The Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC) was inspired by the philosophy and actions of the social reformer, Robert Owen. The Centre was launched in November 2013 with the explicit purpose of researching issues of educational equity and supporting the development of more equitable education systems to improve outcomes for all learners and to promote social justice.

We are now celebrating our second anniversary. Over the past two years, ROC has grown to 19 core members of academic staff. The Centre’s focus on equity and educational change has been organised into six strands of work that reflect our expertise and engagement (view 6 strands webpage).

We lead and participate in research projects at local, national and international levels, and our studies continue to promote both theoretical and empirical dimensions in order to understand and inform policy and practice. Our approach is increasingly interdisciplinary, with collaborations across the social sciences and beyond. Our profile continues to grow through publications and public seminars, and in the coming year we will be hosting international conferences in our areas of expertise.

Some of these are reflected in this bulletin. As ever, it is only a snapshot of our work. If you would like to know more about the Centre, get involved with our work or be placed on our mailing list so you are aware of our events and activities, please do get in touch.

Professor Michele Schweisfurth
Co Director, Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change
November 2015
Dr Gijsbert Stoet has been studying gender differences in school performance and attitudes for a number of years. This is not just an interesting research topic, but it is highly relevant to the agendas of policy makers, with politicians speaking regularly about the aim to attract more girls and women to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects. For instance, recently the Scottish Funding Council held a public consultation about its Gender Action Plan, with one of the main questions being asked: "What can be done to get a more even distribution of male and female students across university study subjects?"

Dr Gijsbert Stoet has published two recent articles about this subject. In one article (Intelligence, vol. 48) he demonstrates that in the majority of the country’s boys in secondary education actually fall behind girls across a range of subjects: science, mathematics, and reading. In the second publication, (New Male Studies, in press), he demonstrated that boys’ performance in GCSEs and A-Levels in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland lags behind girls’ in nearly all school subjects. Of course, this underperformance of boys limits their opportunities, and indeed, in the UK, the gender gap in the numbers of boys and girls enrolling for university grows every year (see hyperlink to The Guardian).

Dr Stoet commented, “What really surprises me is how little attention this problem has received from policy makers. The gap between boys’ performance in reading comprehension tasks is 3x greater than the gap girls show in mathematics tasks (Evidence from Pisa data), yet the latter issue gets far more attention. Equally, there are many programmes and initiatives to promote STEM among girls, but I am not aware of any programmes to promote, for example, psychology among male students. If we are to improve gender balance in subject choice we need not only to encourage girls to choose more traditionally male subjects, but also that males choose more traditionally female subjects.”

In a similar vein, results from a recent study by Accenture showed that 47% of 12-year old girls in the UK and Ireland feel that STEM subjects are more suitable for boys. Dr Stoet’s response (check here for his quotes recently in The Herald and The Scotsman) highlights the fact that it is really difficult to change such attitudes, and that gender differences in occupational interests are relatively large and fairly stable over time. He argues that to ensure that school girls have a better opportunity to make well-informed decisions about STEM subjects, these subjects should be made compulsory for all pupils throughout secondary education. Dr Stoet added, “This would require an overhaul of the way secondary education is organised in the UK. If we need to make space for the compulsory STEM subjects, other choices children can currently make would have to be more limited. I cannot imagine that educational policy makers would agree on such a drastic change in the system any time soon. At some point, though, tough choices about the organisation of our secondary education system will need to be made, especially given that so many other countries are well ahead of the UK in overall student achievement.” (see hyperlink “Pisa test comparisons”)

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Expenditure impacts of Higher Education Institutions

Dr Kristinn Hermannsson has analysed how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) directly and indirectly impact local and regional economies through their expenditures. This is the most tangible impact of HEIs which analyses them simply as any other production sector in the economy, treating students like any other group of consumers. This is particularly relevant in a country like Scotland, where the HE sector is disproportionately large and has a large local impact, as HEI expenditures are concentrated geographically but the incomes supporting these activities are dispersed.

Such impact analyses have been around in Scotland for about 50 years; however, Dr Hermannsson and co-researchers have recently revisited established best practice and in the light of improved data availability, have proposed alternative economic models, which better reflect contemporary circumstances such as devolution and varied HEI income sources.

Effect of devolved funding and variable HEI income resources on economic impact of HEI

As the Scottish Government’s funding is largely determined by a Westminster block grant, this binding budget constraint means that any money spent on HE cannot be spent on other public services in Scotland. This results in a displacement of other activities which needs to be considered in a revised economic model.

