Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

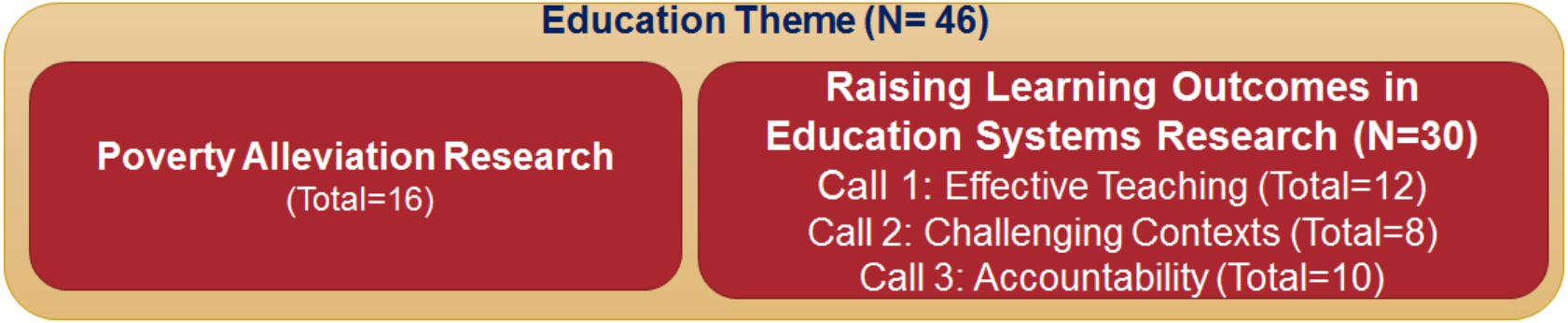
The Impact Initiative for International Development Research

Rafael Mitchell
University of Cambridge

THE IMPACT INITIATIVE
For International Development Research

What is the Impact Initiative?

- The **Impact Initiative for International Development Research** aims to **increase the research uptake and impact** of two programmes funded through the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership –
- by identifying opportunities across the research programmes for **grantees to engage with each other and with policy and practice**.



Thematic focus of all education projects

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EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

QUALITY TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Improving teacher development and educational quality in China. *Sally Thomas* *

Engaging teachers as agents of peace and social cohesion; South Africa/ Rwanda. *Yusuf Sayed* *

Effective teaching for children with multiple disadvantages; India and Pakistan. *Pauline Rose* +

Effective teaching in rural Honduran secondary schools. *Erin Murphy-Graham* +

Understanding resilience and exceptionalism in South Africa. *Servaas van der Berg* +

PEDAGOGY/CLASSROOM PRACTICES

The identification and nurturing of high ability students in Tanzania. *Pauline Dixon* *

Transforming the pedagogy of STEM subjects; Ethiopia. *Per Kind* +

Implementing cross-age peer tutoring in Kenya. *Frank Hardman* +

Improving curriculum and teaching to increase the quality of ECDE provision; Malawi. *Paul Lynch* +

Promoting learning outcomes in Conflict-Affected countries; DRC. *John Aber* +

Education systems, aspiration and learning; India, Laos and Lesotho. *Nicola Ansell* +

Strengthening Open, Distance, and Flexible Learning systems; Malawi and Lesotho. *Patricia Pridmore* *

How can technology improve learning?

IT, education, and welfare in Niger. *Jenny Akers* +

Development of a classroom observation tool; Uganda. *Edward Seidman* +

LITERACY, LANGUAGE AND ASSESSMENT

The Literacy Laboratory project; Uganda. *Rebecca Thornton* +

Literacy development with deaf communities; India. *Ulrike Zeshan* +

Multilingualism and multi-literacy in primary school; India. *Ianthi Maria Tsimpli* +

Student performance in National Examinations: Tanzania. *Pauline Rea-Dickins* *

AFLA - Assessment for Learning in Africa; South Africa and Tanzania. *Therese N. Hopfenbeck* +

HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION

Widening participation in higher education in Sierra Leone and Tanzania. *Louise Morley* *

Expanding education to reduce poverty: public and private provision in Ghana. *Francis Teal* *

Development discourses: higher education and poverty reduction in South Africa. *Melanie Walker* *

Inclusive higher education learning outcomes for rural youth; South Africa. *Melanie Walker* +

Pedagogies for critical thinking: innovation and outcomes in African Higher Education; Kenya. *Tristan McCowan* +

POVERTY-ORIENTED INTERVENTIONS

MULTISECTORIAL INTERVENTIONS

The Gansu survey of children and families; China. *Emily Hannum* *

Provision of sanitary pads and educational outcomes; Uganda. *Catherine Dolan* *

'AIDS competent' schools in rural Zimbabwe. *Catherine Campbell* *

Children, transport and mobility; Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa. *Gina Porter* *

The impact of mobile phones on young people's lives; Ghana. *Gina Porter* *

CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS

Human development and poverty reduction; Colombia and Mexico. *Orazio Attanasio* *

The impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh. *Agnes Quisumbing* *

The early childhood intervention and parental involvement in Bangladesh. *Asadul Islam* +

GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

Gender, education and global poverty reduction; Kenya and South Africa. *Elaine Unterhalter* *

Constructing a global framework for social exclusion; Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, India. *Parul Bakhshi* +

ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

Facilitating innovative growth of low-cost private schools; Pakistan. *Asim Khwaja* +

Improving school governance: Madhya Pradesh school quality assessment; India. *Karthik Maralidharan* +

Technology, Monitoring and Teacher Support in Niger. *Jenny Aker* +

Accountability for gender equality in education. *Elaine Unterhalter* +

Accountability, capacity and trust to improve learning outcomes in South Africa. *Melanie Ehren* +

Can schools' accountability for learning be strengthened from the grassroots? India. *Ricardo Sabates* +

Improving learning: Developing measures of accountability and evaluating their association with students' gains in achievements in Nepal. *Dirgha Ghimire* +

Making the elementary schooling system in India work for the disadvantaged learners; India. *Caroline Dyer* +

Disadvantage and participation accountability processes; India. *Sayantan Ghosal* +

Partnership schools for Liberia. *Justin Sandefur* +

Strengthening schools accountability mechanisms through participation; Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Jean-Francois Trani* +

Organizational perspectives on accountability and learning (OPAL); India, Nepal. *Robin Shields* +

Mapping 46 education projects of the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership

* / * **Poverty Alleviation Call projects** (completed/ in progress)

+ / + **Raising Learning Outcomes Call projects** (completed/ in progress)

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

UKaid from the British people

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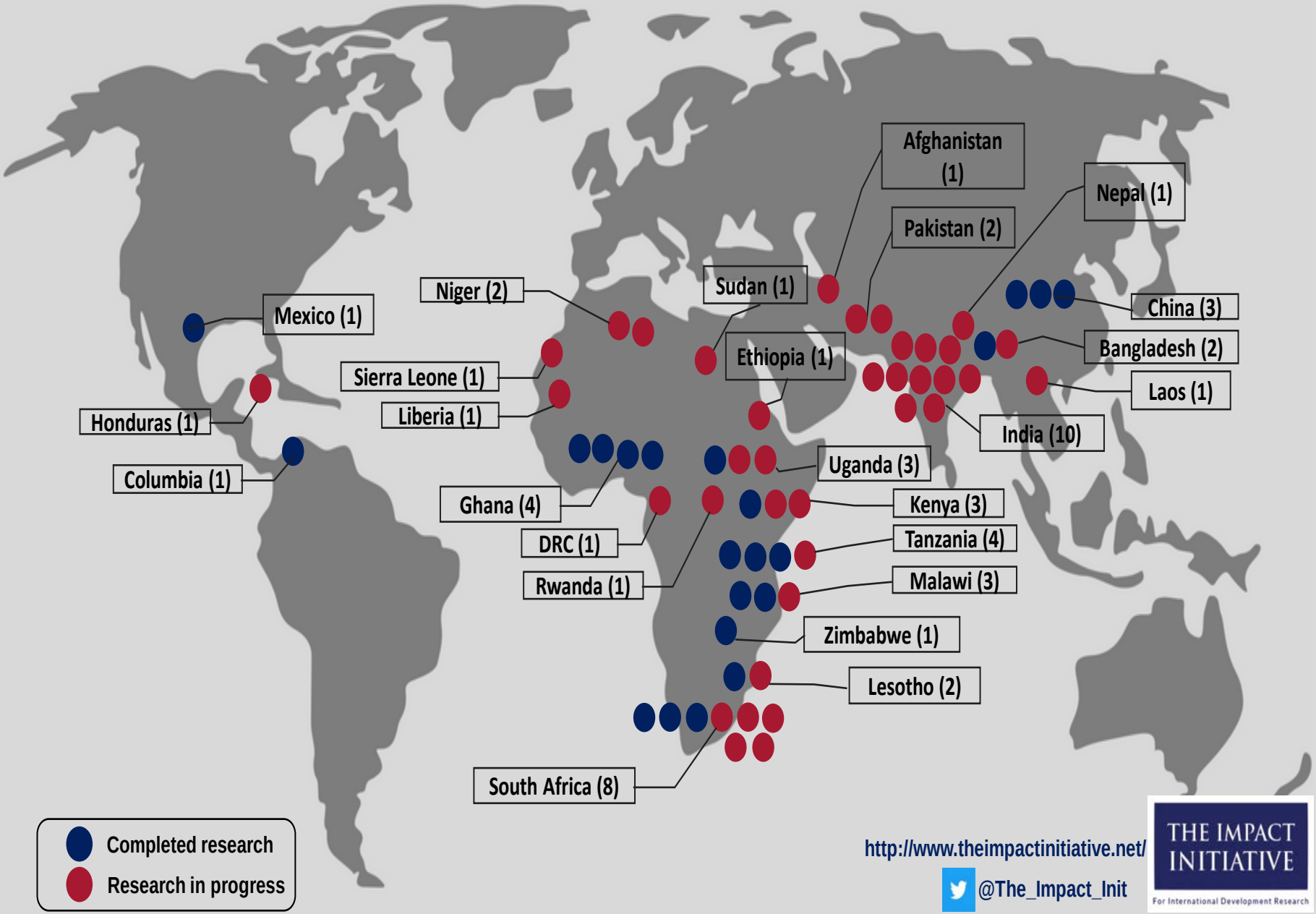
Mapping the Education Projects of the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership



