**Educational Research at BU: UoA position paper – draft 2**

Julian McDougall, Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, May 2014.

This second draft is informed by the response to the paper at the CEL steering committee and the CEL Thought Piece circulated by Gail Thomas on 14.5. The main adjustments are:

* Inclusion of further detail / refinements to previous detail in the audit list
* Adjustment of proposed themes in response to the above

This position paper is in 4 parts – (1) a summary of the criteria for REF 2014 UoA 25 (Education), (2) an audit of the current position across BU, (3) an overview of categories of education research centres across the sector with contrasting likely strategies for REF submission for UoA 25 and (4) a provisional strategy for a BU submission to UoA 25 for the next REF (or equivalent).

**(1) UoA 25: Education (see appendix for panel membership)**

**Descriptor:** Research in education is multi-disciplinary and is closely related to a range of other disciplines with which it shares common interests, methods and approaches. This diversity of content and methodology requires the sub-panel to be flexible in setting out the boundaries of work relevant to the REF.

The UOA may be broadly described as being concerned with research in the areas identified in the following illustrative lists:

* + - Research which addresses education systems, issues, processes, provision and outcomes in relation to sectors, **such as**: early years, primary, secondary, further, higher, medical, workplace, adult and continuing education. It also includes teacher, healthcare and other forms of professional education, vocational training; and informal, community and lifelong learning.
    - Research which addresses substantive areas, **such as**: curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, language, teaching and learning; children, young people, student and adult learners; parents, families and communities; culture, economy and society; teacher training, professionalism and continuing professional development (CPD); special and inclusive education; participation, rights and equity issues; technology-enhanced learning; education policy; the organisation, governance, management, effectiveness and improvement of educational institutions; education, training, workplaces, industry and the labour market; comparative, international and development education.
    - Research which employs a range of theoretical frameworks and methodologies drawn from disciplinary traditions, **including, but not limited to**: anthropology, applied linguistics, economics, geography, history, humanities, mathematics, statistics, philosophy, political science, psychology, science and sociology. Research in the field of education deploys a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies with structured, exploratory and participatory research designs. These **include, but are not limited to**: surveys, experiments and controlled trials; ethnography, interview and narrative enquiry; action research and case study; evaluation research; critical theory and documentary analysis; analytic synthesis and systematic review.

*The sub-panel welcomes submissions in pedagogical research in higher education and in professional education (including healthcare), while recognising that such work may instead be submitted in another relevant UOA.* *The sub-panel will consider submissions in counselling and neuroscience where this work has an educational orientation. However, submissions in these areas may be referred to another sub-panel for advice.*

**(2) Audit of educational research at BU:**

There was a very positive response to the call for inclusion in an educational research group, showing an appetite in the institution to pool research activity, foster support and collaboration and focus thematically and methodologically in order to produce a REF strategy ‘narrative’ to work to. An audit was conducted by invitation and existing educational research at BU was grouped here by school, by theme and methodology (where indicated), by the scale / nature of outputs. Additionally, a significant number of researchers appear to be REF-applicable in a ‘primary’ UoA. These colleagues would need to make a strategic choice whether to focus their work more on education or a core discipline or attempt to cover both.

**(3) Review of educational research centres**

The following represent a range of contrasting structures and REF narratives / thematic strategies:

**Wolverhampton University (CeDARE):** <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=25622>

ITE across all sectors = Teach First etc. Ed D + MA Education. Four research themes, core focus on post compulsory, educational leadership, technology. Applied research methodologies. Professors and Readers in Education + Fellows + Education SL / PL staff. Emphasis on externally funded research projects with impact on policy, qualifications and professional practice. Scale is v different to BU but focus on CPD and professional practice could be similar?

**Institute of Education** – <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research.html>

Highest ranked research centre for education (RAE), 30 educational research centres, range of ITE, MA, Doctoral and CPD provision. Now merging with UCL. Niche research centres (eg Knowledge Lab - <http://www.lkl.ac.uk/cms/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1> and collaborative DaRE intitative - http://darecollaborative.net/could be a model?).

*NB - CEMP have links with knowledge lab and DaRE.*

**University of the Arts, London** [**http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/research-impact/**](http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/research-impact/)

In some respects similar in that lots of arts educational research takes place but they do not appear to have an educational research centre presently. *NB- CEMP Visiting Professor Susan Orr is Dean on Teaching and Learning – could be opportunity for cross-institutional collaboration?*

**Leicester University** – <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/education/research>

Russell Group, established, world class reputation. Several research groups, covering diverse themes – possible due to scale. All sectors covered with ITE, PG and Doctoral provision. Substantial funded projects with impact on policy and practice.

**University of Hull -** [**http://www2.hull.ac.uk/education/research1.aspx**](http://www2.hull.ac.uk/education/research1.aspx)

Three research themes, similar in profiles to our interests potentially – technology, professional practice. All areas covered with ITE, PG and Doctoral.

**Southampton University** - <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/education/research/centres.page>?

Large scale, 4 research centres, 1 discipline based (Maths and Science). Emphasis on major funded projects + research environment for doctoral students. All areas covered with ITE, PG and Doctoral / Ed D.

**Sheffield University** [**http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/research**](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/research)

Large scale, world class reputation, high impact. Four research centres, covering diverse areas (early years, HE educational reseach, literacy research, professional enquiry). All areas covered with ITE, PG and Doctoral + large Ed D programme with multiple strands.

NB – Julian has visiting role here, links with the literacy research centre and teaches on Ed D.

**Exeter University** - <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/>

Five distinct but interdisciplinary research centres – writing, HE, STEM, SEN, thinking & dialogue. All areas covered with ITE, PG and Doc / Ed D.