This revised model of HEI economic impact is outlined in an article in *Regional Studies*, “‘Policy Scepticism’ and the Impact of Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on their Host Region: Accounting for Regional Budget Constraints under Devolution” (See hyperlink doi:10.1080/00343404.2012.697139). This paper explains how to account for the role of funding from devolved governments when estimating the expenditure impact of HEIs.

Additionally, Scottish HEIs have a diverse composition of income sources, which causes a different expenditure impact on the host economy, independent of scale. This is laid out in an article published in the journal *Environment and Planning:* “The expenditure impacts of individual higher education institutions and their students on the Scottish economy under a regional government budget constraint: homogeneity or heterogeneity?” (See hyperlink doi:10.1068/a45233).

A key finding is that HEIs contribute significantly to the Scottish economy, above and beyond simply spending the Scottish Government’s money. This occurs as a large portion of their income is in fact independent of the Scottish block grant. Furthermore, given the high share of wages in education, less is lost on import leakage in HEIs than in public spending on average.

Most recently Hermannsson et al. applied their revised economic modelling to the analysis of the London higher education sector, which is composed of nearly 40 institutions, widely diverse both in terms of their scale and role. The institutions vary greatly in their dependence upon public funding and ability to draw in income/ funding from external sources. Acknowledging the possible alternative uses of the public funding and deriving balanced expenditure multipliers reveals large differences in the net-expenditure impact with the source of variation being the origin of income. This is illustrated in the article recently published in *Studies in Higher Education*, “The expenditure impacts of London’s Higher Education Institutions: the role of diverse income sources.” (See hyperlink http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.899338).

A key finding is that the institutional multiplier is driven by the ability to attract external funding, which would typically favour research-intensive institutions. However, the impacts of students’ consumption expenditures are also very important. Therefore it is not just the high-prestige institutions that drive a local economic impact, there is also much greater economic activity associated with teaching intensive institutions.

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Adult Skills Formation and Utilisation in Spain: Comparative Evidence from PIAAC

The project involved five independent analyses of the statistical data from the first round of the Survey of Adult Skills of the OECD (PIAAC) for Spain, which have been published as a collective book available on paper and digital copy from the foundation website: www.fbofill.cat/sites/default/files/Elsreptesenmateria_83_POL_281015.pdf

PIAAC assesses the proficiency of adults in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. These skills are “key information-processing competencies” that are relevant to adults in many social contexts and work situations, and necessary for fully integrating and participating in the labour market, education and training, and social and civic life. The first round of PIAAC assessed around 166,000 adults aged 16-65 in 22 OECD member countries and collected information on how skills are used at home, in the workplace and in the community; how these skills are developed, maintained and lost over a lifetime; and how these skills are related to labour market participation, salaries and income in participating countries.

Our analysis of PIAAC data for Spain produced evidence on the relationship between educational attainment and skills achievement among young adults, the determinants of adult skills, the effect of education and skills on the probability of being (un)employed, wage premiums associated with education, and the level of skills (mis)utilisation in the workplace.

Key findings include:

- The skills gap between young adults in Spain and young adults in OECD countries is due to the higher levels of early school leaving and low attainment rates in upper secondary education.
- More than 40% of adults (35-64 years old) in Spain participated in education and/or training activities during the last 12 months but their participation in these activities had only a small effect on their actual level of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are strong determinants of the probability of being unemployed in Spain, where 38% of the low-skilled adults are unemployed versus 17% unemployed among the high-skilled population.
- Even in the context of severe economic recession, education shows high economic returns for individuals in the Spanish labour market, with 6.8% of wage premium associated with an additional year of schooling.

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Systemic Curriculum Change in Wales

The 1988 National Curriculum (HMSO 1988), covering Wales, England and Northern Ireland, established a statutory entitlement for all children to experience a curriculum consisting of specified subjects together with defined programmes of study in each subject. In the period following the creation of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, there was an increasing focus on the extent to which Welsh education should be distinct from that in England. The place of Welsh language and culture was a particular concern but there were also wider issues about how far arrangements developed for a country the size of England should automatically apply in Wales with its own distinctive culture and characteristics. Concerns about the relative performance of Welsh pupils in international surveys such as PISA were also fuelling calls for action on educational standards more generally.

By 2015, the Welsh Government saw the need for systemic educational reform and followed up developments in improvement and accountability with far-reaching separate reviews of curriculum and assessment arrangements and teacher training. The curriculum review was asked to ‘take a fundamental look at the ways in which today’s schools can prepare young people for an exciting but uncertain future’ (Donaldson 2015). Following its acceptance of the 68 recommendations in the review report, (Successful Futures, Donaldson 2015) and a parallel report on initial teacher education (Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers, Furlong 2015), the Welsh Government has established a systemic development structure (A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life, Welsh Government 2015) covering curriculum, assessment, teacher education, leadership and accountability. A single ‘Change Board’ will oversee a development process that moves away from previous ‘top-down’ approaches and will work through pioneer schools and extensive stakeholder participation. It aims to have the new system in operation by 2021.

