

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

School of
Education



School of Education Research Newsletter

December 2024

The vibrancy of our contribution to education through research shines brightly in our second School of Education Research Newsletter. One of our key priorities is to submit an account of our collective efforts to the Research Excellence Framework in late 2028. An accumulating narrative is being written behind the scenes based on the breadth of the work everyone is currently engaged in, and this newsletter is a testament to the multiple ways the School is shaping and influencing thinking, policy and practice. I'm really grateful for the willingness of colleagues to respond to periodic calls to report on conferences, publications and research work being undertaken – this newsletter in part represents what's going on and, more importantly, how we are collectively making a difference.



Prof Stephen Parker
Subject Lead Research, Education

Centre for Research into Education of Marginalised Children and Young Adults (CREMCYA)



In this edition of the School of Education Research Newsletter, CREMCYA shares a particular focus on the challenges and joys of applying for funding for research projects.

Ongoing research

- Together with the Centre for Wellbeing in Education (CWE), funded work with The Mercers' Company continues as part of the 2023-2028 project around Mental Health and Wellbeing. CREMCYA's specific focus is on interventions with community groups.
- The funded Waites/Porticus work around school exclusion networks is complete.
- The funded Rising Tide project, focusing on Delhi's informal settlements with socio-economically deprived families, is complete.
- Dr Shalini Bhorkar is supporting ongoing research in three important areas – SoE work around AI, collaboration with the Mauritius Institute for Education around shadow education, and Professor Sara Spear's research with Swansea University into parental engagement in Catholic schools in England and Wales.



CREMCYA Centre Director, Professor Mike Seal, is engaged in a number of ongoing pieces of work including:



Revolving Doors Lived Experience Voices Project (August 2024-2025)
with its aim to ensure that the voices of people with lived and living experience of drug and alcohol problems are central to government's understanding of how recovery and treatment services are experienced.



A Think Piece
on the role of educational leadership of youth work and schools working collaboratively and innovatively to implement the New Curriculum for Wales.

Research bids

The process of submitting bids for research funding is time-consuming and can be disheartening, but is vital to the School of Education's developing research profile and sustainability.

- The Leveraging the Strengths of those with Lived Experience of ADHD Nuffield bid, with colleagues in Psychology, was unsuccessful; the bid has been re-purposed and submitted to BERA – awaiting outcome.
- CREMCYA is part of a bid around 'pedagogies of discomfort' with University of the West of England, submitted to AdvanceHE's 'Collaborative Development Fund'; while not successful, we are looking at other sources.
- We submitted a bid under the Maudsley Building Brighter Futures fund, focussed around marginalisation, neurodiversity and alternative provision, taking a participatory co-productive approach with Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust. While unsuccessful, we are looking to re-purpose for other funders in the new year.
- We also applied to the Spencer Foundation, exploring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and School Attendance: Educators as Researchers and Knowledge Creators, in partnership with schools, a Black community Group and the PiXL Network, a network for school leaders. While not successful, we are looking to re-purpose this bid in a cross-faculty bid for AHRC funding: Locally Unlocking Culture through Inclusive Access (LUCIA).



We envisage a network bringing together researchers, policy leaders and community members to re-imagine civic engagement and community cohesion through the lens of minoritised communities' cultural expressions and ways of knowing, avoiding deficit models of those communities. Two organizing principles will guide our approach:

Dadirri: An Australian Aboriginal philosophy centred on "deep listening" and "inner quiet." It involves mindfulness, reflection, and a profound connection to self and community. Dadirri-based research listens, witnesses, feels, and empathises with the pain of the Indigenous experience, leading to the co-design of practical models for community healing and empowerment.

Ubuntu: An African concept summarized as "I am because we are," emphasising patience, presence, active listening, and interconnectedness. Rooted in Indigenous knowledge, Ubuntu supports personal and collective healing by promoting resilience, emotional awareness, and cultural reconnection.

Other bids in development include:

Against Criminal Exploitation Network (ACE Network) – A Horizon Europe bid which aims to support police authorities to identify, prevent, and investigate major contemporary and/or emerging criminal activities. Partners: Universities of Dublin, Suffolk and Liverpool, together with HEIs in Poland, Netherlands and Finland.

Tackling everyday violence and building everyday peace: the role of non-formal education (Leverhulme Trust). Potential Partners: Glasgow University (Lead), Chile, Mexico.

Creating safer spaces and building everyday peace: School Engagement (ESRC). Potential Partners: Universities of Glasgow, Wrexham and De Montfort, and Youth Action Northern Ireland.

A project with Sussex University's Institute for Development Studies, working with a teacher development NGO in India.

Supporting bid development

CREMCYA aims to support colleagues to become active researchers, including developing ideas and proposals, conducting research, disseminating and publishing findings and having impact. To these ends we have run briefings and drop-in sessions around the internal UKRI funding and QR funding opportunities; more will follow in the new year.

Course Development

The MA in Education, International Development and Social Justice did not run this year, partly due to challenges with student visas for international students. Positively, we have developed a new pathway – Global and Comparative Education – as part of the MA Education offer. Professor Mike Seal has also been seconded a day a week to help develop the new Degree Apprenticeship in Youth Work.