Summary – this review suggests a submission to UoA 25 from a University with no ITE provision, one Ed D & one MA course in Education (both in CEMP) and a small number of specifically education-based PHD students (also in CEMP and also in HSC?) would be an exceptional approach. Crucially, each of these schools of education has multiple research centres or themes and these are quite distinct in each institution to the equivalent of CEL. Each University *also* has a centre or institute for learning / teaching and learning / learning enhancement or another variant on this theme, with a remit for PG Cert, HEA affiliation and good practice sharing / other accreditation. These are quite separate, and sometimes at odds, with educational research centres who tend to face outwards – to ITE and research with impact externally on policy and practice. This is very important with REF in mind because **only external impact is valued** in that context. Therefore growing an educational research group with REF-able outputs from within CEL and without a School of Ed or any ITE would be a rare if not unique approach, but for reasons outlined next this is still a viable strategy.

**(4) Proposal for BU strategy – for discussion**

Despite the summary above, it would seem to be the case that, unless the political strategy of locating ITE in schools is reversed with a change of Government, the above may prove to be a review of the final stage of ITE- driven schools of education in English Universities. If this is the case, then an education submission to REF from a niche research group in a University with no ITE provision would be far less exceptional than currently. As long as **externally ‘impactful’ research** is emphasized, separately from internal accreditation and good practice dissemination, there is clear potential for BU to move in this area.

As CPD is thus highly likely to replace ITE as the ‘core business’ of University schools / centres of education, BU can easily occupy a space in this arena providing we **a) operate within a clear strategy for educational *research* – with impact** – as distinct from the dissemination of practice without research methodology or outputs and b) **identify related research themes around which we can build a narrative** and c) **build external networks** (regional and / or national) in the place of the traditional ITE-generated model.

Firstly, it is essential that BU includes education as a new research theme.

Within that, from this audit of current work and the responses from CEL, our two sub-themes for the REF narrative should be:

**Inter-Professional enquiry**

**Fused learning**

Within and between these, there would need to be a coherent approach to methodology and interdisciplinary research, preferably with one or two methodologies emerging as ‘core’ – for example, narrative enquiry for practitioner research, digital ethnographies for blended pedagogy, socio-cultural approaches to case study.

Key elements of BU strategy that this research would further are:

* Learning together, cross disciplines
* Andragogy- treating students as equals/ adults
* Co-creation and co-production: learning together and creating together
* Developing people- adding value, maximising potential, changing people’s lives
* Knowledge, skills and values for the workplace

Building a research strategy around these must be outward-facing. Education UoA criteria do not validate internal development work as having impact so there must be peer reviewed international outputs along with planned outreach. This should include the development of a more generic approach to Ed D and MA Education, with a significant increase in external students from local schools / FE and other HEIs.

Whilst the CEL responses to the paper have largely favoured research into andragogy / adult learning, I would strongly advise a more open strategy – as the two proposed sub-themes allow – so as to include the work of researchers who are working with both FE/HE and school practitioners – as is the case in CEMP, for example.

Appendix – UoA 25 Panel membership 2014

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| **Sub-panel 25: Education** | |  | | |
| **Chair** |  | |  |
| Professor Andrew Pollard | Institute of Education, University of London | |  |
| **Deputy chairs** |  | |  |
| Professor John Leach | Sheffield Hallam University | |  |
| **Member** |  | |  |
| Professor Paul Connolly | Queen's University Belfast | | Joined Jul 2013 |
| Professor James Conroy | University of Glasgow | |  |
| Professor Julian Elliott | Durham University | |  |
| Professor Becky Francis | King’s College London | |  |
| Professor John Furlong | University of Oxford | |  |
| Professor John Gardner | University of Stirling | | Changed Inst Mar 2013 |
| Mr Tom Hamilton | General Teaching Council for Scotland | |  |
| Professor David James | Cardiff University | | Changed Inst Mar 2013 |
| Professor Anthony Kelly | University of Southampton | |  |
| Professor Uvanney Maylor | University of Bedfordshire | |  |
| Professor Trisha Maynard | Canterbury Christ Church University | |  |
| Professor Debra Myhill | University of Exeter | |  |
| Professor Cathy Nutbrown | University of Sheffield | | Joined Oct 2013 |
| Professor Sally Power | Cardiff University | |  |
| Professor David Raffe | University of Edinburgh | |  |
| Professor Diane Reay | University of Cambridge | |  |
| Professor Charlotte Rees | University of Dundee | |  |
| Professor Jane Seale | University of Exeter | | Changed Inst Mar 2013 |
| Mr Richard Thurston | The Welsh Government | |  |
| Professor Malcolm Tight | Lancaster University | |  |
| **Assessors** |  | |  |
| Professor Mike Baynham | University of Leeds | | Joined Aug 2013 Joint with SP28 |
| Dr Alison Girdwood | Department for International Development | | Joined Aug 2013 |
| Professor Harvey Goldstein | University of Bristol | | Joined Dec 2012 |
| Dr Richard Hickman | University of Cambridge | | Joined Jun 2013 |
| Dr Mary Hickson | Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust | | Joined Aug 2013 Joint with SP26 |
| Ms Sheila Kearney | Education and Training Foundation | | Joined Jul 2013 Changed Org Sep 2013 |
| Mr Antony Luby | Association Chartered Teachers Scotland | | Joined Jun 2013 |
| Professor Jane Martin | University of Birmingham | | Joined Oct 2012 |
| Professor Judy Sebba | University of Oxford | |  |
| Ms Teresa Smart | Institute of Education, University of London | | Joined Jun 2013 |
| Professor Richard Smith | Durham University | | Joined Jun 2013 |
| Mr Chris Taylor | Quality Assurance Agency | | Joined Jun 2013 |
| Professor Li Wei | Birkbeck College, University of London | | Joined Oct 2012 |