

Institution: London Metropolitan University		
Unit of Assessment: 23 - Education		
Title of case study: <i>Research-informed pedagogy for social justice in Higher Education</i>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2002 to 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Sandra Abegglen	Senior Lecturer in Education Studies	2011 to July 2018
Tom Burns	Senior Lecturer in Educational & Professional Development	2005 to current
Dave Griffiths	Senior Lecturer in Education & Learning Development	1998 to August 2014
Kathy Harrington	Principal Lecturer in Educational & Professional Development	2003 to current
Sandra Sinfield	Senior Lecturer in Educational & Professional Development	1994 to current
Digby Warren	Head of Centre for Professional & Educational Development (CPED)	2001 to current
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 to March 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? NO		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The research and professional development work of our Centre has inspired research-informed practice and policy in learning and teaching (L&T) in higher education (HE) at our university, nationally and internationally. Contributing to the promotion of social justice and cultural change in HE, our study guides, frameworks, articles and book chapters, all based on our research, have been used by teaching and learning development staff, as the main beneficiaries, to: devise innovative study skills workshops, transition courses and Learning Development services; adopt creative, student-centred methods; reconceptualise and implement students-as-partners initiatives; activate institutional change programmes; articulate theoretical framing and transformative practice in applications for CPD recognition; and engage reflexively with educational theory and re/design teaching programmes in fresh, scholarly, student-focused ways.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research undertaken by members of London Met's Centre for Professional & Educational Development (CPED) is premised on a vision of education as a vehicle for fostering equality and democracy through broadening HE access, embracing diversity and raising critical awareness, our research questions and replaces models of L&T based on deficit views of learners and investigates the validity of pedagogical approaches that engage, extend and empower both students and teachers in novel and authentic ways. The research encompasses (i) action research which evaluates and informs innovative practice and (ii) critical meta-analysis and synthesis of educational literature and published research, leading to the development of original evidence-based frameworks, conceptual models, good practice guides and policy recommendations. Running through both areas of research are three interconnected strands: widening participation pedagogy, student engagement through partnership, and curriculum development.

Impact case study (REF3)**(i) ACTION RESEARCH: Widening Participation Pedagogy**

Abegglen, Burns and Sinfield's research has entailed participatory, ethical action research using qualitative data gathered from *and with* students via in-class evaluations, image-mediated discussions and 'zig-zag' collaborative, reflective writing by students, and with staff via shared reflexive accounts of their teaching practice. It has developed and validated effective strategies for building cohort identity (welcoming students for who they are), exploring and disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions about education ("de-schooling"), active and engaging learning to pique curiosity, using creative methods that can overcome fear and unlock talent - thereby nurturing the whole person, driving learning through authentic tasks, and scaffolding learning to enable participation in epistemic communities: in short, an emancipatory pedagogy (**R1, R2**).

(ii) CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH**Widening Participation Pedagogy**

Regarding epistemic access, our research has investigated conceptual and practical approaches to facilitating students' engagement with academic discourse. Harrington, in collaboration with Lillis (Open University), Lea (Open University) and Mitchell (Queen Mary, University of London), revisits the influential Academic Literacies approach to transforming pedagogy and institutional policy, developing this seminal model further by elucidating conceptually and practically what it means to disrupt problematic norms of academic writing and adopt instead a "transformative" approach that: values students' diverse cultures, backgrounds and circumstances as resources; de-mystifies semiotic practices in higher education; and fosters students' authentic engagement with and through written discourse (**R4**).

Student Engagement through partnership:

Harrington's research investigates and develops evidence-based models, principles and guidance for engaging students with their learning through partnership approaches. Grounded in an extensive review of UK and international scholarship and research with a focus on the application of SaP principles to HE pedagogy, organisational change and policy development, Harrington, in collaboration with Professor Mick Healey (independent HE consultant) and Dr Abbi Flint (HE Academy), has developed a new model for understanding and developing students-as-partners initiatives in L&T (**R3**). The research uses literature and policy review, conceptual analysis and a rigorous peer feedback process to examine motivations and rationales for staff and students engaging in partnership; offer a pedagogical case for partnership; identify examples of strategic and sustainable practices of engaging students as partners; outline how the development of partnership learning communities may guide and sustain practice; identify tensions and challenges to partnership; and offer recommendations to individuals and institutions for addressing challenges and future work. All chapters were jointly researched and written, and Dr Harrington was the lead author for the concluding recommendations for practice and policy. This research has also underpinned a chapter on Student Engagement by Harrington, Sinfield and Burns (**R7**) that elucidates the critical role of the teacher in fostering effective student engagement both within the academic curriculum and as part of wider extra-curricular learning, and offers guidance on putting principles into practice.

