Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University College London

Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Education

Title of case study: Advancing Global Gender Equality through Educational Partnerships

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013–2020

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:
Jenny Parkes	Professor in Education, Gender and International Development	September 2005 to present
Elaine Unterhalter	Professor in Education and International Development	November 1995 to present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 to 2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

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

Parkes' and Unterhalter's programme of research, undertaken at UCL Institute of Education, has helped to create and sustain more gender-equitable, safe schools, with far-reaching effects on the safety and well-being of girls and boys in schools across eight countries in Africa where the research has been focused. The work has influenced global and national agencies, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), strengthening the ways in which gender equality in education is understood and evaluated, through the generation of robust data, and the use of rigorous research evidence to enhance global, national and local policy and practice. The research has influenced the release of long term funding of £800m for implementation projects. Young people in any more countries in the continent and beyond have benefited as programmes are rolled out through agencies.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research addresses challenges of gender inequalities and violence in education through collaborations with global organisations, governments, NGOs and researchers in Africa. While there has been considerable attention in research and policy to getting girls into school, this focus has neglected the gender relations and intersecting inequalities in school and out of school that differentially affect particular groups of girls' vulnerability to marginalisation, discrimination and violence. Policies on girls' education developed at national or international levels have often been transmitted in linear top-down ways, with little engagement with, or insights into, perspectives and practices in schools and communities. The research has addressed these weaknesses through, firstly, analysing and conceptualising the complexity of gender and other inequalities in education, and secondly, through collaborating extensively with multiple partners to co-produce evidence to inform policy and practice. The research findings have been shared in over 70 publications since 2005 (including over 40 journal articles, 20 research reports and 10 books). The research programme featured three key projects highlighted below.

Accountability for gender equality in education (AGEE) (GBP442,704): A 4-year study (2018–21), led by Unterhalter, jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID, now Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)) which aimed to develop an indicator framework in education supporting the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and government initiatives on gender equality in education **(R1)**. Unterhalter and her team developed a gender equality in education monitoring 'dashboard' **(R1**, figure 6) and convened a community of practice on indicators for gender equality in education, involving the United Nations Girls

Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO. The data collection, which included interviews and workshops with National Statistical Offices, governments and women's rights activists in Malawi and South Africa, examined the effectiveness and feasibility of the dashboard.

This research builds on findings from Unterhalter's ESRC funded study: *Gender, Education and Global Policy Reduction Initiatives* (2007–11) and on the DFID funded *Rigorous Review of Evidence on Girls' Education and Gender Equality* **(R2)** which showed a disconnection between the aspirations of global policies and the interpretation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. Global Policy Reduction Initiatives' research methods involved case studies in Kenya and South Africa, with interviews, observations, and document analysis in the national Department/Ministry of Education, a provincial department, a school, a local and a global NGO.

Key findings/insights: Gender inequality outside schools and education systems has consequences for institutional arrangements within education systems **(R2, R3)**. There is a need to identify and join up the work of all stakeholders involved and develop monitoring and evaluation to review these relationships **(R3)**.

End Gender Violence in Schools GBP708,960: An action research project in Zambia, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo between 2014–17, led by Parkes, with UNICEF and funded by the Global Partnership for Education. This research used evidence as set out below to strengthen policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). Following a global literature review, scoping data were collected through 20 to 30 in-depth stakeholder interviews in each country; workshops and analyses of research, policy and programme texts to evaluate prevalence and patterns of SRGBV; analysis of laws, policies and plans, structures and partnerships, responses in and around schools, prevention through teaching and learning, and systems for data collection. Findings from these studies informed the development and implementation of action plans by country teams led by Education Ministries. Research outputs included a rigorous review of global evidence **(R4)**; 4 country scoping studies of policy, practice and evidence on SRGBV, cross-country analysis, and 2 qualitative studies **(R5)**.

Key findings/insights: The research identified how interventions to address SRGBV were often piecemeal, with policy enactment hampered by political, conceptual and resource challenges at all levels of the education sector **(R4)**. This was exemplified in the study in Ethiopia, with patchy implementation of policy across the country, and low levels of reporting or follow up in schools **(R5)**. Based on the evidence collected, Parkes and her team developed a multi-dimensional SRGBV framework that addresses the causes and consequences of violence in norms and inequalities, through 'whole school' approaches, with participatory engagement of students and staff, and stress on interconnectedness with families, communities, services and local-mid-national policy environments (**R4**, figure 1).

Good Schools Study (2012–2015) and the ***Contexts of Violence in Adolescence Cohort Study (COVAC)*** (2018–2022): Raising Voices, a Ugandan NGO, developed the Good School Toolkit. The objective of the Good Schools Study research was to evaluate whether the Toolkit reduced physical violence from school staff to students, with methods including a randomised control trial in 42 schools and qualitative interviews and focus groups **(R6)**. The COVAC study is a long-term follow up of participants in the Good Schools Study. It is a mixed methods cohort project, with 3 waves of epidemiological survey data collection, and four waves of qualitative longitudinal data collection, providing detailed insights into how adolescents' violence-related experiences, perspectives and practices relate to their social contexts and how these change over time. The research, funded by the Medical Research Council, is a collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Raising Voices, with Parkes leading the qualitative longitudinal study.

