

**Institution: UNIVERSITY of WEST LONDON**

**Unit of Assessment: 25 | EDUCATION**

**a. Context**

This submission represents a broad portfolio of research focused on the life-long examination of education. The research group operates from within the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning (INSTIL). The INSTIL Educational Research Group (INSTIL ERG) focuses on three broad strands: 1) **socio-emotional wellbeing** of school children and students; 2) **student social identities**, and 3) **the impact of contexts on professional and curricular practices and academic identities**. Theories of context and communities of practice inform the broad theoretical framework for this work. INSTIL ERG's activities reflect the University's strategic direction and its ambition to promote 'useful knowledge' within a range of vocational and academic subjects. Our research involves users and is committed to impact beyond immediate context.

The institutional culture has changed significantly since RAE 2008 as the University has adopted a more inclusive and interdisciplinary stance, and a scholarship portfolio for all academics. The Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning (INSTIL) was established in 2009 and has integrated within its function the role of CReaTe (Centre for Research in Tertiary Education) established in 2005. Institutionally, INSTIL's remit is to build capacity in academic scholarship and research, and to promote the generation and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge.

Since 2009, INSTIL has funded educational research projects within the University to a total of approximately £30,000. It nurtures the work of new researchers; co-ordinates educational research funding bids; and provides a research home and identity for pedagogic work. In addition to staff submitting to UoA25, eleven University staff contribute actively to the community; their contributions include: mentoring and training of staff; bid writing; postgraduate research student supervision and training; development of doctoral programmes, and provision of research dissemination opportunities. There are also twenty members of staff who act as reviewers for INSTIL projects.

INSTIL has increased attendance at the University's annual Teaching and Learning Conference (120 delegates attended the 2013 conference) and uses this forum to disseminate national and institutional research outputs and to build staff research capacity. Since 2008, when the University had no PhD students in education, three education doctorates have been awarded; four students are currently completing their PhD studies, and seven Masters in teaching and learning awards have been made.

The increase in the number of category A staff (3.9 FTE) contributing to this education submission (RAE 2008: 1.4 FTE) reflects success of the collaborative approach. The context for education research since 2008 has been characterised by a more inclusive approach through a stronger linkage between research and teaching; a focus on life-long examination of education, and an increased interaction with users of research and other collaborators.

**b. Approach to impact**

The strong social dimension of our work, beyond the specific disciplinary differences, influences our approach to impact. It targets different social groups and social contexts to challenge apprehensions of education that might rely on more quantitative data. There is therefore a strong emphasis on relating research data to social groups and contexts e.g. within schools to vulnerable children, and to groups who are under-represented in higher education (see impact case studies). Since RAE 2008, research quality has been enhanced through focusing our education work on three research strands presented in section (a). These strands concentrate our work on different points of an individual's education trajectory (schools, access to university, and the experience of higher education, including as an academic). This life-long approach maximises the diversity of relevant stakeholders in different contexts.

### Examples of impact outside the University

In addition to the case studies, INSTIL ERG's impact outside the University lies within the domains of enhancing educational practices and influencing thinking about practice.

**Enhancing educational practices:** Research into the use of technology to enhance learning (Greaves, 2009) has been used in other HEIs; a review of curriculum at a London HEI was triggered by a study of engagement (Fanghanel & Cousin 2010); two successful funding bids related to embedding employability were obtained from the Higher Education Academy, and the Centre for Excellence in Professional and Placement Learning (Fox, 2010). Use of mobile technology in strategically difficult to reach regions led to identifying some useful technology for teaching computing in resource-constrained environments (Moore, 2011).

**Influencing thinking about practice:** The 'Practice Filters Model' (Fanghanel, 2009) is used by PhD students and in teacher development education; the role of values/ideologies is used in seminars for educational developers, researchers and educators worldwide and has impacted on understandings of practice, and is used also in professional development programmes in several UK/Europe universities. Work on global citizenship led to co-participating in an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) seminar series: Global citizenship as a graduate attribute (October 2010-2012).