Events

This year, CREMCYA is focusing on larger events, although consideration is also being given to a new Global Majority Scholars seminar series.

Education: Insights for policy from practice and research 21st January 2025
This is a multi-presenter event with St Mary's colleagues and external presenters at the House of Lords, with a series of poster presentations about research and practice for policy makers and politicians. Attendees will include educators, community-based organisations, charities and special interest groups, members of Parliament and the House of Lords. We have over 40 presenters so far, with many colleagues in the SoE on topics including: Emotionally Informed Learning; Inclusive provision for SEND; Supporting International trainee teacher and early career teachers in Education; An increasing demographic of international physics teachers; Challenges and opportunities; Supporting grieving children and young people in schools; Why British Sign Language should be included in the National Curriculum and Teacher Training Programmes; The Power of children's voices to create a diverse and inclusive curriculum; Sustainable Teacher Education and Perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence from the Classroom.

Reimagining community participation, collaboration and civic engagement March 2025 (TBC)
One day seminar/conference as part of a series entitled 'Higher Education: Participation, Collaboration and Activism', with colleagues at Liverpool John Moores University and Birmingham City University. This community celebration/consultation will inform the development of the LUCIA bid described above. It will also launch the forthcoming Bloomsbury Book 'higher education, community connections and collaborations' (Prof Mike Seal is an editor), with contributions from several authors including a panel from Australia and a keynote from Professor Sinéad Gormally (Professor of Community Development and Youth, Glasgow University).

Refugee Education and St Mary's (title and date TBC)
One day event/celebration as part of the St Mary's 175th anniversary event programme in refugee week. The event, to be held in conjunction with the Bakhita centre and local refugee groups, will be looking at refugee education past and present.

CERRL



CENTRE FOR CATHOLIC
EDUCATION RESEARCH
& RELIGIOUS LITERACY



Centre for Catholic Education, Research and Religious Literacy (CERRRL)

In this edition of the School of Education Research Newsletter, CERRRL colleagues share updates on two important research projects.

Research on the Distinctiveness of Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts

Professor Stephen Parker, Associate Professor Mary Mihovilovic and Dr Jakub Kowalewski

A year-long research project, funded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, has begun in earnest (from October 2024 to September 2025) to explore the distinctiveness of Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs). The particular focus of this project – in what we hope will be a larger body of research on CMATs generally – is the perspectives of CMAT CEOs, their spiritual and professional journeys, their vision for Catholic schooling, and how they might be best accompanied in their role by universities and the Church.

It is widely recognised that Catholic education is entering a momentous phase in its history, presenting unrivalled challenges and opportunities. CATtColl (Catholic Academy Trust Training Collaborative) has repeatedly called for research which aids in understanding the enormous challenges being faced, as colleagues in the school sector move into relatively uncharted territory.

In this first phase of research, CERRL colleagues – Mary Mihovilovic and Stephen Parker, along with the newly appointed Research Fellow, Jakub Kowalewski – will be investigating the south eastern diocesan CMATs only, seeking funding to expand the research into a national perspective as the year progresses. Alongside this, research into the perspectives of others working in CMATs, e.g. directors of spiritual life, will also be undertaken, in order to understand more fully the lived experience of CMAT development

and how such organisations seek to fulfil the mission of the Church in education.

Working closely with the Catholic Education Service and CATtColl, the research team is excited to understand the realities of life for the CMAT professional workforce, as well as the journeys they've taken to get there, what (or who) inspires and sustains them day-to-day. Having a vocation to teach is not unique, but the nature of this vocation and how it is lived out is an under-explored area that

the team is keen to explore.

In supporting this research, the funding body in this instance, the Sisters of the Holy Cross, are themselves living out their charism and vocation to support research which impacts for the good

in the communities Catholic schools serve. Recognising that CEOs lead in shaping the ethos of Catholic education, the Sisters wished to support research as a sign of their accompaniment of school leaders in their commitment to the children in their care.

Prof. Stephen Parker comments: "One of the things I've learned since becoming Director of CERRL is that there is a volume of goodwill in the Church in support of Catholic education. The willingness of the Sisters to back this research financially is an indicator of this, and we appreciate their commitment to partner with St Mary's University in this regard."

Book Launch

Congratulations to Honorary Professor, David Fincham, on the launch of his new book, published by Don Bosco Publications: *Christian Leadership in Education: Models of Practice*. The book is based on David's own experience as a leader in Catholic secondary schools over thirty years, and his subsequent teaching on the MA in Catholic School Leadership programme at St Mary's University. The book is well worth a read, especially for anyone wanting to explore examples of Christian practice informed by theoretical models of leadership.



Joint Research Project – St Mary's University and the Diocesan Catholic Education Service of Mauritius (SeDEC)

Professor John Lydon and Dr Caroline Healy, with the support of QR Funding, have embarked upon a joint research project with the Diocesan Catholic Education Service of Mauritius. The title of the project is *The impact of the Shepherding Talent programme on the Commitment of Catholic School Leaders in Mauritius to Maintain a Balance Between School Improvement and Catholic Distinctiveness*.

