

Institution: Swansea University
Unit of Assessment: 19 - Business and Management Studies
a. Context

The **user groups, beneficiaries and audiences** of the unit’s research range from **local businesses** to **regional and national governments** and **major international organisations**. Amongst the major beneficiaries of our policy-oriented research are Westminster-based government departments (including Business, Innovation and Skills; Communities and Local Government; Work and Pensions; and the Home Office), the Welsh Government (WG) and local government (especially the four unitary authorities in South West Wales). Policy-relevant research has also been commissioned by non-departmental government bodies such the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; Equality and Human Rights Commission; Low Pay Commission; National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts; Office for Manpower Economics, UK Commission for Employment and Skills and UK Trade International. Research has also been carried out in close cooperation with, or commissioned by, the European Commission (EC) and international research agencies and organisations such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (Australian equivalent of CEDEFOP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF).

Individual researchers and research groups, especially the Welsh Economy Labour Market Evaluation and Research Centre (WELMERC) and Wales Institute of Social Economic Research Data and Methods (WISERD), have also developed strong connections with local businesses including through the Swansea Productivity Commission and Regional Learning Partnership. Swansea University is also a partner in the LEAD Wales initiative which aims to give entrepreneurs the skillset and confidence necessary to increase their turnover and profitability. This £8m programme has been funded by the WG and the European Social Fund (ESF) will engage with around 700 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in North & West Wales and the South Wales Valleys between 2010 and 2015, with support given to 439 businesses up to September 2013.

The unit has particular impact-related research strengths in labour market policies, regional/spatial economics, in the activity and skill deficiencies of SMEs, conflict resolution within enterprises and employment relations. Taken together, this body of research has made a major contribution to policy debates, **shaping policy-making, changing the attitudes and understanding** of key actors and **influencing practitioner behaviour**. As evidenced by the case studies, research at Swansea University has informed critical public debate and understanding of issues surrounding social justice, employment relations and labour markets in the UK and internationally. It has fundamentally influenced the attitudes and behaviour of the leaders of SMEs in Wales and it has altered perspectives and practitioner behaviour with regards to conflict resolution in enterprises and organisations across the UK.

In terms of the impact on business, the LEAD Wales programme has helped to address the leadership and entrepreneurial skills deficit which characterizes SMEs in Wales. The programme has already had a significant impact on firm performance such as the profitability and scale of a considerable number of enterprises. Regarding behaviour within enterprises, conflict resolution research has had a major impact on both policymaking and practitioner communities of a kind that makes both for improved workforce well-being and, in consequence, more effective utilization of labour within enterprises.

Policy-shaping labour market research has been institutionally located within WELMERC, established with substantial ESF funding (£1.3m) in 2002. Such research has been further strengthened with the creation in 2008 of WISERD, a multi-disciplinary research centre involving other Welsh universities and the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC). SERC is a consortium of universities, including Swansea, and led by the London School for Economics. It was initially funded by the ESRC, Departments for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform and Communities & Local Government and the WG. The research is characterised by the analysis of large scale (survey) data on individuals, households and firms using advanced statistical (and

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econometric) techniques. As a result, the aim is to generate robust findings from a policy perspective grounded in work that is internationally excellent in terms of its quality.

Research on employment relations during the decade of crises in the aviation industry has been carried within the People, Organisations and Work (POW) group. This has changed attitudes and understandings in the social dialogue process within the industry. It was coordinated by the European Commission and has been adopted by the ILO as the authoritative analysis on employment relations in the industry, in addition to being welcomed by the ITF and ETF as a constructive intervention in the public debate over the response to the crises in the industry.

b. Approach to impact

As a result of the links established through WISERD, the unit's research community has been able to work closely with the WG to develop a **social science knowledge exchange and transfer programme** between the government and academic sectors. This is facilitated by WG representation on WISERD's advisory board, regular meetings between the WG's knowledge exchange manager and the WISERD Director and the representation of WG staff on WISERD thematic reference groups. There is also engagement with policy-makers through the WISERD publications series, including a policy briefing series (edited in Swansea). WISERD has also arranged evidence symposia in association with the WG, the second of which on well-being was largely based around research undertaken in Swansea. Specific seminars based on WISERD research have also taken place at the WG. Fellowships have also been secured with the WG that have allowed members of staff to be seconded to the WG. Furthermore, several PhD students have taken up positions within the WG and the Office for National Statistics. High impact interdisciplinary research will be further enhanced by a recent successful funding application (£9.2m) to the ESRC by WISERD and the College of Medicine in Swansea University to establish an Administrative Data Research Centre in 2014.

