

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution: Institute of Education</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 25</b>
<b>Title of case study: 14-19 education and training: the case for a unified and inclusive system</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)

Some research achieves apparent impact because it travels in the same direction as the prevailing political wind. The researchers featured here have often headed into that wind by arguing that England should close the academic-vocational divide and establish a unified and inclusive 14-19 education and training system that meets the needs of all learners. They have consequently made an important contribution to critical public debate on education policy and have helped to shape the thinking of teaching unions, government commissions, awarding bodies and local authorities. Their ideas have proved influential not only in England and Wales but also overseas.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)
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**Context:** Despite 30 years of costly experimentation, England's 14-19 system is still failing to cater for the significant minority of teenagers who leave school or college with few or no qualifications and dismal job prospects. The challenge of creating a more inclusive system is one that Professors Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours of the IOE have been addressing since the 1990s. They were members of the Tomlinson Committee or its sub-groups (2003-4), directed the only independent research into the *Curriculum 2000* Advanced level reforms funded by the Nuffield Foundation (1999-2002) and were two of the co-directors of the influential Nuffield Review (2003-9), the largest independent investigation into 14-19 education and training in England and Wales for 50 years – see reference **R1**. They also directed and made important contributions to a four-year (2004-7) Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) project funded by the ESRC which evaluated the impact of policy levers on learning and inclusion and identified the main features of more equitable local learning systems (**R2**). This was followed by *New directions in learning and skills in England, Scotland and Wales* – another ESRC-funded project that took these ideas into the broader UK context.

**Key findings:** Hodgson and Spours's research has led them to conclude that England's 14-19 system is largely responsible for many young people underperforming. They have identified four fundamental weaknesses:

- The persisting dominance of GCSEs and A-levels, which exclude and alienate many teenagers and overshadow vocational qualifications (**R3**).
- The proliferation of competitive education providers – including academies and free schools – that prevent collaboration over provision to meet the needs of all learners.
- The dominance of higher education and the marginalisation of employers and vocational education.
- The detrimental impact on teachers and learners of decades of top-down policies (**R2**).

They have consequently called for an English Baccalaureate system that would incorporate all 14-19 qualifications and encompass both academic and vocational learning. They see this as a way of including all learners and fostering "a rounded and educated 19-year-old" (**R1**). In their view, greater collaboration between local networks of schools, colleges and work-based learning-providers is also essential if the needs of all 14-19s are to be met – especially as the participation age is to be raised to 18 (**R4 & R5**).

**Research methods:** Hodgson and Spours have conducted many 14-19 studies, literature reviews and evaluations over the past 20 years. They have interviewed thousands of teachers and students in many parts of the country. They have also interviewed university admissions officers, teacher union members, careers advisers, employers and policy-makers. For their TLRP project they tracked courses in 24 learning sites in London and North East England – eight in FE, eight adult courses in the community and eight workplace learning sites. They talked to learners, tutors

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and managers. Alongside this fieldwork, they and colleagues analysed policy documents and conducted 131 interviews with policy-makers and other key players. Hodgson and Spours also have long associations with several education providers, such as the Kingswood Partnership schools in Bristol, and for three years they tracked the education and employment 'journeys' of two Kingswood cohorts who entered Years 9 and 11 in 2008. They are currently working as academic partners to London Councils, a cross-party body including all 32 of the capital's boroughs and the City of London.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1: Pring, R., Hayward, G., Hodgson, A., Johnson, J., Keep, E., Oancea, A., Rees, G., Spours, K. & Wilde, S. (2009) *Education for All: the future of education and training for 14-19 year olds*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- R2: Coffield, F., Edward, S. Finlay, I., Hodgson, A., Spours, K. & Steer, R. (2008) *Improving Learning and Inclusion: the impact of policy and policy-making on post-compulsory education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- R3: Hodgson, A. & Spours, K. (2010) Vocational qualifications and progression to higher education: the case of the 14-19 Diplomas in the English system, *Journal of Education and Work* 23(2), 95-110.
- R4: Hodgson, A. & Spours, K. (2013) Tackling the crisis facing young people: building 'high opportunity progression eco-systems', *Oxford Review of Education* 39(2), 211-228.
- R5: Hodgson, A. & Spours, K. (2012) Three versions of localism: implications for upper secondary education and lifelong learning in the UK, *Journal of Education Policy* 27(2), 193-210.