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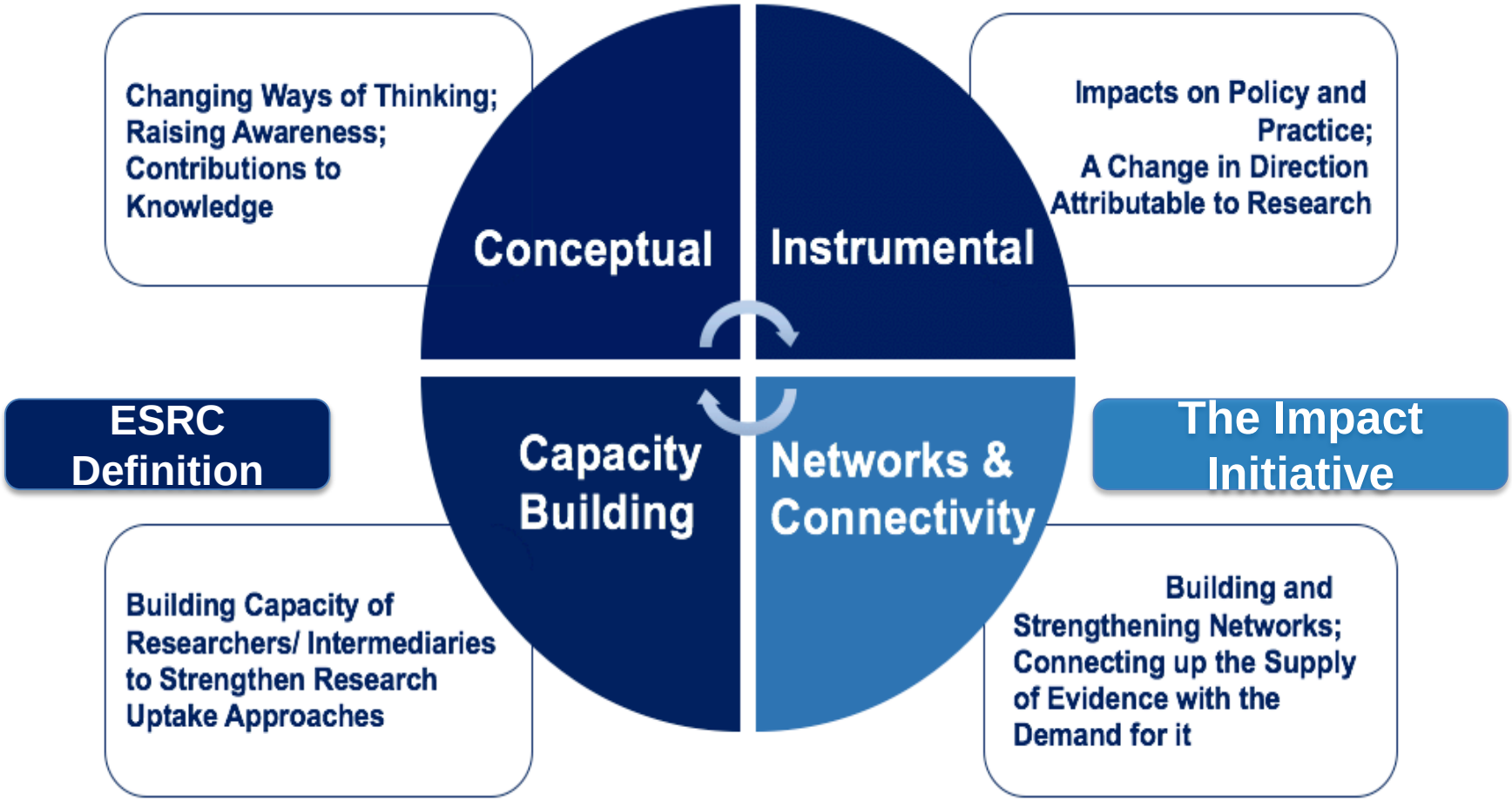
The wheel of impact



Outputs

- *Impact stories* of individual projects
- *Research for Policy and Practice*, reporting research by themes (e.g. disability, quality teaching)
- *Learning guides*
- Blogs

ESRC-DFID Research Impact

Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

REDUCING SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES IN MALAWI AND LESOTHO

'School in a bag', buddy systems and catch-up clubs have paved the way for improved learning and reduced dropout in schools in Malawi and Lesotho. These pioneering techniques have been used by researchers from University College London's Institute of Education and their Southern African partners to help ensure that disadvantaged children, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, stay in school.