Building on its own experience and that of other countries, Wales has seen the need to work systemically, addressing necessary interrelationships and dependencies. Inevitable pressures, political and professional, will present real challenges for ongoing decision-making. The approach has the potential to harness creativity and test ideas in ways that develop deep understanding of the implications of the change of direction and build a sense of common ownership across the education system. Success will depend in large measure on the quality and consistency of political and professional leadership and on the long-term willingness and capacity of the system to respond.

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Knowledge into Action

In 2014, Education Scotland commissioned researchers from the Robert Owen Centre and researchers from the School of Education at the University of Glasgow to work on a research and development project called ‘Knowledge into Action’, which explored the processes by which knowledge from research and other sources can influence action across the education system in Scotland.

This project involved a literature review and research focusing on four pilot projects with the aim of developing and testing evidence-based models that support the effective translation of knowledge into action within the Scottish education system. This would have a particular focus on building capacity to support Education Scotland’s role as the national improvement agency for education.

The literature review explored four main questions:
• What is knowledge into action?
• What do we know about knowledge into action in education?
• What are some of the challenges associated with knowledge into action?
• What frameworks might help us to understand knowledge into action better?

The limited quantity of literature specifically relating to knowledge into action in education highlights the need for further work in this area. While there is much that can be learned from other sectors, caution is required when using frameworks that are designed for a specific context.

Knowledge into Action in education case studies
The final report combined key themes from the literature and those emerging from four pilot projects in four local authorities (Perth and Kinross, East Dunbartonshire, Midlothian and East Renfrewshire). The University team supported the pilot projects through providing guidance and offering advice regarding conducting their evaluation of the respective projects. The pilots highlighted key factors for success and circumstances that have facilitated and inhibited measures to promote knowledge into action in real life contexts.

Taken together the evidence suggests that the approaches adopted in the project case studies have been largely successful, at least as far as the timescale of their evaluations and the research can demonstrate. While each of the projects had different foci, there are similarities in their objectives and in some of the approaches they have adopted to apply knowledge to inform practice and organise change. A number of features appear important for the success of approaches seeking to mobilise knowledge to influence practice. These include:
• providing sufficient time and opportunities for teachers to reflect on how evidence, knowledge and ideas relate to their own context;
• recognising the value of collaborative partnership working;
• fostering collaboration with others beyond the school;
• working to develop a positive culture regarding the use of evidence and practitioner enquiry;
• acknowledging the complexity of the knowledge into action process;
• and ensuring that practitioners and managers systematically evaluate the impact of their knowledge into action efforts.

Drawing on the combined research findings, the Robert Owen Centre provided a draft model for Knowledge into Action, and made a number of recommendations for Education Scotland, suggesting that they should:
• Develop a strategy that draws the learning from Knowledge into Action and the findings from the School Improvement Partnership Programme into a coherent policy that can support the mobilisation of knowledge into action across the Scottish Attainment Challenge for both the Universal Offer and the Challenge Authorities.
• Encourage the system to learn from ‘what doesn’t work’ as well as focusing on promising initiatives and encouraging examples of practice that look like they may work. This will be key to encouraging a climate of innovation and risk taking which is needed to generate new knowledge as well as moving the ‘best’ and ‘evidence-based’ practice around the system. Such a climate will be necessary to maximise the mobilisation of knowledge into action.

Further information on the research can be found on the attached links:
• Final report
• Literature review and framework for change

Contact: Chris.Chapman@glasgow.ac.uk

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• Final report
• Literature review and framework for change

Contact: Chris.Chapman@glasgow.ac.uk
The recommendations within Teaching Scotland’s Future (2010) foreground the expectation that teachers’ professional learning needs to be at Master’s level, and routes and pathways are being established to fulfill this ambition. The announcement by Scotland’s First Minister outlining the aspiration that all new headteachers will require a taught Master’s degree also signals the commitment to developing an ‘M level’ teaching profession.

To date, many members of Education Scotland’s staff have chosen to undertake further study and pursue significant professional development opportunities to support their professional learning. However, the demanding and intensive nature of inspection has made this a challenge for all colleagues to pursue on a systematic basis. In the past this situation has led to an informal combination of expertise and experience being the strongest form of currency. As we move towards an education system underpinned by formal M level accreditation there is an urgent requirement to ensure Education Scotland staff are acknowledged for their high levels of expertise. This is recognised through formal accreditation to maintain credibility within the system.