Our approach to impact is to implement dissemination strategies that are inclusive of our diverse stakeholders, and reach them through appropriate media. Our stakeholders include: children in schools-based interventions and their families, teachers, higher education applicants and students, policy makers, practitioners and academic researchers. We therefore disseminate research within and beyond our own HEI through academic media (e.g. peer-reviewed academic journals, discipline-specific conferences), and through media appropriate to stakeholders beyond academia. Dissemination media include workshops, in-community events, community input into the university, podcasts, radio, printed newspapers, newsletters, and web presence.

### **c. Strategy and plans**

INSTIL ERG's central tenets are to build capacity, and to conduct and disseminate work which is important to a diversity of stakeholders and which resonates with the University's strategic plan and values.

#### **Infrastructure for capacity building**

The work of INSTIL ERG has focused on developing capacity in doctoral supervision. This works synergistically with the University's development of PhD scholarships and staff research capability; this strategy has built on the foundations in place at the time of RAE 2008. Support includes: time for staff to take the Post-graduate Certificate in Academic Practice with its embedded pedagogic research project; post-graduate training in research methods; opportunities for staff to publish in VISTAS (the University research journal), and to present at research seminars and institutional conferences (e.g. the Teaching and Learning Conference, and the MPhil/PhD Conference). The awards offered by INSTIL to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Champions and Teaching Fellows include funding for research.

We are appointing staff strategically to strengthen our existing research strands and to extend research impact. For example, the recent appointment of Dr Kim Drake has strengthened our focus on schools through her research on children's early attachment patterns (Drake, Belsky & Fearon, 2013). INSTIL supports doctoral education while the University is supporting research groups via RAE funds and providing significant funds for doctoral scholarships.

## Plans

The University has now consolidated its position within the sector and achieved significant progress in both teaching and research enhancement (increase in HEA fellowships; increase in PhD students; alignment of research training with the VITAE Researcher Development Framework). Our capacity building in educational research will include a doctoral programme in educational research (starting Sept 2014), and an increase in the number of visiting appointments and exchanges. As part of these plans, building on the experience of psychology colleagues, INSTIL ERG will focus on developing understanding of user-engagement within the academic community, with a view to inscribe this firmly in the University culture. All INSTIL-sponsored projects presently require a reference to impact, and to build-in user engagement in their methodologies. However, in the field of education, the notion of impact on users is complex and requires further investigation. INSTIL ERG will also focus on implications of its educational research for HE policy. We will establish a new group on the impact of technology in transforming the student experience, and further our work on academic identities e.g. reproductive vs transformative self-identities.

### **d. Relationship to case studies**

Research programmes underpinning the two case studies both have a strong social dimension that facilitates impact within and beyond academia. Both programmes have benefitted from institutional resources and INSTIL ERG's strategic direction.

The two research teams have accessed institutional funding for dissemination, to enhance impact. For example, the University has hosted an HEA Seminar Series workshop entitled *Higher Education Students and Ethnicity: Lessons from Research* as part of the Access and Success for All HEA initiative. Similarly, the consolidation of the Pyramid project within INSPIRE is consistent with UWL's strategic plan, and enables us to disseminate our work to new audiences through UWL's civic responsibility and employability agendas. INSPIRE has further supported diversification of impact through co-hosting with the HEA a conference for education practitioners, senior managers and students, and funding research equipment, and attendance at staff conferences.

Both case studies are informed by the INSTIL ERG ethos of stakeholder-involvement and using stakeholder relevant media for dissemination. For example, the Pyramid evaluation research is relevant to stakeholders beyond academia and, therefore, its dissemination has included consumer media (e.g. Radio 4 *Woman's Hour*; *The Independent*). Similarly, the WP research team has promoted impact through workshops for HE practitioners and students.

Our plans for sustaining impact include extending our research programmes into related areas that we believe will have an impact on children and young adults. Therefore, the two research teams have successfully applied for INSPIRE awards of a graduate scholarship for research into Pyramid clubs for the primary-secondary school transition, and the impact of bereavement on student performance within HE. Staff will benefit from the allocation of protected research time for these activities through the University's New Academic Framework. The research teams plan also to develop our stakeholder involvement activities, and to use our research programmes to devise training examples of developing research impact for inclusion in the University's new doctorate in educational research, so that impact is seen as integral to research.