The provenance for this research emerged from the delivery of the Shepherding Programme to a group of 95 middle and senior leaders based in Mauritius. The programme, created by Professor John Lydon, supports teaching professionals who are looking to fulfil leadership roles in Catholic schools. It is also part of the professional knowledge base that forms the Catholic School Leadership: Principles and Practice MA programme. The programme has been delivered across three continents alongside a variety of constituencies based in the UK.

Following the conclusion of the series of five seminars, the Director of SeDEC, Dr Pascal Nadal, agreed that research into the impact of the programme on leaders was essential. This is part of the central quest to maintain a balance between school improvement and Catholic distinctiveness; in essence, an holistic approach. Dr Pascal Nadal felt that the research would be welcomed enthusiastically by school leaders and would generate a considerable degree of reciprocal learning which represents a central principle of the programme.

This proved to be the case with a cadre of leaders responding positively to Dr Nadal's request to take part in an in-depth interview. Discussions ensued and the following structure was agreed upon:

A literature review on the five pillars of the programme

In terms of fieldwork research, a qualitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate, eliciting narrative accounts of impact of the programme in a Mauritian context from up to ten principals and aspiring senior/middle leaders.

The narratives of the ten participants (35,000+ words) will capture appropriately the impact of the 'Shepherding Talent' learning experience on their respective leadership journey in Catholic education. Following the life history project write-up, the narratives will be analysed in the light of the literature reviewed with the assistance of Dr Aruna Ankhiah-Gangadeen, the project research consultant from the Mauritius Institute of Education.

In terms of the Research Excellence Framework, the following outputs are planned:

- The first article will focus on the research topic: The impact of the Shepherding Talent programme on the commitment of Catholic school leaders in Mauritius to maintain a balance between school improvement and Catholic distinctiveness
- The second article will build on the first and will constitute a comparative study of the impact of Shepherding Talent in a UK context in comparison to that in a Mauritian context. This data will be collected following the completion of the first article.
- Subsequent articles could focus on the South African and Ugandan contexts. There is a possibility that such articles could be co-authored by St Mary's and South African/Ugandan academics.



Centre for Wellbeing in Education (CWE)



www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/centre-for-wellbeing-in-education/centre-for-wellbeing-in-education.aspx

In this edition of the School of Education Research Newsletter, **CWE Co-Director, Dr Catherine Carroll**, shares an overview of one of her current research and practice projects.

Supervision in Education

Background

Even in professions where supervision is well established, there is no universally agreed definition of supervision. What does exist are models and frameworks that have been developed within traditions to describe the typical function/s of supervision. Below is a definition influenced by the Inskipp and Proctor (1993)¹ model common to other professions, such as social work:

The empirical research available from primarily small-scale studies using self-reporting data collection methods indicates that supervision is associated with positive benefits for supervisees and their organisations.

For example:

- Professionals report benefits in health and wellbeing including, for example, reduced levels of stress, increased ability to manage work-life balance, feeling re-energised and a greater sense of empowerment in their role.
- Regular supervision can reduce professionals' feelings of isolation and enhance camaraderie and collegiality within staff teams. Professionals appreciate the framework of supervision that facilitates a structured process to explore complex challenges in depth and the time to explore various options and possible next steps.
- Supervision provides the space and support to develop meaningful reflection skills within and beyond formal sessions.
- Participants report building better interactions with students and colleagues, safer practice and developing new approaches that improve their practice.^{2,3,4,5,6,7,8}



Supervision aims to provide a reflective space for a safe, non-judgemental, collaborative and learning dialogue with a trained supervisor that supports the supervisee's practice, development and wellbeing. In so doing it contributes to the development and learning of children and young people.

Footnotes

- 1 Inskipp, F. & Proctor, B. (1993) The Art, Craft and Tasks of Counselling Supervision, Part 1. Making the Most of Supervisors. Twickenham: Cascade Publications.
- 2 Schools in Mind. *Supporting staff wellbeing in schools*. <https://www.annafreud.org/media/7026/3rdanna-freud-booklet-staff-wellbeing-final.pdf>. Anna Freud Centre.
- 3 Reid, H., & Soan, S. (2018). Providing support to senior managers in schools via 'clinical' supervision: a restorative and purposeful professional and personal space. *Professional Development in Education*. ISSN 1941-5257
- 4 Willis, J., & Baines, E. (2018). The perceived benefits and difficulties in introducing and maintaining supervision groups in a SEMH special school. *Educational Review*, 70(3), 259-279.
- 5 Lawrence, N. (2020). Supervision in Education—Healthier Schools For All. *Barnardo's Scotland report on the use of Professional or Reflective Supervision in Education*. https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Supervision%20in%20Education%20-%20Healthier%20Schools%20For%20All%20-%20Executive%20Summary_0.pdf
- 6 Forbes, C. (2021). *Reflective Supervision in Oldham: An Evaluation Report*. <https://oldhamopportunityarea.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Reflective-Supervision-Evaluation-Report.pdf>
- 7 Hurry, J., & Russell, T. (2022). *An evaluation of professional supervision for teachers*. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10153935/1/Final%20report%20Professional%20supervision%20for%20teachers%20-%20Jan%202022.pdf>
- 8 Julings, M., & Cowen, G. (2023) *Evaluation of the School Leader Mental Health and Wellbeing Service Research report*. https://www.yorkconsulting.co.uk/uploads/pdfs/Evaluation_of_the_School_Leader_Mental_Health_and_Wellbeing_Service_Oct_23.pdf
- 9 Department for Education (2023) Early years foundation stage statutory framework https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1170108/EYFS_framework_from_September_2023.pdf

