

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: [The Education University of Hong Kong]

Unit of Assessment (UoA): [41 Education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)]

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: [82]

(1) Context

[The key non-academic user groups and beneficiaries of research by the 94 staff (1 Sept 2019) in the Education UoA are: (i) students from the early years to tertiary level, particularly those with special education needs (SEN); (ii) practitioners and leaders in education, counselling and speech therapy; (iii) parents and families; and (iv) the providers of educational, social welfare, community and health services. Our research generates five main types of impact on (i) practitioners; (ii) communities; (iii) technical resources; (iv) education policy; and (v) community attitudes and values.

Our impact strategy is developed by the Faculty of Education and Human Development's Research and Higher Degrees Committee. It is implemented through four interdisciplinary Research Themes (Special Needs Education and Inclusive Environments; Children, Learning and Development; Curriculum, Learning and Assessment; and Policy, Leadership and the Social Contexts of Education); two University-level Research Centres (Assessment Research Centre; Joseph Lau Luen Hung Charitable Trust Asia Pacific Centre for Leadership and Change); three faculty-level Centres (Integrated Wellbeing; Child and Family Science; and Educational and Developmental Sciences) and two Research Groups or emerging research centres (Positive Psychology in Education, and Diversity, Equity and Social Inclusion), and the UNESCO Chair in Regional Education Development and Lifelong Learning.

Our impact focuses on two areas: **1.1 Changing policy to improve education quality and equity.** For example, the Special Needs Education and Inclusive Environments Research Theme has implemented a consistent programme of research over three decades that has directly benefited the 45,000 SEN students in Hong Kong schools. It has exposed the stigmatisation and policy neglect of SEN students and addressed this problem by changing community attitudes, advocacy, and policy advice that has been adopted by the Legislative Council, endorsed by the Chief Executive in the annual Policy Address (2015, 2018). It led to the appointment of SEN Coordinators in all Education Bureau schools, the reassignment of onsite rehabilitation services to professional NGOs, and an increase in service places for SEN students from 3000 to 7000 by 2019.

1.2 Developing knowledge, interventions and resources that improve the learning and well-being of young people and support their families and the work of practitioners in education and community services. For example, the Assessment Research Centre conducts analyses of large, complex datasets. It led international experimental research by a team from Poland, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Serbia, Zimbabwe, USA, Singapore, Lithuania, Taiwan and China that validated the effectiveness of short breaks using web-based games to stimulate concentration and learning in classrooms. This work contributed to international research that impacted on practitioners and benefited students through the development of a global company Brain Breaks® endorsed by UNICEF and the Foundation for Global Community Health, and adopted by teachers and schools around the world, as evidenced by 2,694 books (WorldCat), 39,600,000 websites and 338,000,000 references (Google) on using the concept of brain breaks for teaching and learning (27 Sept 2019).

Impact by the Integrated Centre for Wellbeing and Centre for Child and Family Science, in contrast, includes the development interventions using gaming (technical resources) that enable teachers to improve the student learning and wellbeing, thereby supporting their parents and families. Illustrative is research by *Poon* that identified links between executive function (cognitive skills), poor reading, lower socioeconomic status and delinquency. She developed an on-line training game in task-switching to boost working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control, helps children in poverty achieve their goals by taking control of their thoughts and actions. The intervention has proven effective even after 12 months, and the quality of its impact internationally recognised with a Silver medal at the elite Silicon Valley International Intervention Festival (2019).

(2) Approach to impact

The approach to impact in the Education UoA focuses on building and sustaining an institutional culture of impact-oriented research through our support strategies, structures and mechanisms. Our approach has been achieved using three strategies:

2.1 Strong research collaborations and partnerships with key constituencies. Collaborations and partnerships with key stakeholders are embedded at the onset of our research, with 43.9% of our external research income during the RAE period coming from non-government sources (i.e., not-for-profit, charitable and international agencies) compared with 11% for the university sector in Hong Kong (RGC, 2019:17). Our researchers partner with a diverse range of *local agencies* (e.g., Equal Opportunities Commission, Hong Kong Kindergarten Association) and *non-government organisations* (e.g., Hong Kong Jockey Club, Tin Ka Ping Foundation, YWCA, Oxfam), as well as *international* (e.g., International Baccalaureate, British Council, The Head Foundation) and *supranational organisations* (e.g., Asia Development Bank, World Bank, UNESCO). These relationships shape the agenda and character of our research and the work of our research partners.