Education Scotland M. Phil/PhD (Education System Leadership and Change)

Over the next four years a total of thirty Education Scotland staff will undertake this programme, each engaging in a detailed piece of collaborative research within their own professional setting that will make an original contribution to knowledge that also has clear implications for the development of educational and public policy reform, research and practice. In order to fit with the demands of senior leaders the M.Phil programme will be organized over a minimum of two years part time (five-seven years for those who extended their involvement to doctoral level).

This programme is underpinned by ROC’s core principles including a commitment to supporting the rethinking of roles and relationships within the system, blurring the boundaries between research, policy and practice and adopting a theory-driven applied perspective to public service reform in order to promote a more equitable and socially-just society.

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To this end, the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change has tailored a research-based degree to develop senior leaders’ capacity for critical and analytical thinking, knowledge and understanding about what works and why in education and public service inspection and to enhance their appreciation of the wider theoretical and methodological debates within the social sciences.
A new MSc programme titled Education, Public Policy and Equity: International perspectives, is set to welcome its first cohort of students to the School of Education at the University of Glasgow in the fall of 2016. The programme has been developed within the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change and closely mirrors the Centre’s founding principles. As the title suggests, it is an interdisciplinary programme, which aims to meet the need of education systems worldwide for graduates with a diverse skill set, ready for work at a strategic level.

The design of the programme aims to address the challenges that arise when working on issues relating to education policy. Education is increasingly seen as part of a broader spectrum of public policy issues relating to health, social policy and the economy. It is expected to achieve an ever-wider range of objectives, and policy discourse on education is increasingly international in scope. This is challenging, as although education is a powerful force for equitable social outcomes, it is not omnipotent in its ability to remedy wider social, economic and political developments.

Working in this environment requires individuals with a broad skill-set encompassing analytical and leadership skills, a strong grasp of academic principles, as well as the realities of policy practice. The academic foundations of the programme are drawn from a broad canon of social sciences and students will develop an analytical toolkit based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The primary aim is to prepare graduates for policy practice, with a particular emphasis on the interplay between education and equity and the role of education within a broader public policy mix. Working with issues like equity requires more than analytical abilities. Given its normative nature, it is imperative that graduates have the philosophical grounding and leadership abilities to arrive at a reasoned judgement.

Graduates are expected to pursue careers as analysts, consultants, administrators, policy makers and leaders in the governance of education. Graduates are expected to be in demand with organisations such as local, regional and national governments, international organisations, NGOs and large scale education providers such as school chains or private sector education firms. The programme aims to develop graduates that approach education policy from an international perspective, which is complemented by a thorough understanding of the particular education systems which candidates consider their local context.

The new programme will be formally launched during celebrations of the Robert Owen Centre’s two year anniversary on November 5th.

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Knowledge Exchange links

Events occurring since last e-bulletin, April 2015

Since our last e-bulletin in April we have had held a number of Seminars. This included three lunchtime sessions (largely for Glasgow University staff) but also three well attended evening sessions which were open to the wider public. These included:

- Seminar on “Distributed Leadership: Theory, Principles and Practice”, presented by Professor Jim Spillane, Northwestern University, Chicago (3 September). This was co-hosted by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership
- Seminar on “Effective Teaching”, Professor Daniel Muijs, University of Southampton (16 September)
- Seminar on, “Innovation & Equity: Working Together for Educational Change”, presented by Professor Penny Wohlstetter, Columbia University, New York (23rd of September). This was co-hosted by “What Works Scotland”.

Future Events

Robert Owen Conference 9/10 January 2016
The site of Robert Owen’s original Institute for Formation of Character in New Lanark has now been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site (www.newlanark.org/world-heritage-site). The Institute for the Formation of Character also celebrates the 200th anniversary of its opening in January 2016, and so it is very fitting that the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change invites you to visit, to explore the philosophy of Robert Owen and the legacy of his revolutionary ideas on education and social welfare in Scotland and beyond.

Guest speakers include Professor Andy Hargreaves, Boston College and Professor Bob Davis, University of Glasgow, with a tour of the site undertaken by the New Lanark Trust. If interested in attending, please register using the link – RoC New Lanark Conference.

CESE Conference to be held in University of Glasgow, June 2016
To what extent are education systems fair and inclusive in terms of access, processes and outcomes? How does education help to create a society that is more – or less – equitable? What can we learn by studying these questions internationally and in comparative perspective? These are some of the broad questions that set the agenda for CESE’s 2016 conference to be hosted by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the historic University of Glasgow.

