Australian Government
Australian Research Council

EI 2018 ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

Engagement and Impact 2018

The University of Melbourne

MEL13 (SS) - Impact

Overview

Title

(Title of the impact study)

Assessing students by ability, not disability: The Students with Additional Needs Program

Unit of Assessment

13 - Education

Additional FoR codes

(Identify up to two additional two-digit FoRs that relate to the overall content of the impact study.)

17 - Psychology and Cognitive Sciences

Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit SEO codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

93 - Education and Training

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit ANZSIC codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

80 - Preschool and School Education

Keywords

(List up to 10 keywords related to the impact described in Part A.)

special education

assessment and reporting

student learning

student outcomes

Sensitivities

Commercially sensitive

No

Culturally sensitive

No

Sensitivities description

(Please describe any sensitivities in relation to the impact study that need to be considered, including any particular instructions for ARC staff or assessors, or for the impact study to be made publicly available after EI 2018.)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research flag

(Is this impact study associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content?
NOTE - institutions may identify impact studies where the impact, associated research and/or approach to impact relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, communities, language, place, culture and knowledges and/or is undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, and/or communities.)

No

Science and Research Priorities

(Does this impact study fall within one or more of the Science and Research Priorities?)

No

Impact

Summary of the impact

(Briefly describe the specific impact in simple, clear English. This will enable the general community to understand the impact of the research.)

Assessment and reporting tools developed by University researchers are helping students with disability and additional needs reach their full learning potential. The ‘Students with Additional Needs’ body of research has resulted in an integrated program of curriculum, teaching, assessment and reporting resources that provide schools with access to high-quality, research-based materials to support their professional practice. It has profoundly impacted the ways in which Australian schools approach assessment and reporting of students with intellectual disability or developmental delay. It has resulted in widespread use of system-level resources and is recognised as a Government-endorsed professional learning option as part of mandatory teacher registration in Victoria.

Beneficiaries

(List up to 10 beneficiaries related to the impact study)

Students: Assessed in an inclusive manner that focuses on their abilities, & are better able to participate in learning activities.

Parents: Access to personalised learning plans for their child that gives them new information about their child’s learning and development.

Teachers: Access to programs/resources to support the delivery of high quality schooling for all students

Schools: Have access to free, online professional learning opportunities.

Governments: Have a suite of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting resources to provide improved learning outcomes for students

Countries in which the impact occurred

(Search the list of countries and add as many as relate to the location of the impact)

Australia
New Zealand
Singapore

Details of the impact

(Provide a narrative that clearly outlines the research impact. The narrative should explain the relationship between the associated research and the impact. It should also identify the contribution the research has made beyond academia, including:
- who or what has benefitted from the results of the research (this should identify relevant research end-users, or beneficiaries from industry, the community, government, wider public etc.)

- the nature or type of impact and how the research made a social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental impact
- the extent of the impact (with specific references to appropriate evidence, such as cost-benefit-analysis, quantity of those affected, reported benefits etc.)
- the dates and time period in which the impact occurred.

NOTE - the narrative must describe only impact that has occurred within the reference period, and must not make aspirational claims.)

The everyday classroom experience of thousands of children with intellectual and developmental disability in Australian schools has been substantially improved thanks to the 'Students with Additional Needs' Research Program. Teachers of Australian students with disability now have access to tools that allow them to record observations and judgements of student learning against 9 core skill areas and to review student progress to set targeted learning objectives. In Victoria and Western Australia, reports derived from the assessments have been linked to curriculum. Tools provide teachers with targeted advice on teaching strategies for students who are often seen as challenging to teach. This advice has been assembled over ten years of work with experienced special educators.

Traditionally, assessment for students with disability took a diagnostic approach and described students in terms of the nature and severity of their disability. This was useful for the purpose of establishing eligibility for programs of additional support, but not for the purpose of guiding instructional decision-making by teachers. In classrooms, teachers often maintained observational records or portfolios to describe student learning. However, these were highly idiosyncratic and relied strongly on the experience and knowledge of the teacher. Many teachers did not know which behaviors to document.

In the mid-2000s, the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) recognised the limitations of traditional approaches to instructional decision-making for students with a range of cognitive and physical disabilities. They began working with researchers at the University of Melbourne to develop new ways to assess students on the basis of their abilities rather than their disabilities.

At this time, there were individual schools implementing disparate approaches to assessment of students with disability and additional needs; there was no common approach and little organizing structure within the existing curriculum for teachers to assess learning and achievement for students who were working to develop foundational skills. DET recognized the need for a common approach and readily accessible forms of assessment that, taken as a set, could help teachers identify ways to improve learning.

This was achieved through a series of projects (2007, 2009, 2014) undertaken as part of the 'Students with Additional Needs' Program (SWANs). The purpose of these projects was to design, validate, and disseminate an integrated program of assessment, planning, and teaching advice that was easy for teachers to access and use and that helped inform classroom practice. The SWANs resources were further tailored to the Victorian school context through mapping to the Victorian curriculum. Between 2009-13, this resulted in an adapted and validated suite of resources for primary/secondary school students called the Abilities Based Learning and Education (ABLES) assessment tools and in 2014-15, a modified version for younger children (2-5 years) called Early ABLES.

Following the implementation of this program, fundamental changes have been seen in teaching and learning for students with disability and additional needs. For example, teachers are able to gather evidence of student's current abilities, capabilities and readiness to learn on one of nine developmental pathways, implement appropriate learning strategies (such as using targeted questioning to extend a student's requests, comments, and observations to develop speaking and listening skills) and then plan the use of these teaching and learning strategies to ensure students meet the appropriate curriculum goals.