Current supervision context in England

English education has no formal tradition of supervision for educators. It is not, for example, embedded in the Teachers' Standards or teacher development programmes. Apart from early years professionals,⁹ supervision is not a requirement of the teaching profession. Nevertheless, Educational Psychologists (EPs) have a long tradition of providing professional and/or reflective supervision to educators, with arrangements agreed at an individual school, multi-academy trust (MAT) or local authority level. More recently, professionals from different professional backgrounds, such as counsellors, psychotherapists and play therapists are providing supervision in education settings.

To date, there has been no national guidance as to what 'good supervision' looks like in education settings and what minimum level of qualifications and training is required of a professional who offers and delivers supervision in the EYFS, schools and colleges. Moreover, few training routes are open to educators (without retraining as a counsellor/therapist) to gain a recognised qualification in supervision.

Supervision in Education Network

Aware of the growth in supervision, but also the lack of national guidance as to what 'good supervision' looks like in education settings and what minimum levels of qualifications and training required of supervision professionals in schools, Dr Catherine Carroll, set up (with Emeritus Professor Gill Brackenbury at UCL) the Supervision in Education (SIE) Network in September 2022.

The purpose of the network is to bring together the range of professionals from EYS, schools, universities, charities and independent practice concerned with supervision in education, to share and develop supervision practice and undertake research in the field. The network is open to all professionals with an interest in supervision.

Supervision in Education Quality Standards Framework – Department for Education

In March 2024, the DfE commissioned St Mary's University and UCL to lead a representative group from the SIE Network to write the Supervision in Education Quality Standards Framework (in publication).

The Framework provides an ambitious vision for supervision in education. It has been produced to: support commissioners of supervision, such as headteachers, and professionals who receive supervision, understand what good supervision might look like in their setting; provide supervisors in education with a shared understanding of the knowledge, understanding and skills required of the role and inform training providers about the content and delivery of courses in supervision in education.

The Framework provides guidance on the following:

- Quality Standards for supervision in education
- Knowledge and Competences Framework for supervisors in education
- Qualification and training pathways for supervisors in education
- Register of Approved Supervisors and Supervision in Education course
- Professional Conduct Procedures to respond to and manage supervision complaints.

Post Graduate Certificate in Supervision in Education – September 2025

As part of the MA Education offer, a new PG Cert in Supervision in Education will be offered at St Mary's from September 2025. The course will provide a route to qualification for educators, that will meet the requirements of the national Framework, to practise as supervisors in education settings.

And, in other news ...

CWE Webinar on Farm-based Education – September 2024

Honorary Research Fellow, Dr Matt Williams, led an engaging and informative webinar with more than 60 participants as a result of his research into farm-based education. Matt's related blog is available here: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/centre-for-wellbeing-in-education/cultivating-connections.aspx>

European Grief Conference, Dublin 11th-13th November 2024

Professor Anna Lise Gordon presented her research on bereavement awareness training in ITE, including being interviewed live on Ireland's main Drive Time radio programme: www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/centre-for-wellbeing-in-education/bereavement-in-schools.aspx



The conference blew me away, broadening perspectives on bereavement beyond education into so many new areas – coping with grief in refugee camps, supporting children in hospice care, grief retreats, navigating grief in context of involuntary childlessness, conversations about death and dying as part of training for medical school students, gendering grief, and links between grieving and tattoo art, to name just a few. I have now established connections with researchers across Europe working in the field of bereavement and education. Let me know if you'd like to be involved!"



Spotlight on British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference September 2024



The School of Education was well represented at the largest BERA (and WERA focal meeting) conference yet, which hosted over 2,000 delegates to celebrate 50 years of educational research. Sixteen colleagues delivered ten presentations and workshops over the four days in Manchester, contributing to a broad range of topics as evidenced below.

- Sam Lovatt and Associate Professor Mark Price: Perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence from the Classroom: Opinions from students, staff and the impact for future practice.
- Jemima Davey and Associate Professor Jane Chambers: A research informed approach to the professional identity formation of primary school-based teacher educators.
- Associate Professor Mary Mihovilovic and Jamie Ribolla: Headteachers' Post-pandemic Reflections: 'Where is our support?'
- Professor Stephen Parker: Reforming Catechesis: towards an appraisal of the contribution of Canon Francis Drinkwater (1886-1982) to religious education.
- Professor Mike Seal and Dr Shalini Bhorkar: Deconstructing the doctorate: Making the doctorate fit for purpose for Widening Participation Students.
- Dr Viki Veale: Lived experience: listening, learning and leading with love.
- Shabana Marshall: Research ethics and normative whiteness: developing an ethics of self-care as a researcher of colour.
- Dr Fin Cullen: Promoting university to the parents of students – Normative Youth transitions and intensification of 'ideal' parenting into HE – with Dr Craig Johnston (UWE).
- Dr Fin Cullen: Contested RSE across inter/national contexts.
- Associate Professor Mark Price, Kerry Assemakis, Gemma Cass, Jemima Davey, Karen Fox, Sam Lovatt and Associate Professor Sophie Wilson: Holding the space: early career researcher-lecturers' learning from conference experience.
- Helen Thouless: Social justice and mathematics teaching in primary schools – with Gwen Ineson, Caroline Hinton, Balbir Kaur, Laura King and Pete Wright.