The Comparative Education Society in Europe Executive Committee in association with the Glasgow organising committee invite papers that explore the conference theme from a range of local, national and supranational contexts. We encourage submissions which engage both theoretically and empirically with the issue of equity in and through education. The issue of equity permeates education across phases and sectors, from early childhood, through compulsory schooling and higher education, to adult learning, and is deeply embedded in the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. Analyses of government policies and policies of supranational entities such as the EU and World Bank aiming at managing the relationship between education and equity are invited, as are explorations of stakeholder narratives and evidence about education’s power to interrupt or perpetuate cycles of advantage and disadvantage. In the study of such concerns, an assortment of social categories become meaningful, including gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity, but these also demand critical questioning. In order to encourage and channel discussion and debate, the following six Working Groups (WGs) have been established which reflect diverse theoretical perspectives, evidence bases and methodological approaches:

- Education, Knowledge, and Economy
- Flows, Mobilities, and Migrations
- Transnationalism, Regionalism, and Educational Organisations
- Public Policy Strategies, Practitioners, and Interventions
- Identities, Subjectivities, and Intersectionalities
- Sustainability and Precarity

In addition to these six WGs there will be a Working Group dedicated to new scholars, as well as opportunities to submit papers for a number of cross-thematic sessions. We invite you to submit an abstract at the conference website (www.cese-europe.org/2016) and registration will soon open.
Knowledge Exchange links

Invited presentations

Dr Robert Aman
- “Colonial Differences and Epistemological Bias within Intercultural Education”, Paper presented at the International Association for Intercultural Education, Intercultural Education in the 21st century and beyond, Ioannina, Greece, June 2015

Dr Katherin Barg
- “Family resources and children’s early development in the UK – a decomposition of social origin effects”, invited talk at Research Seminar of Institute of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Cologne, June 2015
- “Social inequality in Educational Attainment in West and East Germany before after reunification – Convergence or Continued differences?” Lunchtime seminar at University of Glasgow, October, 2015

Professor Andy Furlong
- Presentation for symposium on youth transitions at Newcastle University, Australia, July 2015

Professor Barbara Kehm
- “What is University Governance and does it Matter?” Presentation at the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina), XXI Century Program, August 2015.
- “Global University Rankings – Impacts and Applications.” Presentation at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 2015.
- “Professionalisation or Hybridisation? Changing Job Roles in Higher Education.” Presentation at the 28th annual CHER Conference, Lisbon (Portugal), September 2015.
- “The Global Academic Rankings Game: Implications for Internationalisation.” Presentation (together with M. Yudkevich (Russia), L. Rumbley (USA), K. Kouwenaar (Netherlands) at the EAIE Annual Conference, Glasgow, September 2015.
- Visiting professorship to the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile, October 2015

Dr Oscar Odena
- Profi led scholar at Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) Summer School session ‘What I have done with my PhD’, University of Edinburgh, June 2015
- Invited Staff Seminar on software-assisted qualitative enquiry, University of Strathclyde, October 2015.

Dr Gijsbert Stoet
- Invited to give a keynote talk at the Institute of Physics (IOP) conference “Opening Doors”: Link: IOP Open Door conference

Dr Oscar Valiente
Recent appointments

Appointments

Professor Chris Chapman
- Appointed as Senior Academic Advisor to the Scottish Attainment Challenge, November 2015

Professor Barbara Kehm
- Member of evaluation panel German Institute for Adult Education, November 2015
- Member of assessment panel Norwegian Research Council, November, 2015

Dr Oscar Odena
- Appointed to the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Social Research Methodology (Routledge), April 2015
- Invited to curate Special Virtual Issue of USRM in the coming months. September 2015
- Appointed to the ASRF Board (as SoIS rep) September 2015

Professor Michele Schweisfurth
- Appointed as Honorary Professor at Hong Kong Institute of Education (June 2015)
- Appointed as Chair of Board of Trustees of UK Forum for International Education and Training (September 2015)
- Appointed as Lead Author for Education section of International Panel on Social Progress (May 2015)
Recent publications


Members of the Robert Owen Centre

Director(s)
Professor Chris Chapman
Dr Mark Murphy
Professor Michele Schweisfurth

Other core members
Dr Robert Aman
Dr Katherine Barg
Ms Hannah Chestnutt
Ms Julie Cooper
Professor Clive Dimmock
Professor Graham Donaldson
Professor Andy Furlong
Professor Anthony Finn
Dr Niamh Friel
Mr Stuart Hall
Dr Kristinn Hermannsson
Professor Barbara Kehm
Dr Deirdre Kelly
Mr Kevin Lowden
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