Between April 2007 and July 2010, the team developed and piloted these distance- and flexible-learning techniques in 20 primary schools in Malawi and 16 secondary schools in Lesotho, all of which were located in areas where HIV/AIDS was highly prevalent and where school dropout rates were high. In both countries, the schools saw reduced dropout rates (up to 45 per cent in Malawi), particularly for older children.

THE CHALLENGE

Many developing countries have made good progress in improving enrolment rates since universal primary education became a UN global target over 15 years ago. But for countries in Africa such as Lesotho and Malawi which are deeply affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis, these gains mask a troubling picture of low levels of achievement and worrisome dropout rates. For orphaned or vulnerable children who struggle to attend class, for example because they care for chronically ill parents or work to support themselves and their families' income, the problem is made worse by school policies which actively discriminate against poor households.

THE RESEARCH

The research team wanted to study whether a flexible approach to learning could improve educational achievement and reduce the risk of dropout for vulnerable children. Key components of their ground-breaking SOFIE model included a 'school in a bag' that held pens, notebooks, textbooks and self-study

Cover photo: Malawi. Children studying in class. © Giacomo Pirozzi /Panos Pictures.

1. The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE); the Institute of Education, National University of Lesotho; and the Centre for Education Research and Training (CERT), University of Malawi.
2. Strengthening Open and Flexible Learning for Increased Educational Access in High HIV Prevalence Countries.

ESRC-DFID Research for Policy and Practice:

Disability and education

Foreword

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ensure that no one should be left behind in education. Having been completely left out of the Millennium Development Goals, disability rights activists advocated for a disability inclusive framework for sustainable development – drawing on increasingly available research to inform this advocacy.

Despite efforts by governments, policymakers and practitioners to ensure inclusive quality education for all learners, disability continues to be one of the primary causes of educational exclusion. We still lack the full picture of why girls and boys with disabilities are more likely to drop out of education and what methods may support their learning processes.

Disability rights activists depend on research-based evidence to shape advocacy and influence education policymakers to develop effective responses. We need research on how children with disabilities learn and thrive from early childhood and how to ensure a foundation for higher learning and employment. We need a nuanced and contextualised picture of challenges and good practices to fill the knowledge gaps.

his collection of ESRC-DFID funded research provides valuable w evidence on what governments must consider in order to ure that children with disabilities benefit from quality education out discrimination or exclusion. This research contains excellent, ally relevant and contextually grounded evidence of how the ation sector can plan and design policies with a lasting impact dren with disabilities. It highlights the value of a study led f researchers in India; explores school readiness in Malawi; reater understanding of the experiences and challenges children with disabilities within the classroom across six ; and advances strategies on how to support the learning ng of children facing multiple disadvantages, including in India and Pakistan.

the research also highlights how to use available tools dren with disabilities in national surveys in ways that ning while avoiding stigmatising families and children . The research should be promoted by all disability rights advocates and read by all planners aiming to implement Sustainable Development Goal.

However, we still need to know and understand more. The World Bank's 2018 World Development Report highlights how girls with disabilities are more likely to drop out of school than their male peers; how the issue of intersectionality between disability and other forms of disadvantage is still poorly documented; and how too many girls with disabilities leave school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. As the clock ticks towards 2030, evidence is urgently needed on how to tackle these challenges.

We must keep our promise to all girls and boys who are left behind and respond to the needs of all learners.

Trine Cecilie Riis-Hansen
Head of Advocacy and Policy
PLAN International Norway

Key messages

- Adopt collaborative approaches to working with beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders - including people with disabilities as research partners.
- Adopt a more holistic approach to addressing educational exclusion of children with disabilities, focusing on intersecting disadvantage associated with factors such as poverty and gender.
- Collect data that identifies children with disabilities in household- and school-based surveys to track their progress in learning and access.
- Recognising that children with disabilities are increasingly in mainstream schools, identify and adopt strategies that support them in the classroom and tackle discrimination they may face.

Learning guides

Testing and showcasing ways that research can bring about change

Demand for evidence

Cultivating demand for evidence to influence policy and practice for greater research impact

Engaging research with policy and practice

How to engage research with policy and practice to strengthen decision-making

Building networks and relationships

Strong networks and relationships contribute to greater impact of global development research

See more at the Impact Lab

Blog: Getting to grips with the media

Sep 2017
19/09/2017

By Nic Spaull and Nompumelelo Mohohlwane

How to pacakge, present and deliver your research to the media

The Impact Initiative recently hosted a workshop on *How to package, present and deliver your research to the media* at the recently held UKFIET conference. Education journalists from BBC, The Guardian and the Press Association provided advice, strategies and facilitated practical sessions to researchers from different parts of the world working in education.The two main insights from the workshop were:

- **Establish a relationship:** Good rapport goes a long way. Use the opportunities you have to network and distinguish yourself as a credible researcher. Build a profile as an engaged, socially aware researcher whose work journalists should keep up with. This helps when journalists they get inundated with endless emails from all sorts of people including those sharing fake news.
- **Make your case:** Do not assume that your story is important, make a case for it! Why should readers care? Why should the journalist care? How does this speak to a bigger agenda/concern/movement? Answer these questions deliberately and early on in your communication. If you get this right, journalists are often willing to take a chance with your story even if it may be beyond what is the typical article.
- **Consider multi-media options:** Using videos, animations, graphs and infographics helps; these are often attention-grabbing, and easier to relate to for the public. Complement your research report with one of these, human interest stories and anecdotes can strengthen the larger empirical findings.