Key findings/insights: The violence prevention intervention - the Good Schools Toolkit - reduced violence in schools by 42 per cent over 18 months and improved children's sense of well-being and connection to schools. The studies identified characteristics of whole school interventions

that can generate more equitable, safe schools, including engaging school staff and students in reflection and action to strengthen alternative non-violent approaches to discipline. They also addressed questions about sustainability, as young people move to secondary schools or out of schools **(R6)**.

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

R1 Unterhalter, E., Robinson, L. & Ron Balsera, M. (2020) *The politics, policies and practices of intersectionality: Making gender equality inclusive in and through education* (Background Paper for the UNESCO Gender Review 2020, 1–45), Paris: UNESCO.

R2 Unterhalter, E., North, A., Arnot, M., Lloyd, C., Moletsane, L., Murphy-Graham, E., Parkes, J. & Saito, M. (2014) *Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality: a rigorous review of literature,* London: DFID.

R3 Unterhalter, E. & North, A. (2017) *Education, Poverty and Global Goals for Gender Equality: How People Make Policy Happen,* Abingdon: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315104225.

R4 Parkes, J. L. N., Heslop, J., Johnson Ross, F., Westerveld, R. & Unterhalter, E. (2016) *A Rigorous Review of Global Research Evidence on Policy and Practice on School-Related Gender-Based Violence,* New York: UNICEF.

R5 Parkes, J., Johnson Ross, F., & Heslop, J. (2020) The ebbs and flows of policy enactments on school-related gender-based violence: Insights from Ethiopia, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 72, 102–133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.102133

R6 Devries, K.M., Knight, L., Child, J.C., Mirembe, A., Nakuti, J., Jones, R., Sturgess J., Allen, E, Kyegombe, N., Parkes, J., Walakira, E., Elbourne, D., Watts, C. & Naker, D. (2015) The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: a cluster-randomised controlled trial in Uganda, *Lancet Global Health,* 3(7), E378-E386. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00060-1

Research quality indicators: Outputs that have been through a rigorous peer-review process and peer-reviewed funding from ESRC, MRC, UNICEF, UNESCO and DFID.

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

Research undertaken by Parkes and Unterhalter has re-focused global policy (FCDO, UNICEF, UNGEI) to address gender inequality and violence in education. The research has contributed to a) the ways governments are making and implementing policies in Africa; b) decisions to greatly increase funding for this work; c) the development of evidence-informed programmes, and d) strengthening approaches to monitoring progress on gender and violence prevention in the education sector. As a consequence, the work has had far-reaching effects on the safety and well-being of young people in schools in and beyond Africa, confirmed by two senior officials who worked closely with the team on the development and application of the research findings:

'*Professor Unterhalter and Parkes engagement has helped put girls' education at the top of DFID's agenda and their research has been key to influencing DFID's policy, spending and programming priorities towards girls' education. Their work has been central to DFID achieving its objective of getting all children learning*' (**S1** Head of Education Research, FCDO (formerly DfID).

'*Regarding measuring gender equality in education, IOE has had a significant impact on the manner in which the global community defines, frames admonitors gender equality in education*' (**S2** Head of United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, UNGEI).

The research has built partnerships with policy makers and practitioners to strengthen the evidence. For example, in the End Gender Violence in Schools project **(R5)**, Parkes and her team engaged the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia and UNICEF in the research through workshops to design the study and reflect on the findings. This led to revision of their Code of Conduct to Prevent SRGBV and to developing an action plan to prioritise a series of policy

changes to ensure better outcomes, informed by the recommendations **(S3)**. It included action to improve coordination between government bodies responsible for education, justice, health and social protection, so that cases are handled with more sensitivity and accountability, and more children are encouraged to report their experiences. It also involved improved training for teachers to help them better understand and address inequitable norms and stigma linked to SRGBV. These improvements are being rolled out across the country, affecting 20,800,000 children in primary and 2,600,000 in secondary school, with intensive work taking place in two states (Amhara and Addis Ababa), improving safety and wellbeing for 5,800,000 children (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education, 2017).

In Uganda, the collaboration throughout all stages of the COVAC research, including a recent workshop reflecting on emerging findings with stakeholders from government and NGOs, was described by the head of a lead NGO as: '*an example of how researchers can enhance the practical work of NGOs by sharing research skills, real time analysis of data and how it can inform refinement of interventions*' **(S4)**. The Good Schools study findings **(R6)** increased understanding of how to work with whole school communities to reduce corporal punishment and enabled the NGO to take a leading role in supporting the scaling up of this school-based violence prevention intervention, in collaboration with government and civil society organisations. In their testimonial, the NGO confirms that this has led to safer environments in more than 1000 schools, benefitting an estimated 750,000 children in Uganda **(S4)**.