Curriculum Development:

Focusing on curriculum as a locus of culture change in learning and teaching, Warren posits a holistic notion of "curriculum" as the nexus of knowledge domain, educational values and principles, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation (**R5**). This practice-informed research which integrates an extensive literature survey critically reviews different curriculum development models derived from "process" versus "product" paradigms; emphasises the importance of attending to underpinning ideologies, values and beliefs about teaching and learning; and promotes learning-focused approaches informed by critical pedagogy and whole-person development, in keeping with our advocacy of education for social justice (**R5**). The relational pedagogical approach encouraged in our CPED research is also elucidated in the new model of supervision, proposed by Griffiths and Warren, founded on a critical synopsis of a large body of published research into supervision practice. Using a partnership lens, it replaces a traditional hierarchical relationship with the concept of the supervisor as "navigator", facilitating the student-researcher across the different phases and challenges of the project process (**R6**).

Running through all our research, therefore, are the core and interwoven themes of emancipatory pedagogy, teacher development and social justice – with curriculum conceived as a “third space” of staff-student interchange that allows for critical practice and transformative action.

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

- R1. Abegglen, S., Burns, T., Middlebrook, D. and Sinfield, S. (2019). ‘Disrupting academic reading: Unrolling the scroll for academic staff’ in Quinn, L. (Ed) (2019) *Reimagining curriculum: Spaces for disruption*. Stellenbosch: Africa Sun Modia
- R2. Abegglen, S.; Burns, T. and Sinfield, S. (2016) ‘Critical Pedagogy: Utilizing Critical Writing Exercises to Foster Critical Thinking Skills in First-year Undergraduate Students and Prepare Them for Life Outside University’, *Double Helix: a journal of critical thinking and writing*, Vol 4. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/double-helix/v4/abegglen.pdf>
- R3. Healey, M.; Flint, A. and Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership - students as partners in learning and teaching in HE*. York: Higher Education Academy https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/engagement_through_partnership.pdf
- R4. Lillis, T; Harrington, K., Lea, M.R. and Mitchell, S. (2015) Introduction to *Working with Academic Literacies: Case Studies Towards Transformative Practice*. WAC Clearing House, Perspectives on Writing Series. <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/lillis/>
- R5. Warren, D. (2016) Course and learning design and evaluation, in H. Pokorny and D. Warren (Eds) *Enhancing Teaching Practice in Higher Education*, chapter 2. London: Sage
- R6. Griffiths, D. and Warren, D. (2016) Effective Supervision, in H. Pokorny and D. Warren (Eds) *Enhancing Teaching Practice in Higher Education*, chapter 9. London: Sage
- R7. Harrington, K; Sinfield, S. and Burns, T. (2016) Student Engagement, in H. Pokorny and D. Warren (Eds) *Enhancing Teaching Practice in Higher Education*, chapter 6. London: Sage

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

The primary beneficiaries of CPED’s research are HE staff, as designers and facilitators of learning, and their students. Staff include those who teach and support student access, transition and achievement in HE; institutional managers, policy makers and change agents with responsibility for learning and teaching strategy; and those seeking professional recognition for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (e.g. from SEDA, Advance HE/HEA, ALDinHE). Through our research and pedagogical resources, HE staff in various institutions abroad and the UK have encountered evidence-based ideas which they have applied to their educational practice, both as teachers in the classroom and to effect culture change at organisational level.