Nic Spaull

Dr Nic Spaull is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Research on Socioeconomic Policy (RESEP) group at Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

He has recently returned from Paris where he

http://www.theimpactinitiative.net/blog/blog-getting-grips-media

How can the Impact Initiative help ESRC-DFID grant-holders?

- Capacity development on engaging with non-academic audiences – e.g. development of impact plans, media training (see **Impact Lab** resources).
- The **facilitation of meetings** between researchers and research users – e.g. with in-country policy actors, DFID and other donors, and civil society organisations.
- The **organisation of policy orientated events** which promote evidence emerging from the ESRC-DFID portfolio.
- Showcasing research to non-academic audiences through the co-production and targeted dissemination of tailored outputs including **blogs, Impact Stories** and **Research for Policy and Practice** reports.
- The **archiving of the full text of your research outputs** in an open access repository to maximise their accessibility. The Impact Initiative open access repository collection has already received 27,000 downloads.

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Our mission is to increase the uptake and impact of research from two major research programmes jointly funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID): the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research and the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme. [read more]

News and Views

IDS Bulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

Call for papers: Special Issue of IDS Bulletin on research-policy collaboration

The Impact Lab

The Impact Lab seeks to strengthen links and create dialogue by providing an outline of the issues and clear lessons for knowledge practitioners, donors and researchers. The first outputs are an edited collection of articles and a series of Learning Guides which draw on the lessons for successful impact in areas previously identified as potential barriers to impact. Find out more or see our glossary of terms.

CALLING ESRC DFID GRANT HOLDERS

Discover how to maximise the impact of your project

Access support now

Edited collection of articles

http://www.theimpactinitiative.net/

Introducing the African Education Research Database

Rafael Mitchell, Pauline Rose & Samuel Asare

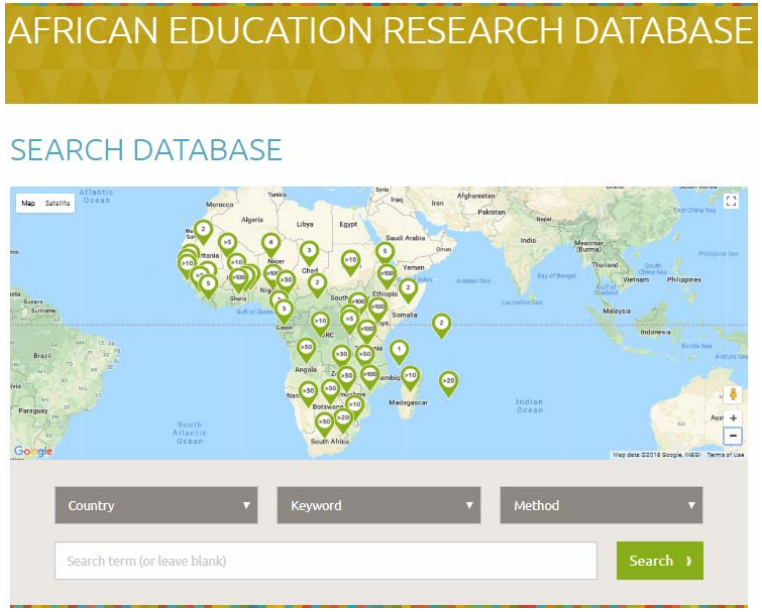
Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre,
Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Africa Symposium

The African Education Research Database project

Objectives

- Catalogue the work of SSA-based researchers to produce database
- Review literature to identify key findings & gaps
- Identify priorities & partners for future research



http://essa-africa.org/AERD

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Approach to cataloguing

- Social science research with implications for education policy and practice undertaken by SSA-based researchers
- Systematic literature search (49 countries in SSA) – academic databases, expert consultation
- For each study, collected information on: thematic foci, methods, authors (gender, institutional affiliation, email), etc.
- Each study tagged with up to 8 keywords

