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Reflections on setting up a participatory action research project with local schools

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Research and
Knowledge Exchange



Dr Kate Duffy is research lead for Initial Teacher Education (ITT). This involves supporting colleagues in the School of Education (SoE) with their research activity and convening the Centre for Research in education (CRE) Public Seminar series. The series showcases the wide range of research that is undertaken by the SoE at its different stages of development. Within this role I also work with external partners such as Global SpiritEd and support the Global Research Network which is committed to exploring ways to personalise education and increase student agency.

The graphic features the University of Sunderland logo and 'Research and Knowledge Exchange' text at the top. The main title 'IMPACTFUL RESEARCH WITH TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS' is in large, bold, orange and white letters. Below it, a paragraph describes InterAction as a research unit in the Centre for Research in Education. A central box lists three key areas: 'EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE', 'PRACTITIONER RESEARCH AND INQUIRY', and 'A RESEARCH CULTURE'. A small inset photo shows a woman pointing at a whiteboard. At the bottom, contact information and logos for UK Research and Innovation, Global Spirit Ed, InterAction, and VCTF are displayed.

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IMPACTFUL RESEARCH WITH TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

InterAction is a research unit in the University of Sunderland's Centre for Research in Education

- EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE
- PRACTITIONER RESEARCH AND INQUIRY
- A RESEARCH CULTURE

To find out more email: interaction@sunderland.ac.uk

UK Research and Innovation | Global Spirit Ed | InterAction | VCTF

Dr Elizabeth Hidson is research lead for the International Initial Teacher Training (IITT) team in the School of Education. She is also a Vice-Chancellor's Research and Knowledge Exchange fellow. Her research focus is research collaboration with schools and teachers, with the goal of co-constructing evidence-informed solutions to teaching and learning priorities that schools and teachers want to focus on, and to facilitate reciprocal knowledge exchange between teachers, schools and the University.



The InterAction Unit



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Background



UK Research
and Innovation



Global
Spirit Ed

Mini
MIND

- Research England allocations for universities in England to develop or increase the scale of **research conducted in partnership with diverse communities.**
- Participatory research involves the communities and **users of research, better recognising their experience, needs and preferences, and supporting communities to implement findings.**
- UoS existing partnerships with local schools for teacher training → general **invitation to participate.**



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No matter how great an idea is in principle,

“what really matters is how it manifests itself in the day-to-day work of people in schools”

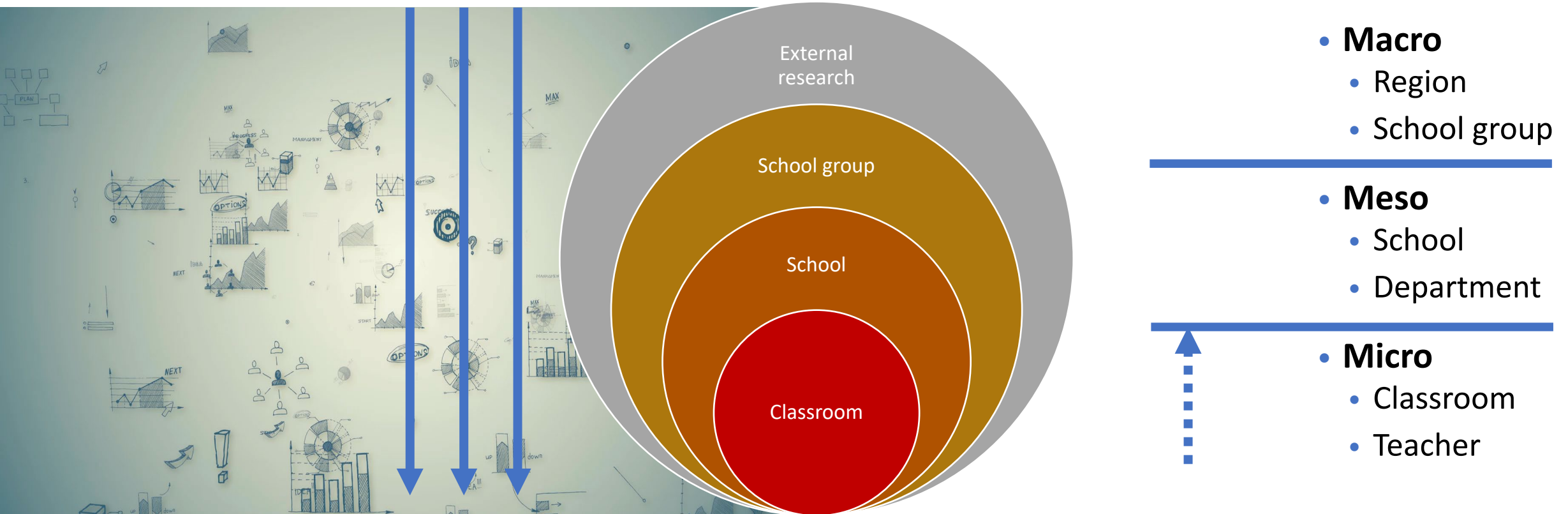
(Sharples et al., 2019, p. 3)



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Research in the school sector – mostly top-down



Schools engaging with research

- The school sector is geared towards developing a **research-rich** and **self-improving** educational system predicated on the capacity for teachers to engage with research
- Schools are part of the **solution**, not the **problem**
- **Local** insights and context are vital