Widening Participation Pedagogy

In terms of **national impact**, across the UK, the emancipatory pedagogy developments that have been advanced by our research have contributed to the development of HE transition courses and ‘study skills’ workshops and services, for example at the University of Reading, where it directly influenced the creation of a ground-breaking online transitions course, *Study Smart*, from 2016 onwards. Dr Michelle Reid, the project lead for *Study Smart*, cites the research of Burns and Sinfield as “*the guiding principles that underpin our values and profession as Learning Developers*” [S1]. By its third year (2018/19), *Study Smart* had reached over 7850 undergraduates, and course evaluations show it has consistently achieved its aims of supporting transition into HE study, with 94% of students indicating that their confidence had increased following completion of the course and it has also had “*a nationwide impact as an innovative model for transitions support*” (S1). Similarly, Burns and Sinfield’s “*highly valued*” work is used by the academic development team at the University of Edinburgh to support students and teaching staff, with their research-based textbooks having “*influenced the development of [their] learning resources*” in ‘study skills’ workshops (S2). Their research also informed and shaped the establishment of the Study Skills Advisors service at the University of Strathclyde and the creation and evolution of the Learning Development team at the University of the West of Scotland (S2).

Impact case study (REF3)

Our Academic Literacies research has been used to enable epistemic access and engagement with academic discourse and subject learning amongst those traditionally marginalised within higher education. Julian Ingle (Deputy Head of Academic Skills, University of Portsmouth, and former Thinking Writing consultant at Queen Mary, University of London) notes that *“these powerful and influential ideas have shaped the development, design and teaching of numerous programmes and institutional initiatives”*, making a *“demonstrable and beneficial difference particularly to non-traditional students’ sense of agency within academic and disciplinary arenas and their sense of belonging within higher education”*, and that his work, which is *“grounded in the Academic Literacies approach to writing pedagogy, has had an impact, on average, on 150 teaching staff, and 700 students, each year for the past ten years”* (S5).

Regarding **international impact**, CPED’s research is facilitating cultural change in approaches to education in societies which have traditionally favoured teacher-led approaches, including informing professional development sessions for an EU-funded partnership between London Met and a consortium of three Romanian universities (*Universiteria* project, 2015) and a second EU-funded project in Sibiu, Romania, in 2018, which focused on creative ways to develop problem-based learning. As Alina Mag, of Sibiu University, has said, this training had a *“positive impact”* on colleagues’ educational practice, providing them with *“the chance to learn new ideas, to value our students’ voice and potential”* and *“get [them] more involved in each class!”* (S3).

Student Engagement through partnership

Nationally and internationally, the Students-as-Partners (SaP) framework developed by Harrington et al (R3) has provided an innovative conceptual model to develop thinking, practice and institutional policy in working with students as partners in learning and teaching in HE. Evidencing **national impact**, the model has been used to design and deliver a highly effective programme of “SaP in the curriculum” change initiatives within 8 universities in 2014-15 (Bristol, Dundee, Exeter, Nottingham Trent, Robert Gordon, Strathclyde, Winchester, West of Scotland), leading to the development and implementation of: student-led curriculum enhancement strategy, institutional culture of students as co-researchers, co-produced assessment and feedback practices, and sustainable peer-led teaching initiatives (S4). The associated chapter on Student Engagement (R7), besides being a core text for London Met’s professional development course (see below), is used by other UK HEIs to support staff seeking professional recognition for their teaching, including the University of Hertfordshire where it is used as a theoretical framework for staff preparing submissions for their CPD scheme (50-70 a year for the past 3 years (2017-2019)), especially those applying for SFHEA, as it *“gives a scaffold on which they can speak to their sustained effectiveness in a critical area of practice”* (S7).

Showing **international impact**, since 2016, Harrington et al’s research has been a key resource for delivering the annual International Students as Partners Institute (ISaPI) at McMaster University, Canada, which works with geographically diverse student-staff teams to build capacity and enable implementation of local SaP initiatives in L&T in HE, reaching 97 participants from 8 countries in 2016, and 78 participants from 10 countries developing 8 change projects in 2017 (S4). This research continues to demonstrate ongoing relevance, including providing the conceptual underpinning and core model for Advance HE’s 2019 guide for working with SaP at departmental, programme and institutional levels (S4).