Associate Professor Mark Price

The School of Education presence at BERA 2024 was even more impressive than previous years. I counted 16 of us. There were highlights every day – not so much from the keynote presentations, but for me, from the parallel sessions and workshops that came thick and fast. From the School of Education, I learned from Viki Veale, Mike Seal, Fin Cullen, Stephen Parker, Jemima Davey and Jane Chambers and hearing of their research was such an insight, privilege and inspiration. Through frustrating scheduling I missed out on sessions led by Shabana Marshall, Helen Thouless, Mary Mihovilovic and Jamie Ribolla, but caught up with some of the buzz that was around for all of us. And then it was just such a joy to share presentations with Kerry Assemakis, Gemma Cass, Jemima Davey, Karen Fox, Sam Lovatt (twice) and Sophie Wilson.

I witnessed again the very fabulous Karen Hanrahan from UCL present her life history work into the experiences of Irish nuns (including her mum) who left religious life. Storying human experience remains for me the most evocative process in my research and Karen's work is so nuanced and vital.

But the jewel I think was the participatory workshop led by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Daisy Pillay, entitled 'Unfolding Academic Identities in Higher Education through Visual Exegesis and Poetic Inquiry'. The experiential ripples and deep creative resonance have stayed with me and will continue to influence my own teaching and research identity, voice and practices for a long time.



Karen Fox

Being able to attend BERA again has been such a privilege. Attending presentations that were related to research allowed me to discover new methodologies and gave me permission to try out new ideas.

One such presentation was 'At the Intersection of Philosophy and Poetic Inquiry'. Presenters shared how they

had woven philosophy and poetry into their research design and approached data collection and analysis in creative and innovative ways.

Another very powerful presentation was given by a group of Secondary children who talked about their involvement in an environmental project with the University of Manchester. Hearing the voices of children as participatory researchers was wonderful as, so often, we hear about research on children rather than with children.

Attending a conference as large as BERA is a daunting but empowering experience. Attending with colleagues helps to cement and grow our research community at St Mary's as well as developing my skills as a researcher and benefit from the wealth and expertise at the conference.

Jemima Davey

Following my first research conference experience at BERA 2023, it was incredible to present individual papers with Jane, Mark and the SoE Early Career Researchers. This was a huge milestone, both for our shared research projects and my personal research journey. The courage it takes to present original research at a conference of this size is not to be underestimated, and I feel fortunate that my first two presentations were alongside such supportive individuals. Both Jane and the ECR network made the experience of presenting so much more special than it would have been had I done it alone. I share below key takeaways from the several presentations I attended during the conference, but the biggest affirmation BERA 2024 provided me with was that research is as much about who you share it with as what you are exploring!

Aligned to the theme of collaboration was Tal Carmi's presentation on co-reflective and transmissive approaches to mentor-mentee interactions. Based on the idea that cooperation promotes effective

reflection and thinking together supports the co-construction of new knowledge and practice, the ideas presented prompted reflection about the way we train new teachers and support experienced teachers in developing mentoring dynamics that will best help trainees to learn. Nicky Dulfer's paper echoed these ideas and asserted the place of collaboration in promoting teacher agency, safety and professional trust through a co-mentoring approach to teacher education. In support of the previous presentations, Jacklyn Barry and Jan Georgeson highlighted the relational nature of mentoring and the need to remove the isolation of the role through professional learning and dialogue. Not only has this affirmed our evolving approach to mentor training at St Mary's, but I feel the above will continue to shape the way we prepare new teachers and promote the empowerment and autonomy of experienced practitioners in a landscape of regulation and increasing professional demands. Many other presentations followed and the combination of all the speakers left me feeling more knowledgeable of, and more empowered to engage in, the current ITE research landscape. As a result, I am already greatly anticipating contributing new knowledge and ideas at BERA 2025!

The BERA Conference 2025 is taking place at the University of Sussex between 9th-11th September. Abstracts submissions are welcomed until 31st January 2025 and more information can be found on the BERA website: www.bera.ac.uk/conference/bera-conference-2025.

Spotlight on Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Professor Mike Seal



Engagement and Impact

Engagement and Impact (E&I) counts for 25% of the REF submission. As noted in our previous SoE Research Newsletter, this is where we can shine as we have a profound commitment to engagement and impact through a variety of our activities with the field and the public.

Our approach is multifaceted, involving continuous interaction with diverse stakeholders and the implementation of research findings in practical, impactful ways. **Impact** can be on many levels including Cultural, Academic, Economic, Educational, Environmental, Health, Political, Social and Technological. **Engagement** is involving non-academic stakeholders in the research process. This includes activities such as public lectures, community projects, collaborations with industry, and media engagement.