An online platform supported by the Victorian Department makes the ABLES and Early ABLES resources available to every Victorian Government School (1500+), early childhood centre (5000+) and Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Schools (approx. 500). As well as access to the assessment tool, schools and teachers are provided with teaching strategies and resources to support the development of targeted learning programs and professional development opportunities.

The success of these tools in Victorian schools saw the program expanded to Western Australia (2015), the Northern Territory (2016), New South Wales (2014), South Australia (2014), Tasmania (2014) and the ACT (2015) as well to New Zealand (2014) and Singapore (2014) with more than 32,000 Australian students assessed as part of the program.

One recommendation of the 2002 Australian Senate inquiry into 'Education of students with disabilities' was that

teachers be more closely involved in the early identification process of students with additional needs. The resources available through the 'Students with Additional Needs' Program has empowered schools to conduct assessments and develop individualised learning plans for students in-house. This has contributed to an upskilling of teacher qualifications, a new facet in Victoria's investment in its teaching workforce. Schools can now be more effective in the way they work with students, setting up appropriate learning goals and strategies before specialist educational Assessment and Therapy Services staff are involved. Students can benefit from this Program through more targeted teaching and better instructional decision-making by their teachers.

As further evidence of the impact of this research, the Victorian Government recommends the extensive ABLES Online Professional Learning suite to all Victorian teachers and it is an endorsed professional learning option as part of mandatory teacher registration in Victoria. University Researchers have developed a free online professional learning portal for using the ABLES assessment tools which is used by Australian Schools to personalise learning for its students. Impact is also demonstrated by contributions to curriculum reviews for example, for the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2016).

Associated research

(Briefly describe the research that led to the impact presented for the UoA. The research must meet the definition of research in Section 1.9 of the EI 2018 Submission Guidelines. The description should include details of:
- what was researched
- when the research occurred
- who conducted the research and what is the association with the institution)

The research of Professor Patrick Griffin, Dr Kerry Woods and colleagues from the Assessment Research Centre at the University of Melbourne has developed new ways to assess and report on the learning of students with disability and additional needs. 'The Students with Additional Needs' Program resulted from Australian Research Council Linkage Projects (2007, 2009, 2014) conducted in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training. These projects use a developmental, individualised approach to formative assessment and learning. Research has,
--allowed teachers to record observations and judgements of student learning against nine core skills areas (literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, thinking and learning skills, social and emotional skills, communication, movement) and to review student progress to set learning objectives,
--identified and validated observation-based measures that teachers could use to describe and monitor learning across foundational or enabling skills for their students,
--worked with experienced teachers of students with disability and additional needs to design and trial assessment items that drew on the sorts of behaviours teachers could observe in everyday classroom interactions with their students,
--developed an integrated online program of assessment, reporting, and teaching materials to assist teachers to assess students' capabilities in these developmental pathways and identify the next learning step for each student.

FoR of associated research

(Up to three two-digit FoRs that best describe the associated research)

13 - Education

References (up to 10 references, 350 characters per reference)

(This section should include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant research outputs associated with the impact)

Coles-Janess, B. & Griffin, P. (2009). Mapping Transitions in Interpersonal Learning for Students with Additional Needs. Australasian Journal of Special Education 33(2), 141-150.

Griffin, P., Woods, K., Coles-Janess, B., & Roberts, E. (2010). Mining the Gold: Assessing students by ability, not disability. Teacher: The National Education Magazine, (April), 34-37.

Roberts, E. & Griffin, P. (2009). Profiling transitions in emotional development for students with additional learning needs. Australasian Journal of Special Education, 33(2), 151-161.

Roberts, E. & Griffin, P. (2010). Differing Progressions of Cognitive Skill Development for Students with Additional Learning Needs and Autism Spectrum Disorder. In J. Wright (Ed.), 2010 Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference (pp. 1-23). Melbourne, Australia: Australian Association for Research in Education.

Strickland, J., Woods, K, & Pavlovic, M. (2016). Assessing and understanding emergent numeracy for students with additional learning needs. In M. Baguley (Ed.), 2016 Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference (pp. 1-13). Melbourne, Australia: Australian Association for Research in Education.

Woods, K., & Griffin, P., (2013). Judgement-based performance measures of literacy for students with additional needs: Seeing students through the eyes of experienced special education teachers. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 20(3), 325-348.

Woods, K., & Mountain, R. (2014). Developmental assessment for students with additional needs. In P. Griffin (Ed.), Assessment for Teaching (pp. 234-249). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Woods, K. & Underwood, K. (2015). Building Road Maps of Learning for Students: The Abilities Based Learning and Education Support Program. Australian Council for Educational Leaders Disability Reform Summit. Sydney, 7-8 May 2015.

Woods, K., & Pavlovic, M. (2016). Using differential item functioning to validate a judgement-based assessment of emergent literacy for students with autism spectrum disorder. In M. Baguley (Ed.), 2016 Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference (pp. 1-11). Melbourne, Australia: AARE.

Additional impact indicator information

Additional impact indicator information

(Provide information about any indicators not captured above that are relevant to the impact study, for example return on investment, jobs created, improvements in quality of life years (QALYs). Additional indicators should be quantitative in nature and include:
- name of indicator (100 characters)
- data for indicator (200 characters)
- brief description of indicator and how it is calculated (300 characters).)