**Indicative funding**

- IF1: Developing a National Qualifications Framework for Qatar (2012-13), IOE/Pearson, funded by Qatar Supreme Education Council (£109,000 for IOE).
- IF3: The impact of policy on learning, teaching and assessment in the learning and skills sector (2004-2007), funded by the ESRC, awarded to IOE (£591,000).
- IF4: Kingswood Area Progression Project (2008-2012), funded by Learning and Skills Council, South Gloucestershire Local Authority, the Kingswood Partnership and Connexions West of England, awarded to IOE (£75,000).

**Indicators of quality:**

- IQ1: Tom Schuller, Director of the UK Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning, described the 2011 book that Hodgson and Spours co-edited with Martyn Waring, *Post-compulsory education and lifelong learning across the United Kingdom: policy, organisation and governance*, as "another authoritative analysis of post-compulsory education and training, from an expert research team with an excellent reputation".
- IQ2: Their TLRP project (2004-7) was rated 'outstanding' by the ESRC.
- IQ3: R1 (above) was 2nd prize-winner in Society for Educational Studies' 2010 awards.
- IQ4: R3 was the most downloaded article in the *Journal of Education and Work* in 2011.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

**Principal beneficiaries:** Education professionals and policy-makers at various levels have benefited from the ideas and practical strategies outlined in the work of Hodgson and Spours. Many of these have then impacted on young people in 14-19 education and training in England and Wales through better progression routes, guidance systems and improved programmes of study.

**Dates of benefit:** From before 2008 to the present day.

**Reach and significance:** The researchers have played an important role in shaping political and professional thinking on 14-19 education and training – not only in England and Wales but as far

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afield as Qatar. They have influenced Labour party and union policies, and provision in local authorities, colleges and schools. They have also helped to design national baccalaureate courses and qualifications frameworks. They have therefore made a range of 'instrumental' impacts<sup>1</sup> (influence on policy/practice). They have also achieved significant 'conceptual' impacts (informing debate).

**Conceptual impact:** *Public engagement:* Hodgson and Spours have made a major contribution to 14-19 debates since the 1990s by writing about their research for many specialist and mainstream magazines and newspapers, and giving interviews to high-profile radio and television programmes. They have argued consistently and effectively for a unified and inclusive 14-19 education and training system that meets the needs of every learner. Spours has written five articles for the *Guardian* alone since 2000 (three co-written with Hodgson). His most recent piece (see impact source **S1**), co-written with Neal Lawson of the Compass think tank, attracted more than 100 responses – including one from the High Master of Manchester Grammar School. Spours also edited Compass's 2011 e-book, *Education for the Good Society*, and spoke at its Westminster launch. More than 150 people attended this event, including Stephen Twigg, the then Shadow Education Secretary.

*Conference and seminars:* Hodgson and Spours have given around 100 presentations to audiences beyond the research community – in the UK and abroad – since 2008. The IOE Centre for post-14 Research and Innovation, which they jointly direct, organises events for practitioners and policy-makers, as well as researchers. Elizabeth Truss MP has twice attended one of the Centre's seminars, once shortly before becoming schools minister in 2012 and then again in March 2013. The Centre also supports the London Regional Post-14 Network, which reaches policy-makers and practitioners through its conferences and seminars. The Centre's open lecture series has been offered annually to the public for 20 years.

**Instrumental impact:** *Labour policy:* Hodgson and Spours strongly influenced the Tomlinson proposals for a 14-19 diploma system (**S2**) – and although the Blair government rejected their recommendations, senior Labour politicians remain open to their arguments. Kevin Brennan, shadow minister for schools, invited them to brief him on their proposals for a unified curriculum on May 22, 2012 (**S3**) and some of their ideas were incorporated in the draft curriculum policy that Labour issued the following month. It states: "We therefore propose to explore a modernised version of the approach pioneered by the Tomlinson Report". Spours has since been invited to contribute to the David Blunkett review of school collaboration arrangements. He is also the organiser of an inquiry into a new model of education, sponsored by Compass and funded by the National Union of Teachers, which was launched in July 2013.