Our partnerships are based on long-term relationships with impact that extends beyond the initial collaboration and cascades through our researchers' professional networks and those of our partners, thereby ensuring sustained, long-term impact. For example:

- (i) **Cheng's** 10-year collaboration with 60 Hong Kong schools (3,000 teachers, 42,000 students) resulted in the empirically-based 'Normative Knowledge Management Model' which matches teachers' capacities with school development planning to identify teachers' and principals' professional learning needs. E-learning tools and a training programme have been co-created for school staff and the model has been adopted by three education systems in three countries (Taiwan, Japan and Hungary).
- (ii) **Adamson's** 30-year partnership with teachers in China through his work with the Ministry of Education and local academics at Congqing, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia Agricultural, Nottingham Ningbo, Southwest, Yanbian, Yunnan Normal universities and The Qinghai University for Minorities has improved English language education in low-resource, trilingual schools in ethnic minority areas. This partnership has resulted in the co-creation of an innovative teacher professional development programme using student-centred learning rather than teacher-driven instruction and used this to train over 4,000 teachers across China, benefiting 800,000 students in the provinces of Yunnan, Qinghai and Jilin.
- (iii) **Leung's** partnership with the Heep Hong Society in Hong Kong has resulted in the translation of his research on executive functioning into an Augmented-Reality, play-based learning app to help children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) improve their planning, organising and completing tasks. This has changed professional practice by enabling teachers to track students' progress in 'real-time', and is being used with 234 SEN students in 15 Heep Hong Society schools. Its significance and impact have been internationally recognised (Silver award, 2018, International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva), and the University is in negotiation with AESIR (Top 12 Social Enterprise Company, Asia) to develop the app in Putonghua for the global Chinese market.

2.2 Taking research impact into public arenas. Grassroots engagement to transfer knowledge to end-user communities is a key part of our impact strategy. In the RAE period, we hosted 69 conferences, 22 symposia and 647 seminars and workshops of which many were in collaboration with external stakeholders. For example, since 2014 we have partnered with Autism Hong Kong and the Education Bureau to host the city's annual 'Autism Conference' at EdUHK, enabling up to 300 teachers from the 60 Special Schools per year to engage directly with our research while also fulfilling their annual professional learning requirements.

So that our impact reaches multiple public arenas, it is translated into Chinese and English and circulated in multiple forms (e.g., newsletters, research 'snapshots', policy briefs). To increase public engagement, our online dissemination (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) has been intensified and WeChat and Weibo is used to extend the reach to user-groups in mainland China. The

Centre for Child and Family Science (CCFS) Facebook page demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy, attracting 10,987 followers (since July 2016). Our researchers also actively contribute to building public understandings of educational and wellbeing issues. Supported by the faculty's Media Unit, researchers have disseminated their expertise through more than 30 different media outlets (newspapers, radio, TV) on topics ranging from the development of children's learning (*Lee*), the state of the teaching profession (*Cheng*), the effect of examinations on student and parents' wellbeing (*Lau*), to sexuality education (*Kwok*) and life-long learning (*Tam*).

2.3 Formal mechanisms to build and sustain an impact culture. The University has made knowledge transfer and impact a required component for contract renewal and promotion. Two of the four overarching goals in the Faculty Research Plan (2016-18; 2018-22) relate directly to impact: i) to forge local, regional and international research partnerships; and ii) to extend the significance, reach and impact of our research. The Faculty Research and Higher Degrees Committee ensures that our priority on impact cascades into all faculty operations.

The Faculty has allocated resources to build a research environment that supports impact, including the: i) appointment of a full-time Senior Research Impact Officer to collate and analyse impact data; ii) establishment of an online repository of impact tools, indicators and case studies to support staff; iii) on-call access to 'Impact Pathway Funds' to support impact initiatives; and the iv) recognition of outstanding impact through the annual 'Dean's Engagement and Impact Prize'.

Mentoring and building capacity are central to our approach. Our four professorial 'Impact Champions' (*Chiu, Halse, Lee, Lim*) mentor staff to integrate impact into their research from the development of collaborative partnerships to knowledge translation. We develop impact skills and intelligence through training workshops delivered by non-academic partners and by local and visiting professors, such as an 'Impact Q & A', a seminar by the Associate Dean (Research) following a faculty-funded study tour of high-impact UK universities, attended by 120 staff and research students.

(3) Strategy and plans

Building and sustaining a culture of impact-oriented research will continue to be our priority through three new major initiatives approved by the Faculty Research and Higher Degrees Committee for implementation in 2019/2020: i) **Dean's Advisory Committee** to strengthen research partnerships with key research stakeholders such as the Education Bureau, school systems and the Hong Kong Kindergarten Association; ii) **Research Impact Clusters** to work with stakeholders to address significant research problems and translate the findings into actionable benefits, including resources to improve learning and professional practice; and to invest in a iii) **Centralized data management platform** for long-term collection, analysis and tracking of impact quality and reach.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Each case study represents a cumulative programme of research at EdUHK which has been supported by the University and Faculty funds, and our research impact infrastructure. Each case study addresses our priorities on learning, professional practice and/or policy, and was conducted in the vital, supportive research environment provided by our Research Themes, Centres and Groups. Collectively these cases illustrate that the reach of our impact ranges from the early years in Hong Kong (*Yuen*) to post-secondary education (*Lim, Pavlova*) across the Asian region. It focuses on research that benefits diverse populations, including students (*Lim*), parents (*Lam and Lau*), socio-economically disadvantaged families (*Yuen*); and key education sectors (*Pavlova*). Each case study demonstrates our deep engagement with our user communities, ranging from parents, students and teachers (*Lam and Lau, Lim, Yuen*) to advocacy groups, professional associations, policy makers (*Yuen, Lam and Lau*), tertiary providers and international agencies (*Pavlova*), in particular our close engagement with regional and international stakeholders (*Pavlova, Lim*).