2010. £29,232.

R. Holmes. Generating Alternative Discourses of Childhood as a Resource for Educational Policy Making. ESRC RES-189-25-0122 (Seminar Series). Oct 2010-Jul 2012. £18,000

Peer-reviewed research outputs

52 peer-reviewed articles in high quality journals (inc. *BERJ*, *BJSE*, *QSE*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Qualitative Research*, *J Philosophy of Education*, *Evaluation*, *IJRME*, *Children and Society*; *International Journal of Art and Design*; *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*; *J Early Childhood Literacy*, *Cultural Studies* ⇔ *Critical Methodologies*, *IJ Early Years*, *Biosemiotics*).

Invited contributions to international handbooks: Cannella and De Soto (Eds) *Childhoods: A Handbook*, Peter Lang (3 chapters); Yelland (Ed) *Critical Issues in Early Childhood*, Open University Press (2 chapters); Brooker et al (Eds) *Handbook of Play and Learning*, Sage.

Invited participation in peer-reviewed/invitational international symposia:

50+ conference presentations inc. AERA (x 7); BERA (x 11) Reconceptualising Early Childhood

Impact case study (REF3b)

Education Conference (RECE) 2011; Australian Association for Research in Education (x4); NZ Association for Research in Education (x2); International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (x4); Gender and Education Association (x2).

6 international symposia, including BERA Keynote Symposium, RECE Opening Event; AERAx2.

Prizes and recognition:

Abbott received an OBE in 2005 for her contributions to early years education and research.

Communicating Matters was commended in the Rose Review of early reading (2006,10).

MacLure's book, *Discourse in Educational and Social Research* (OU Press) received the 2004 Critics' Choice Award from the American Educational Studies Association.

Jones and Holmes were appointed [Velma E. Schmidt International Fellows](#) (2010-2013) in the College of Education at the University of North Texas.

Jones was awarded the Erskine Scholarship, University of Canterbury, NZ 2011 in recognition of her research in early childhood. She was appointed Visiting Professor ii to Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (August 2013).

[16 keynote presentations](#) were given (UK, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Italy).

4. Details of the impact

In 2008, B-3M was incorporated into the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The research thus influenced secondary legislation, and impacted upon all registered early years providers and practitioners in England, and the children in their care. This phase (2008-12) of uptake of B-3M represents the culmination of a policy trend that the original research had inaugurated, toward high quality educare for the under fives.

Communicating Matters (CM) has continued to influence CPD. Local CM training was recommended in the [National Strategies EY Inclusion Development Programme](#) (2008, p19), and its policy significance was cited in support of 'communication friendly museums' by a [Nesta-funded consortium](#) (2009). The CM programme was still being offered in period by Local Authorities including [Lincolnshire](#) (2008-9); [Central Bedfordshire](#) (2011); [Plymouth](#) (2013-14); [Sure Start St. Helens](#) (2008-9) (indicative list).

Following Abbott's early lead, the research team continued to contribute to the development of professional standards and a graduate workforce. Under Barron's leadership MMU was selected by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in 2011 as main provider in the North of England of Early Years Professional Status accreditation and leads the Early Years Professional Northern Alliance, a consortium of nine providers. EYPS is recognised as having 'significantly improved quality' ([Nutbrown Review](#) 2012, 8). Jones served on the Scientific Advisory Board for the CWDC/University of Wolverhampton Longitudinal Study on Early Years Professional (EYP).

B-3M is not explicitly referenced in the latest iteration of EYFS (1 Sep 2012). Nevertheless, its holistic, child-centred ethos is still evident in its three 'prime areas' of communication and language, physical, and personal, social and emotional development, described as 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (DfE 2012, 1.4). *The key tenets of B-3M have entered the language and the architecture of English EY policy to a point where they no longer require specific citation.*

Moreover the B-3M training materials (booklet, cards and poster) are still being disseminated, testifying to their continuing significance. The EYFS-endorsed website, [Foundation Years](#) has made them available for download stating that they 'contain useful information relevant to the reformed (2012) EYFS', and the materials are also accessible via LA websites including [Hampshire](#), [Leicester](#), [Oxfordshire](#), [Dorset](#) and [Somerset](#); the [Parents In Touch](#) website, and [Nursery World](#) magazine (11.06.2012).