The research findings have been taken up and shared through a range of tools that are influencing the work of organisations and governments on gender and violence around the world. Guidance stemming from the research on working with school communities to address SRGBV **(R3)** features in learning resources targeting policy makers and practitioners globally - UNGEI's Thematic Briefs on Ending SRGBV **(S2, S5)**, and Apolitical's Field Guide to Safer Schools **(S6)**. The findings have advanced work with UNGEI and UNICEF on minimal standards for and monitoring of a whole school approach to prevent and respond to SRGBV **(S7** p.6**)**. The Minimum Standards guide sets out a global framework to help governments and NGOs across the world ensure and monitor gender equity and safety in schools.

The research team worked closely with DFID, supporting the production of their 'REDNote', which sets out evidence-based guidance on how to work on school violence. This engagement ensured that DFID put 'whole school approaches' at the centre of their work **(S1, R4)**. DFID education advisors in over 17 countries in Africa and Asia have subsequently reviewed policies and programmes and oriented towards using whole school approaches, including creating dialogue with government and NGO partners about how to do this: '*Drawing on work of both Jenny Parkes and Elaine Unterhalter our 2018 Education Policy has committed to strengthening our engagement at every level in the system to ensure gender issues are addressed*' **(S1)**. The research has also influenced decisions to make a very significant funding commitment to this area: '*This includes the development of a new programme providing significant £300m of new funding for policy change and programming in this area*' **(S1)**.

The research is helping to improve the ways gender equality and SRGBV are addressed, monitored and evaluated in education. Unterhalter's scholarship on conceptualising gender equality in education and her focus on marginalisation **(R2, R3)** has '*substantially influenced*' **(S8)** DFID's Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) programmes, such that they are targeted on addressing multiple forms of marginalisation '*We drew on recommendations to ensure analyses of exclusion look at intersecting inequalities associated with contexts, power dynamics and risks of sexual violence*' **(S8)**. This has influenced the delivery of programmes totalling GBP500m **(S1)**, with testimonials evidencing how her monitoring framework has been mainstreamed across programmes and is '*estimated to have reached 1,317,695 direct beneficiaries*' across 41 projects in 17 countries **(S8)**. UNESCO's 2018 Gender Review **(S9)** reframed its approach to accountability using Unterhalter's conceptualisations of gender (p.37). Its approach cites her framework to identify the need to incorporate additional dimensions, including scrutiny of power relations and normative aspirations on justice and equality beyond education (p.10).

The AGEE research has been instrumental in building a community of practice among key organisations engaged with measuring aspects of inequalities and equalities associated with education, including the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Oxfam, LSE Equality project and UNESCO, and with government and NGO partners in South Africa and Malawi. The 'dashboard' of indicators on gender and education **(R1)** was introduced into the G7 endorsed Gender at the Centre Initiative '*to guide the integration of gender into education analysis across the 8 partner countries in Africa*' **(S2)**. The dashboard has been '*fully integrated into the Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review, which is the global authority on education around the world*' **(S2, S9)**, and is being used by UNESCO to monitor progress towards the education targets in the SDGs; and to shape the global database used in its annual monitoring: '*this innovative approach [that] not only helps improve our monitoring of progress towards gender equality in and through education, but also to monitor changes in existing laws and policies*' **(S10)**. The studies on the policies, institutions and politics of gender and education **(R1, R3, R5)** have helped to refine UNGEI's capacity development and advocacy work on Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning, through a series of workshops with key government officials from over 27 countries in Africa and Asia, working to formulate education sector plans that eliminate discrimination **(S2)**.

In sum, Parkes' and Unterhalter's research has contributed to improving gender equality and violence prevention in schools. Their findings have influenced major funding bodies to inject funding of approx. GBP800,000,000 to support innovative research-informed programmes. Working with well-established and collaborative partnerships at global, national and local levels, the work has helped to improve policies, practices and research that support school communities and education systems in Africa and beyond, to create safer and more equitable learning environments for young people and their teachers.

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

S1 Testimonial Head of Education Research Team, UK Department for International Development (DFID).
S2 Testimonial Head of United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.
S3 Email to UNICEF 1 February 2019, with attached Action Plan, from the Government of Ethiopia, Acting Director, Ministry of Education (Women, Youth and Children Directorate).
S4 Testimonial Co-Founder and Co-Director from Raising Voices, Uganda.
S5 UNGEI (2019) *Ending school-related gender-based violence: A series of thematic briefs* – Brief 1 see pp. 2, 3, 7 and acknowledgements).
S6 Apolitical (2019) *Field Guide to Safer Schools*, module on How to fight sexual violence in schools (section on Change Agents).
S7 UNGEI *A whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence: Minimum standards and monitoring framework* (p.6).
S8 Testimonial Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Manager, Girls' Education Challenge.
S9 UNESCO Gender Review (2018) (p. 37).
S10 Testimonial Senior Statistician and Policy Analyst, Lead Gender Specialist, Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report), UNESCO.