Key informant interviews

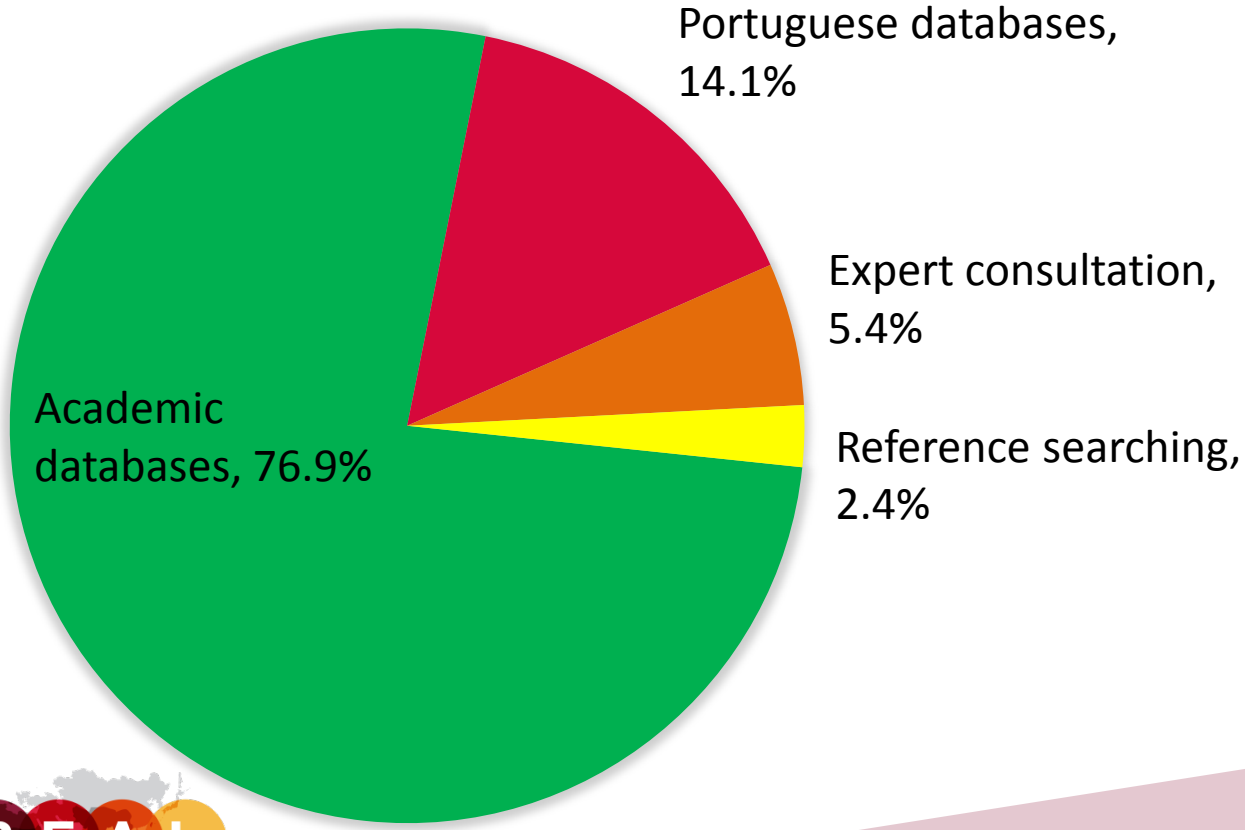
Interviews conducted with SSA-based researchers on:

- priorities for research
- research impact
- experiences of funding, partnerships & collaboration

Interviews with 4 female & 10 male researchers (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal)

Bibliometric analysis of the African Education Research Database

2811 studies catalogued to date (August 2018)



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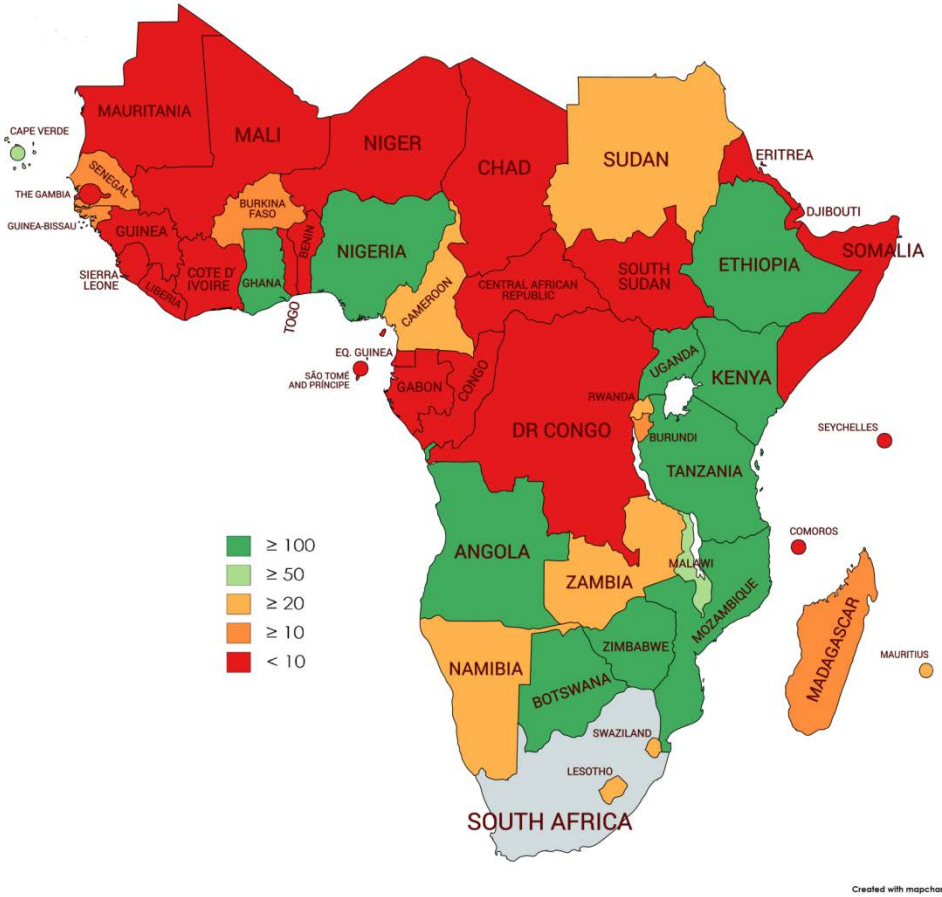
Overview of research outputs by country