The ESRC and AHRC research has impacted on professional practice, stimulated practitioner debate and challenged conventional wisdom about children and childhood. The *Becoming a Problem* (BAP) report attracted media coverage in September 2009, including: *Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Observer*, *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Sunrise* (Australian TV), *The Week With George Galloway* (Jones, radio interview), and blogs (UK, Ethiopia, Japan, Denmark, Indonesia and India). It was cited in the Policy.co.uk ('Opinion Formers'), Social Policy Digest, ResearchGate (Berlin) and Wellbeing Australia.

The BAP research identified barriers to change from cultural assumptions about young children, and generated a prototype film as an alternative to more traditional research-based

Impact case study (REF3b)

CPD materials. [ESRC Follow-On funding](#) was awarded to maximise the impact of the film by developing a cross-professional educational package in collaboration with users from constituencies including LA Children's Services, GTC, educational psychology, journalism, CAMHS services, social work, psychotherapy, educational psychology, parent groups, EY trainees and practitioners, school staff and students.

The research has been taken up in ITT, CPD and cross-professional education in the UK and overseas; eg: 2 multi-professional seminars, Sheffield University (7.30,2012; 12.07.13); workshops and presentations: Chester University (2011), University of the West of England (2012), Staffordshire County Council EYP National Conference (2012); Oslo and Akershus University College, Norway (2012, 2013), Universities of Helsinki and Oulu (2012), Organization Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire, University of Canterbury, NZ (2011); Summer School on the Rights of the Child, Ministry of Justice, Rome (June, 2012).

[User responses to the film package](#) testify to its strong impact and value for training; eg: "I could see your film being part of cross-professional training. I think teachers would see it very differently to how we've viewed it" (CAMHS team psychologist). "I think the film has huge potential across children's services, social workers, early years practitioners in children's centres, youth workers" (LA Director of Children's Services). "It'd be a great training tool... I'd love to use it in one of my sessions" (Teacher Educator). "I have thought a lot about your film and its purpose to promote alternative conceptualisations of children - without being too directive. I think that this is a real issue in our society and much needed" (Education Consultant/Educational Psychologist).

International impact on teacher education: the ESRC and AHRC research has been evaluated and used by educators including D. Britzman, Ontario; A. Palmer & H. Lenz-Taguchi, Stockholm; A.M. Otterstad, N. Rossholt, Oslo; S. Grieshaber, Hong Kong; J. Sumsion, & J. Reid, Deakin, Aus.

From the widely-used and appreciated B-3M and CM packs to the BAP film, the materials generated during the research, and their uptake by diverse communities, exemplify the transformative potential of cultural artefacts and resources that creatively encapsulate high quality research. These materials have been significant in scaffolding multi-professional and interdisciplinary engagement with young children and their education.

Interdisciplinary and multi-professional impact has been sharpened through spin-off activities involving artists and professionals. [Holmes' ESRC Seminar Series](#) (2010-12) brought together museum curators, policy makers, artists, teachers, teacher educators, school students and academics from sociology, cultural studies and art and design.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The sources below are selected to represent the wide range and reach of the impact of the research across diverse stakeholder groups (* = those individuals ("a maximum of five") whose details are entered separately; other names and addresses can be supplied on request).

Impact on practitioners and professional services

National College of School Leadership (Area Director), former LA Director of Children's Services*
Children's Workforce Development Council member and former Chair, National Children's Bureau*
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Professor of Child & Youth Studies, Stockholm University

Impact on public policy:

DfES (2008) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Everything You Need to Know*: "The EYFS is based on existing standards already used in all types of childcare: Birth to Three Matters. Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage..." (p.3); "the combination of the Birth to three matters and Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage in the EYFS removes the possibility for confusion for practitioners and means a better experience for children" (p.4; practitioner view).

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/EYFS_Media_Pack.PDF

Vice President of an international child and youth research network and Professor of Sociology*

Impact on EY curriculum:

Early Years Teacher Consultant, ENTRUST*

Impact on creativity and interdisciplinary practice

Manchester City Art Gallery (Principal Manager - Learning)*

Museum of Childhood, V&A Museum (Director)