The important thing is that we have to show *how* we have had an impact. It is not enough to say how many people came to events; the REF panel want to know how this changed or impacted the attendees. There is a big emphasis on changes in policy or practice, and this can be at a local, regional, national or international level. Evidence can be testimonials, statements, emails, etc., demonstrating changes to practice or naming your research or project as having changed a policy, be that in a school or a government.

They also talk about **pathways to impact**, wanting to know how you took a strategic approach to impact (rather than it being random). Essentially, they want to see

Our approach is multifaceted involving continuous interaction with diverse stakeholders and the implementation of research findings

how impact has been built in from the start, with an emphasis on co-production with policy makers, practitioners and the public. The positive thing is that many colleagues are doing this anyway, and where not, people often have ongoing relationships with people, such that we can go back and ask. Going forward it would make sense to collect feedback from any activities you do. We'll have some sessions on this in the new year.

Our submission (not until late 2028) will have two elements: case studies and a wider narrative. **Case studies** demonstrate the tangible benefits of research, how it has positively influenced society, the economy, public policy, the environment, and quality of life. We are likely to have one or two. This counts for up to 50% of the overall submission. The **Wider narrative** captures our collective approach. The case study is a worked example of this.



Actions

Firstly, we have set up a Working party for Engagement and Impact, if you are interested in joining this, please contact Mike Seal (mike.seal@stmarys.ac.uk). To help produce the wider narrative we would like to get a picture of all the other things you are engaged in beyond the academic community, so not academic articles, books, membership of academic networks, or speaking at academic conferences (these go to Professor Stephen Parker) but it does include:

- Engagement with the field (links to schools, trustees, links with subject associations, etc.)
- Public and practice engagement events (including speaking at professional events, this also includes our talk times, talking heads, ECR network events, free CPD events, etc. It can include speaking in schools, etc.)
- Practice publications, podcasts, blogs
- Consultancy and evaluations.

Secondly, we have compiled a draft based on colleagues' outward facing bios on the website, the SoE weekly update and our X social media account. However, we are aware that we might have missed out on many things. Positively, a lot is captured already. Please could you change and add what I have put down or just send what you have done in these categories since Jan 2021? I will eventually try and write a narrative that captures all this excellent work.

Link to document needed: [REF 2029 impact discipline statement education.docx](#)



What does this mean?

All writing is important, but the REF looks at writing in a particular way. The REF rates the writing we do into five starred categories:

- **4*** World-leading;
- **3*** Internationally excellent but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence;
- **2*** Recognised internationally;
- **1*** Recognised nationally, and Unclassified* falls below the standard of nationally recognised work or 'work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.'

The problem with starred ratings is that it can lead to thinking that unless your writing gets a high rating in terms of the REF, it has no validity. This needs to be challenged! Some of your writing might have a different audience in mind or might be an opinion piece. This is fine but, to be a successful academic, some of your writing will need to meet the REF Criteria.

As you can see the difference between a 2* and 3* publication seems small. Positively, it means upping your piece of writing from a 2* to a 3* may not be as hard as you think. The judgement is made against three criteria.

Originality 'The extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field'

This could be in terms of new empirical data, engaging with new and/or complex problems; Developing innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; Showing imaginative and creative scope; Providing new arguments and/or new forms of expression, innovations, interpretations and/or insights; Collecting and engaging with novel types of data or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice and new forms of expression. You need to know the international and worldwide literature and say how you are doing something original. Show there is a gap, and that you are filling it!

Significance 'The extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice'

4* is defined as 'a primary or essential point of reference; a formative influence on the intellectual agenda'. 3*, an important point of reference, contributing very important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence on the intellectual agenda. 2* writing is contributing to incremental and cumulative advances in knowledge and 1* writing provides an identifiable contribution to understanding, but largely framed by existing paradigms or tradition of enquiry. Again, this is really about showing how you fill an international gap and saying why it is likely to be significant. You will get a 2* if you are applying existing ideas to a new context, but higher if you can show how your approach is new, not been done before, and people will want to quote you – no room for modesty here!

Rigour 'The extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies'

Interestingly, this is divided into research design, application or analysis, and separately the significance of the data set or development of a research resource. The grades talk about research design, application or analysis being exceptional (4*) robust (3*), professional and thorough (2*) or competent (1*). Interestingly, only 3* and 4* talk about the data set or research tool, with 4* being exceptional, and 3* substantial. If you are aiming for 3* & 4* in terms of data set, you will need to have a large data set for quantitative and significant spread for qualitative (nationally or internationally). You might think this knocks out small or local scale pieces of research. However, if you have created a significant new way of doing research (e.g. that provides new data or reaches new populations), it could still be a 3* or 4* 'research resource'.

Who judges the writing, how is it judged and does this matter?

If your writing is submitted to REF, then it goes to a national panel of 22 peers (most of whom are professors from old universities). Two to three people will come to a judgement about your piece. There is, however, normally an internal panel that will rate your piece and will

decide which are the outputs to submit that will score the highest. More about this internal process in future issue of the SoE Research Newsletter!