Curriculum Development

Considering **national impact**, at London Met, CPED’s accredited PGCert/MA in Learning & Teaching in HE course, as a strategic vehicle for promoting research-informed practice and pedagogical research, is profoundly shaped by both our research and the approaches espoused therein. Through engagement with this research and professional development, participating lecturers (around 50 annually for the past five years (2015-2019)) have gained a more in-depth grasp of pedagogical theories and issues, and new/alternative “students focused” L&T and assessment strategies which are, in the view of academic managers, *“extremely useful for everyday teaching practice”* and, according to the External Examiner, for their potential *“to be real agents for change in their students’ lives”* (S6).

Impact case study (REF3)

Externally, CPED's research features as core or supplementary sources on equivalent PGCert programmes at UK universities, including Imperial College London, where Warren's chapter on curriculum development (**R5**) is used by their staff-participants (51 attendees altogether over the past 3 years (2017-2019)) to "*deepen their understanding of principles that underpin educational design.. adopt practical techniques... and critically reflect on how they gather, analyse and discuss evidence to evaluate impact on learning*" (**S8**). That chapter and the one on supervision (**R6**) are used at the University of Hertfordshire (with 60-80 completions on their PGCert programme each academic year for the past few years) to correctively offer "*scholarly insight into pedagogical processes that can all too often veer towards a mechanistic and compliance orientation*" (**S7**).

Looking at **international impact**, for two EU-funded projects for HE development in Uzbekistan involving their Ministry of Higher Education and half a dozen leading universities, our research contributed directly to the content and presentation of training sessions, for university lecturers and managers, on curriculum development (*Enhancing Quality Assurance through Professional Development* [QAPD project], 2011-2014), thereby having seeded subsequent course re/design initiatives at target institutions. Our research also underpinned master classes on the theme of student engagement (*Internationalisation and Modernisation of Higher Education* [IMEP] project, 2015-2018). The QAPD project received praise from Jamilya Gulyamova, Deputy Director of the British Council in Tashkent, as an "*excellent example of... knowledge sharing and professional development of academic leaders*" and "*important project which has led and will continue leading to systemic change, innovation and quality in teaching and learning*" (**S9**). A direct outcome of QAPD was the development and piloting of a "Education Quality Management" course for HE senior managers (2014-2016), including quality enhancement of L&T, that was underpinned by approaches validated by CPED's research (**S9**). The IMEP training was highly rated by participants as "*interesting and fruitful, providing new ideas for professional practice*" (**S9**) and, together with related research (**R3** and chapter on Student Engagement **R7**), informed the development of a Student Engagement Framework that fed into national HE policy in Uzbekistan (**S9**). These particular projects exemplify how all strands of our research combine to foster culture change in HE teaching practice and policy.

Summary of impact of CPED's integrated body of research

Illustrating the sustained influence nationally of our combined research, as an advocate of research-based emancipatory pedagogy, Professor Debbie Holley, Bournemouth University, credits the research undertaken by CPED as having inspired a group of UK universities (Anglia Ruskin, Bournemouth, East Anglia) to promote this approach through staff and curriculum development initiatives and their regional network (SCARN). (**S10**)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1. Dr Michelle Reid (Oxford Brookes University)
- S2. Lesley Kelly (University of Edinburgh) and Gordon Asher (University of West of Scotland)
- S3. Dr Alina Mag (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania)
- S4. Students-As-Partners initiatives: SaP in the Curriculum Change Programme Compendium (HEA 2015); use of SaP Framework at ISaPI (2016 & 2017); Student Engagement through Partnership framework (Advance HE 2019)
- S5. Julian Ingle (University of Portsmouth)
- S6. MALTHE Course Feedback from Periodic Review and External Examiner
- S7. Sarah Flynn (University of Hertfordshire)
- S8. Kate Ippolito (Imperial College London)
- S9. Testimonials and feedback on EU-funded international projects (Jamilya Gulyamova: Director of British Council, Uzbekistan; Associate Professor Alex Krouglov: International Projects Coordinator)
- S10. Professor Debbie Holley (Bournemouth University)