SERC has also organised conferences in the UK, with the second Welsh conference taking place in Cardiff in 2010. This was well attended by representatives from the WG and unitary authorities, with the WG's Chief Economist making a keynote presentation. As well as a discussion paper series, SERC also has a policy papers series, which aims to disseminate research findings to a more policy-orientated audience. WELMERC has further disseminated research findings and engaged with policy makers and organisations that aim to **promote Welsh business** through discussion papers, research reports and newsletters. Research groups and centres within the unit are integral components of the recently formed Research Institute for Applied Social Science, **bringing together social science researchers** from across the university. In doing so it has extended and strengthened links with social science research groups with a strong policy focus. Research centres within the unit also have a significant media profile, with members making regular contributions to newspapers, radio and television.

Individual researcher networks and relationships also play a significant role. For example, the academic investigating employment relations in the airline industry **developed a network** in the civil aviation sector that includes key actors and decision-makers in the ILO, ITF and ETF. The relationship with these organisations not only resulted in a number of widely publicised reports from 2002 onwards but the research is also recognized as the authoritative analysis in its field by the ILO. This particularly relates to shaping the agenda of key discussions, such as at the ILO Global Dialogue Forum on the Civil Aviation Industry (February 2013) and the European Commission Civil Aviation Sector Social Dialogue Committee (June 2012).

LEAD Wales is a key means of **engaging with the sizable SME sector in Wales**. The programme focuses on providing practice-oriented training to a large number of small business entrepreneurs. The economic impact of the training has already resulted in increased turnover (around 26% on average) and in the creation of over 120 new jobs. This has been achieved by gearing the programme, originally developed for Northwest England, to meet the needs and demands of the Welsh socio-economic context. This has been accomplished, to a large extent, through research at Swansea. Links have also been established with **large private sector employers** such as the one that exists between researchers in the Finance group and Admiral. Furthermore, the University's academic career pathways scheme includes an enhanced strand for innovation and engagement, **recognising and rewarding staff** who demonstrate their impact through knowledge transfer.

c. Strategy and plans

Throughout the period a conscious and fundamental objective of the research communities located within the unit has been to influence the context and debates that **shape the formulation of economic and social policy** and employment relations at Welsh, UK and international levels and also to change in a positive way the conduct and performance of SMEs. This has been achieved through institutional vehicles such as WELMERC, SERC, WISERD and the LEAD programme. These have been used to establish and to strengthen the interface between the academic and policy-making/business communities and to sustain a mutually beneficial and iterative relationship that has enhanced the quality of our research while ensuring, in turn, that it promotes behavioural and policy changes with beneficial social and economic consequences.

Future plans and efforts will be mediated by these Centres which have proved effective in delivering and disseminating policy-relevant research. However, given the range and vitality of the unit's research activity there is considerable scope to increase the reach and significance of impact outside of these; in particular research with significant potential impact on the human resource and organisational practices of large employers. There are also plans to **develop further links with local businesses**, with the LEAD Wales initiative a particularly important channel through which this can be realised. The programme experience establishes an ongoing relationship with its alumni which has proven valuable not only in developing and localizing the programme further but also in providing research access to SMEs in Wales. This is something that has not been easy to gain in the past. Some results of this research have already been published, and research-oriented engagement with LEAD Wales participants will intensify in the future as the number of alumni increases and the benefits of the programme become even better known.

It is also anticipated that the proposed move of Business and Economics, with the highly influential College of Engineering, to the new £250m **Science and Innovation Campus** in 2015 will considerably enhance opportunities to establish links with the major companies which will be co-located on this site. The potential for collaborative research with impact is enormous, with the campus itself conceived of in terms of interleaving the academic and business communities, which will help to drive the creation of high technology clusters. As a result, it is planned to become a global exemplar of how a research-intensive university can work effectively with industry, helping to drive economic regeneration and creating exciting employment opportunities. In particular, the new campus is based around an open innovation model, in which research and development is embedded within academic activities. As a result, the aim is to maximize mutual benefits to all stakeholders, especially by increasing the efficiency of knowledge transfer. Companies such as Rolls Royce, BP (£19m) and Tata Steel (£5.3m) have already invested heavily in the campus. Other collaborative research partners include Airbus UK, BAE Systems, BT, IBM, Jaguar, Land Rover, Microsoft and Vodafone.

d. Relationship to case studies

The impact case studies relate to the more effective and equitable functioning of labour markets and to creating amicable, productive and sustainable work environments and organisations through conflict resolution and positive employment relations. The case studies also provide clear evidence on fundamental labour market inequalities at the Welsh and UK levels. The research has impacted on policy debates and the policymaking community, helping to frame and inform policy implementation on a national and regional basis, such as in relation to the possible introduction of regional/market facing pay in the public sector across the UK.

In all these case studies, **research has been conducted in tandem with policy, business or practitioner communities**. It has therefore been the product of an iterative process with impact an integral element of how research questions have been formulated, how research has been conducted and how outcomes have been disseminated. While the case studies are partly the result of institutional and inter-institutional support, more individualistic arrangements have also yielded clear results in terms of impact. A good example of this is the importance of positive employment relations in civil aviation. This case study reflects more than ten years of research on the airline industry, with the focused analysis and relationships developed with key actors in the sector over time important factors in achieving such an impact.