Importantly, people only have around 8-10 minutes to consider each of the outputs and make a judgement on them. This means that you claim for originality, significance and rigour needs to be front and centre, preferably in your abstract, introduction and conclusion Think about how would you judge a piece in that time! Don't be modest, but don't over claim. David James, the Chair of the last panel, said characteristics of a low scoring output were:

- over-claiming of contribution to knowledge; weak location in a field;
- insufficient attention to the justification of samples or case selection;
- under-development of criticality and analytical purchase.

Also, cynically, if your piece is controversial, or very challenging, it may well split a panel with little time to consider it. Perhaps worth publishing the controversial version elsewhere? Ironically, you may get known for the more contested piece, and your work is seen as influential and significant as a result.

Does it matter where I write and what I write?

All the guidance from the REF says that it does not matter where you write, rather it is the quality of the writing that matters. Apparently, for the education Unit of Assessment panel, the author and publication are removed before consideration. If you look at the database of outputs, some professional reports have been scored as 4*. Some internal panels only allow journal articles through, arguing that book chapters and books are not peer reviewed, even though many books nowadays are peer reviewed, sometimes more thoroughly than journal articles.

However, most journals nowadays specifically ask for and judge whether to include an article using the originality, significance and rigour criteria. It is therefore fair to say that if it is a journal article, it will have been peer reviewed in terms of the REF criteria, whereas books and book chapters may not look for this. Similarly, if the writing is published in a highly read or cited journal, a claim for significance is easier to make. Conversely, I often write books, and in the last REF they were externally reviewed as 3* and 4*, mainly because significance and originality were easier to prove. The lesson is, wherever you publish, if it is for the REF, be mindful of the criteria.

Post Graduate Research News

Success stories

Three EdD students successfully defended their thesis in the last few months:

Kate Spurling passed her viva with her research project: *Navigating the use of data through management information systems in secondary schools in England: a case study approach.*

Philip Robinson passed his viva with his project: *Can religious education in Catholic schools be objective, critical and pluralistic? An investigation into the views of Catholic religious education advisers at the frontier of faith and culture.*

Karen Rhys Jones passed her viva on *Physical Literacy: Practitioner and Learner Concurrent Journeys. A Reflective Exploration of Perceptions, Experiences and Resultant Intentions for future Holistic Informed Practice.*

There are a significant number of students in Education submitting their theses in the coming months so it will be a very busy time for them, their supervisors and the examiners. We wish everyone well and look forward to celebrating their success.



Conferences

Presenting your research project at conferences and seminars is a great way to develop your confidence and to receive feedback from the research community. While many students attend conferences, we also have a significant number presenting including:

Rob Campbell: *Using self-study of teacher education practices to explore my understanding of the nature of science and its influence on my teaching on a PGCE science course.* Presented at the Scottish Education Research Association conference on Wednesday, 27th November 2024.

Julie-Anne Tallon: *Opportunities to encounter Christ in a Catholic Primary school and the impact this has on leaders at all levels* The Network for Researchers in Catholic Education Conference, Glasgow University, 24th-25th October 2024.

Elaine Arundell: *Song in Primary RE Pedagogy: Why and how should its neglect be addressed?* AULRE Conference in Birmingham, 20th-21st June 2024.

The creative use of song as a tool for social justice, NCFRCE in Glasgow, 24th-25th October 2024.

Publications

A number of our students have published their presentations from the Pedagogy Sharing Stories: Practice and Research Conference held in June this year. Joint authorship is a valuable way to develop skills as well as share the load of writing so consider any opportunity you get to write with someone else. The following items appear in the *Special Edition of ReflectED: St Mary's Journal of Education* (page 13).

Jeannette Simpson: *Exploring Home Educated Children's Experiences of Learning*

Janine Pavlis and Sam Lovatt: *Exploring the connection between Design and Technology and Computing: Enhancing Learning Opportunities in Primary Education*

Laura Minogue: *Arts-based pedagogy on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice*

Rob Campbell and Nic Tierney: *A conversational journey for professional development through an epistemically insightful lens*

Kelly Smith: Hutt, M., Smith, K., Jones, K. (2024) Professional learning in education: policy and practice in *Wales since devolution*, *Wales Journal of Education*, pp.39-53.

Elaine Arundell: (2024) *The Use of Song in RE and Worship for Spiritual Development and Wellbeing of Pupils Aged 7-11 in Catholic Schools.* *International Studies in Catholic Education.*

Past Students' Successes

Tim Mills (EdD) Was made an MBE for his services to Education and has published his research: Mills T (2024) *Can Older Pupils, Who Do Not Present as Struggling Readers, Improve Their Basic Decoding Skills Through Systematic Phonics Instruction and What Effect Does This Have on Their Reading Fluency and Comprehension?* *International Journal of Teaching and Learning Sciences*

Kevin O'Donnell (PhD) Kev's thesis was published *Language, Love, Alterity and Transcendence as a Model of Julia Kristeva's Dynamic Spirituality* with Ethics Press in October 2024.

ReflectEd Special Issue – Pedagogy

ReflectEd is the School of Education's research webpage area, aimed at encouraging, celebrating and disseminating research, scholarly activity, and exciting pedagogical practice that is in keeping with the School of Education and University mission: www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/areas/education-and-teaching/reflectd/about.aspx.