*Select Committee:* When Hodgson appeared before the Education Select Committee in 2008 she argued for an extension of the aims-based curriculum to older teenagers – particularly as the participation age is to rise to 18. The Committee endorsed this suggestion in their subsequent report (**S4**): "We strongly recommend that an overarching statement of aims for the National Curriculum – encompassing the Early Years Foundation Stage, National Curriculum and 14–19 learners – be introduced, properly embedded in the content of the National Curriculum, in order to provide it with a stronger sense of purpose, continuity and coherence". They also made it clear that Hodgson's testimony had helped to clarify their thinking on this issue.

*Wales:* Huw Evans, Chair of the 2012 Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19s in Wales, has said that Hodgson and Spours had a significant influence on his board's thinking (**S5**). A key question that Evans kept in mind during the Review was one that the researchers posed in their IOE professorial lecture in 2012: "Should education reflect and promote the more equal and democratic society that we want to build rather than reinforce its current inequalities and divisions?" He also said that their work had confirmed "our commitment to developing an inclusive 14-19 framework for Wales. This

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<sup>1</sup> Using Evidence: How Research can Inform Public Services (Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davis, H. 2007)

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is to be achieved within a Baccalaureate model providing a unified pathway post-16". The Welsh Government broadly accepted all of the Evans Review's recommendations.

Local authorities and pan-authority bodies: Hodgson and Spours are also advising LAs on 14+ Progression and Transition Boards (PTBs) – a new type of collaborative body that they conceived and designed. It brings together schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, employers, voluntary and community organisations, regeneration agencies, higher education institutions and local authorities. They are currently academic partners for the London Councils' Young People's Education and Skills Board and their ideas on 14+ PTBs are spreading across the capital. Two 14+ PTBs have been set up in North East Lincolnshire and Luton and other local authorities are showing interest.

Qualifications and awards: Their Tomlinson work has influenced examination boards' thinking. The baccalaureate offered by AQA, the largest of England's exam boards, is a case in point. As a *Guardian* article on the AQA Bac commented: "Three years after Tony Blair kicked the Tomlinson diploma into the long grass, it is back in a new guise" (S6). The AQA Bac is now offered by more than 200 centres. From 2009-2011, the researchers also helped the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) to develop a baccalaureate – the SFBac Award – which recognises all-round learning and achievement at levels 1, 2 and 3. This involved working with pilot institutions and producing research reports for SFCA to inform the design and implementation of the award (S7).

Students: Young people in the 11 sixth-form colleges that developed the SFBac now experience a broader post-16 curriculum and the wider activities they undertake are being recognised. Tens of thousands of students also benefit from the new 14+ PTBs that support their progress from school to work and HE. Bristol students have also gained from their institutions' collaboration with the IOE, and the Kingswood Partnership is now seen as an example of best practice in 14-19 education and training (S8).

Teacher unions: Hodgson and Spours are working with the NUT and the University and College Union on a long-term project examining teacher and lecturer perceptions of 14-19 reforms. The project's first report was launched at a 2011 seminar involving both unions at which Hodgson and Spours gave the keynote address. The questionnaires they designed with UCU and the NUT in 2011-12 on teachers' and lecturers' views of 14-19 policy have underpinned campaigns in both organisations.

Overseas influence: Their research on unified systems has now been carried into international work and they recently developed an inclusive National Qualifications Framework for Qatar.

<b>5. Sources to corroborate the impact<sup>2</sup></b> (indicative maximum of 10 references)
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- S1: 'Education's essential building block', October 17, 2011, *Guardian*  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/17/education-essential-building-block-schools>
- S2: Sir Mike Tomlinson, Chair of the Working Group for 14–19 Reform
- S3: Kevin Brennan, Shadow Minister for Further Education
- S4: House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, National Curriculum, Fourth Report of Session 2008–09 Volume I Report (See pages 37-38)  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmchilsch/344/344i.pdf>
- S5: Huw Evans, Chair of the 2012 Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19s in Wales
- S6: 'Grow your own diploma', April 1, 2008, *Guardian*.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/apr/01/furthereducation.uk>
- S7: Executive Chair, Sixth Form Colleges Association
- S8: Head, Sir Bernard Lovell School and Chair of Kingswood Partnership

<sup>2</sup> All web links accessed 5/11/13