	Country	# of studies	% of total studies (n = 2811)
1	Nigeria	662	23.6%
2	Ghana	260	9.2%
3	Mozambique	258	9.2%
4	Kenya	257	9.1%
5	Uganda	151	5.4%
6	Tanzania	145	5.2%
7	Ethiopia	131	4.7%
8	Botswana	124	4.4%
9	Zimbabwe	121	4.3%
10	Angola	107	3.8%
11	Cape Verde	81	2.9%
12	Malawi	59	2.1%
13	Mauritius	45	1.6%
14	Zambia	42	1.5%
15	Namibia	40	1.4%
16	Cameroon	38	1.4%
17	Rwanda	33	1.2%
18	Swaziland	23	0.8%
19	Lesotho	21	0.7%
20	Sudan	21	0.7%
21 - 26	Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Madagascar	<20	<0.7%
27 - 37	Benin, Côte D'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo	<10	≤0.3
38 - 49	Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Republic of the Congo, Seychelles, Somalia	<5	≤0.1%

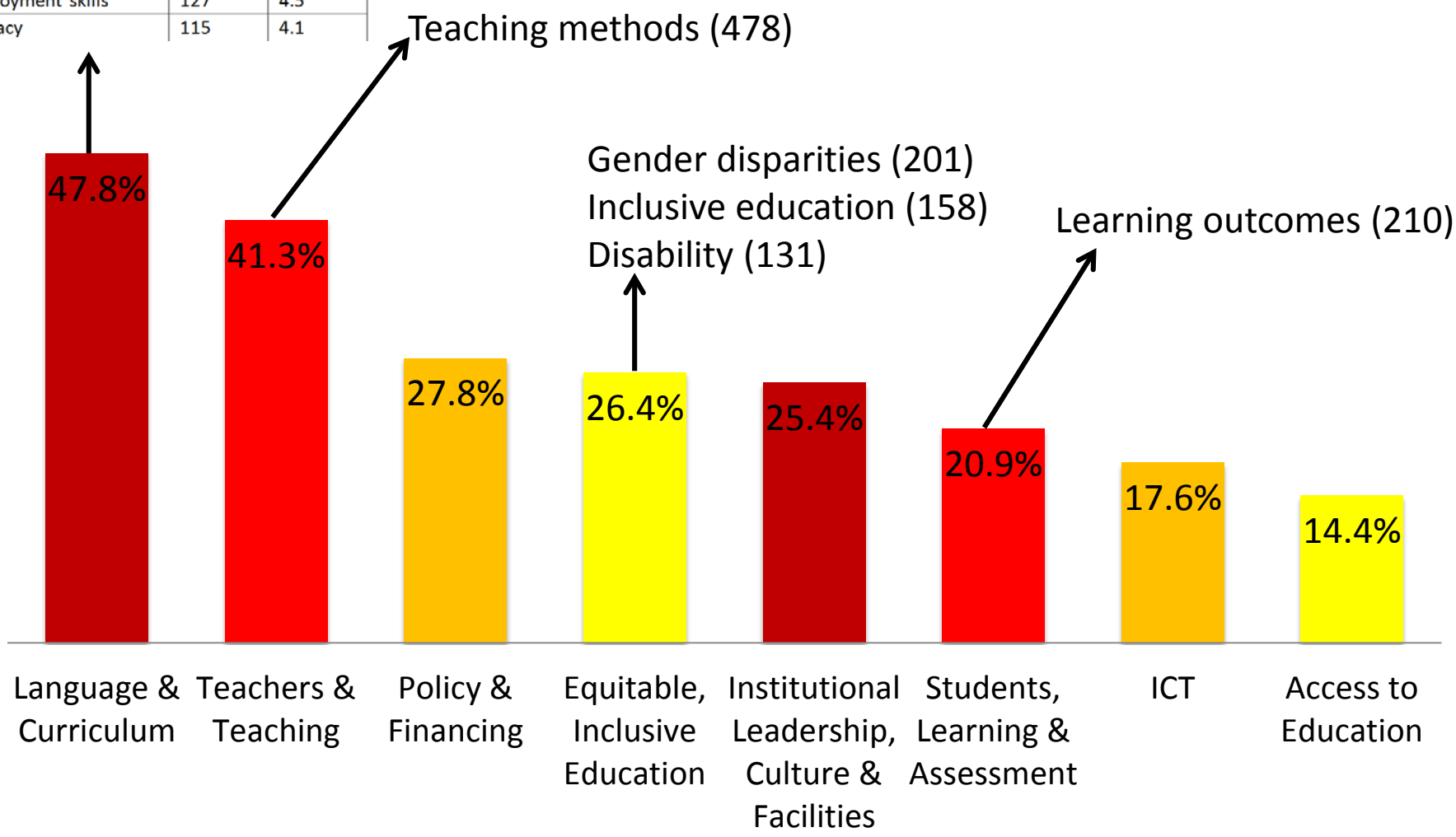


Research by educational level

	# of studies (n = 2811)	% of studies in AERD
Early childhood education	83	3%
Primary education	524	18.6%
Secondary education	717	25.5%
Higher education	860	30.6%
(Other)	627	22.3%

Language & Curriculum	# of studies	% in AERD
Science education	188	6.7
African languages	184	6.5
Curriculum reform	165	5.9
Language of instruction	162	5.8
Health education	156	5.5
Curriculum relevance	140	5.0
Mathematics education	134	4.8
English language	132	4.7
Employment skills	127	4.5
Literacy	115	4.1

% of studies by thematic area



Global agendas – a common view

Maclure (2006) notes:

"the parameters of inquiry are defined by the contracting organizations, most of which are foreign to Africa. It is thus **difficult for many otherwise well-trained researchers to establish their own independent research programs when they are understandably drawn to opportunity structures that offer attractive facilities and salaries**…[As a result,] **African educational research has been dislocated from national contexts and has become largely the prerogative of researchers and institutions situated in North America and Europe."** (p.82)

Does funding affect the focus of research?

290 out of 2811 studies (10.3%) indicated they had received research funding.

	Unfunded (n = 2521)		Funded (n = 290)		Difference
	# of studies	%	# of studies	%	
Early childhood education	75	3%	8	2.8%	-0.2
Primary education	421	16.7%	103	35.5%	**+18.8**
Secondary education	649	25.7%	68	23.4%	-2.3
Higher education	807	32%	53	18.3%	**-13.7**
(Other)	569	22.6%	59	20.3	-2.3

Funded research is **twice as likely to focus on primary education**, and **half as likely to focus on higher education**

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Evidence from interviews

Researchers motivated by their own interests and priorities:

- We have in most cases…disappointed individuals that have come here and said *“Look here, we have this money. We want to do A B C D.”* and we have said…*“No, it’s not in our interest. If you want to work with us, here are the areas that are of interest to us.* (*Male researcher, Malawi*)

An abiding concern of researchers we interviewed was ***the desire for local relevance*** – encouraging positive changes in policy and practice through work with teachers, principals and other institutional stakeholders, or else by informing policy actors and decision-making processes at regional and national levels.

This links with IDRC’s work on Research Quality Plus (RQ+) (Offir et al. 2016; Lebel & McLean 2018) which values research for its practical, contextual relevance.

Research collaboration: Lessons from high impact journals

- 390 research outputs (2015-2018) in high impact journals (~0.5+ impact factor)
- 199 studies (51%) of these involve collaboration with researchers based outside SSA

Country	# of researchers	%
USA	121	25.8
UK	109	23.2
The Netherlands	47	10.0
Canada	34	7.2
Belgium	19	4.1
Australia	18	3.8
Finland	11	2.3
Germany	11	2.3
Portugal	10	2.1
Norway	10	2.1
France	7	1.5
India	7	1.5
Sweden	7	1.5
Japan	6	1.3

Florida State University
Johns Hopkins
Harvard University

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Imperial College London
University of Cambridge

University of Groningen
Wageningen University
University of Amsterdam

- % of studies with first author based in SSA:
  - USA = 14/57 studies (24.5%)
  - UK = 12/51 studies (23.5%)
  - Netherlands = 21/27 studies (77.8%)

Lessons from high impact journals

- Top funders of research in high impact journals involving collaboration outside SSA

Funder	# of studies
DFID	12
RTI International	5
USAID	5
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	4
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	3
Netherlands Fellowship Program (NFP)	3
Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC)	3

- Roughly one quarter of the SSA-based researchers are female

	SSA-based	Not SSA-based
Female	80 (25.6%)	224 (47.8%)
Male	202 (64.5%)	234 (49.9%)
Unknown	31 (9.9%)	11 (2.3%)
Total	313	469

Conclusion

- Introduction to the African Education Research Database –
  - The landscape of education research in SSA
  - Patterns in international research collaboration
- For ***Impact Initiative*** I hope to talk with many of you to discuss your experiences of partnership, collaboration, funding & impact – and any support requests you may have