A special edition of ReflectED emerged from the School of Education's inaugural Pedagogy conference, *Sharing Stories: Practice and Research* (St Mary's University, June 2024). There were so many rich and exciting pedagogic stories being showcased in the applications for presentations, that the organising group saw an opportunity to share them beyond the day and capture the stories in a special edition of ReflectEd. The articles in this edition cover practice and research with most speaking to both aspects of a researching professional's life. After all, what is practice without research and research without practice? Additionally, we have included a specific section on Reflective Practice with papers representing researching professionals across the sectors sharing their journeys of reflecting on aspects of their pedagogy. We hope you enjoy reading this edition. www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/areas/education-and-teaching/reflectd/about.aspx



Pedagogy in Action Blog



The Pedagogy In Action (PIA) blog is written by educators for anyone interested in exploring and celebrating teaching practices in all fields of human activity. We aim to empower educators' professional autonomy by sharing ideas that enhance knowledge, learning and educational practice in an accessible manner. We welcome posts from all educators, whether an Early Career Teacher, experienced classroom practitioner, university lecturer, professional coach or trainer. We also encourage new and less experienced writers who are starting out on their academic publishing journey. If you are interested in writing a blog post for us, or know someone you think may be interested, please contact [Nicola Tierney](#) or [Viki Veale](#).

We have released three PIA blogs via LinkedIn so far:

- In October, Dr Viki Veale prompted us to consider why we need to talk about pedagogy rather than teaching or learning.
- In November, Emma Marfleet, founder of the Marfleet Foundation, shared ideas for how schools can support bereaved children.
- In December, Kerry Assemakis talks about why we need to prepare children to be visually and globally literate.

The PIA blog is published by the Pedagogy Research Special Interest Group to encourage, celebrate and disseminate research, scholarly activity, and exciting pedagogical practice that is in keeping with our mission. This mission is to advance education through continuing reflective practice and professional development in all educational contexts. You can read the PIA blog on LinkedIn (please follow!) [\(21\) Pedagogy in Action: Overview | LinkedIn](#) and it will also be available shortly on the Pedagogy Research webpage.

Profile of a Journal

Dr Fin Cullen shares a profile of a journal: Gender & Education
www.tandfonline.com/journals/cgee20 | Impact Factor 2.0 (2023)



With a growing body of scholars with a keen interest in gender and education, there is both a dedicated journal and academic association linked to focusing on aspects of sex, gender, inequalities and education. *Gender & Education* is a peer reviewed, hybrid open access journal published eight times a year by Taylor & Francis. The journal publishes multi-disciplinary, critical research on gender and education, focusing on feminist knowledge, gendered subjectivity and culture in education globally.

The journal grew out of feminist politics and activism with an explicit social justice agenda. The focus of the journal remains on multi-disciplinary and critical discussions of gender and education and links to feminist knowledge and praxis. Authors interested in submitting an article are expected to engage in feminist debate, to draw upon a range of theoretical frameworks and to go beyond simple descriptions.

Recent special issues have focused on eco feminism and education, gender-based violence in education and indigenous and Black ways of knowing in education.


Aligned with the journal is the Gender and Education Association (GEA) established in 1997. This is a volunteer-led international intersectional feminist charity that is committed to challenging and eradicating gender stereotyping, sexism, and gender inequality within and through education (www.genderandeducation.com). As a membership organisation, members of GEA can gain discounted access to the *Gender & Education* journal with membership.

GEA also hosts regular events with the next Gender & Education conference scheduled for Manchester in 27th-30th May 2025.


Any questions? Dr Fin Cullen was on the editorial board and her articles have been published by the journal over many years.

And finally ...

Invitation
And finally, an opportunity to promote one of our research projects by sharing this information with relevant people in your networks!




Survey invitation –
Supporting young people’s learning



St Mary’s University and Swansea University are conducting a research study into **how parents in Catholic schools in England and Wales support young people’s learning, and how school staff and clergy can support parents and families**. We’d like to invite you to take part in our online surveys of [parents](#), [school staff](#) and [clergy](#) in Catholic schools – please click the link for the relevant survey for you!

We hope the findings will help us keep improving young people’s learning, through schools, families, and the diocese working together.



Sources of Funding for Learning, Teaching and Pedagogy Research projects

Here are some funding opportunities, specifically for research into learning and teaching. Most of the funding sources are the same as for any research, but there are two small pots of funding that are dedicated to exploring pedagogy.

SRHE Society for Research into Higher Education

www.srhe.ac.uk/research

- Usually up to four awards annually of £10,000 each for research focused on any aspect of higher education submitted under three overarching themes: Higher Education Policy; Higher Education and Society; Higher Education Practice.
- Scoping awards annually of £5,000 each for the exploration of any new or emerging area of higher education research leading to the development of a plan for further research.

SEDA Small Grants

www.seda.ac.uk/research/research-and-evaluation-small-grants

- £1,000 for research into educational development practices. Up to a maximum of five grants to be awarded in 2025 (deadline for applications is 25th February), one of which is reserved for a ‘developing researcher’ (with limited track record in pedagogic research), in order to encourage capacity-building.
- All proposals should involve collaboration either within or beyond the institution.



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