FIGURE 1:
EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE



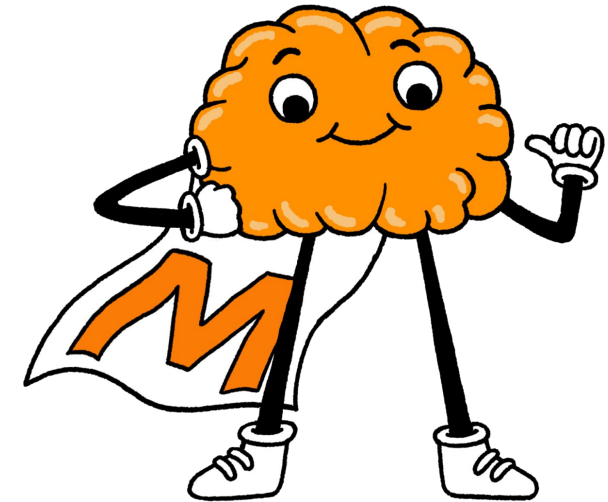
Figure adapted from Scutt (2018)

Following on from the pandemic, research has shown that the **regulation of attention**, along with the development of other **cognitive, social and emotional resources** vital for the 21st century, must find their place alongside more traditional learning (Wear and Bethune, 2021).



The 'WHAT' – the Mini Mind Programme

- WHAT – Mini Mind **positive psychology** – helping pupils to understand how they think about themselves, life, and the world around them
- WHY – school has identified psychological wellbeing and resilience as a **school priority**, especially post-pandemic
- HOW – delivery and evaluation of **12 hours of learning**
- WHO – schools identify initial **trial group**
- WHEN – must be completed by **June 2024**
- WHERE – training at **university**; trial in schools



What is Mini Mind?

The Mini Mind Programme is designed for children to understand how they think about themselves, life, and the world around them. The aim of the 12 hour programme is to empower children to take responsibility for their actions and choices, provide greater understanding of how their mind works and consider the relationships around them.



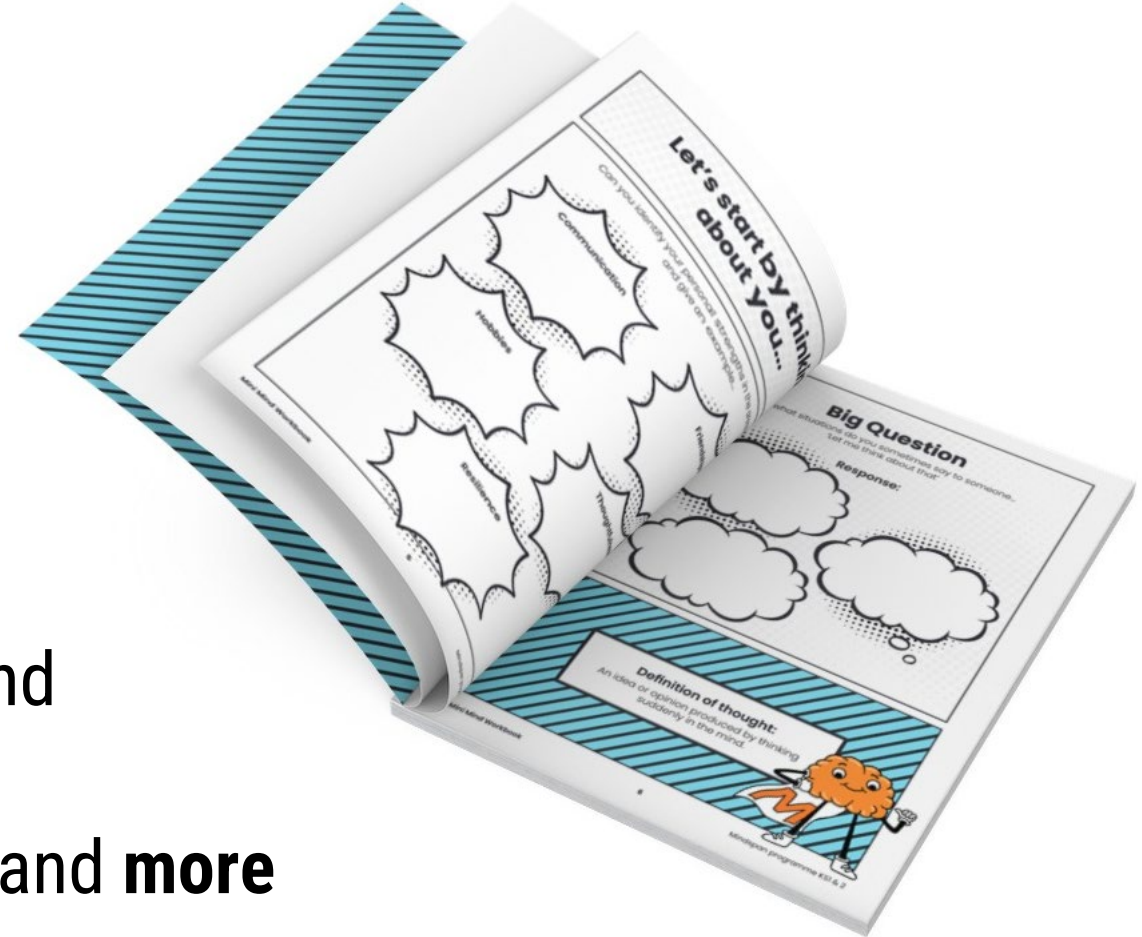
Progress so far

- Four* local schools **trailing** Mini Mind – from EYFS to mixed Y3/4
- Full day of **training** here at UoS – booklets, materials, planning
- Documents to structure thinking, **planning** and research questions
- Individual school **meetings** to capture first cycle reflections, tweaks, insights
- Capturing and **sharing** progress so far e.g. Chartered College Impact abstract – all named; inviting teachers to conferences



Impact on children

- Children taking **pride** in their booklets
- Now have **tools to articulate**
- **Less dysregulation**
- **Better behaviour** around school
- Notable in **comments at break times** and **relationships** between each other
- Much **more reflective** on their actions, and **more quickly**

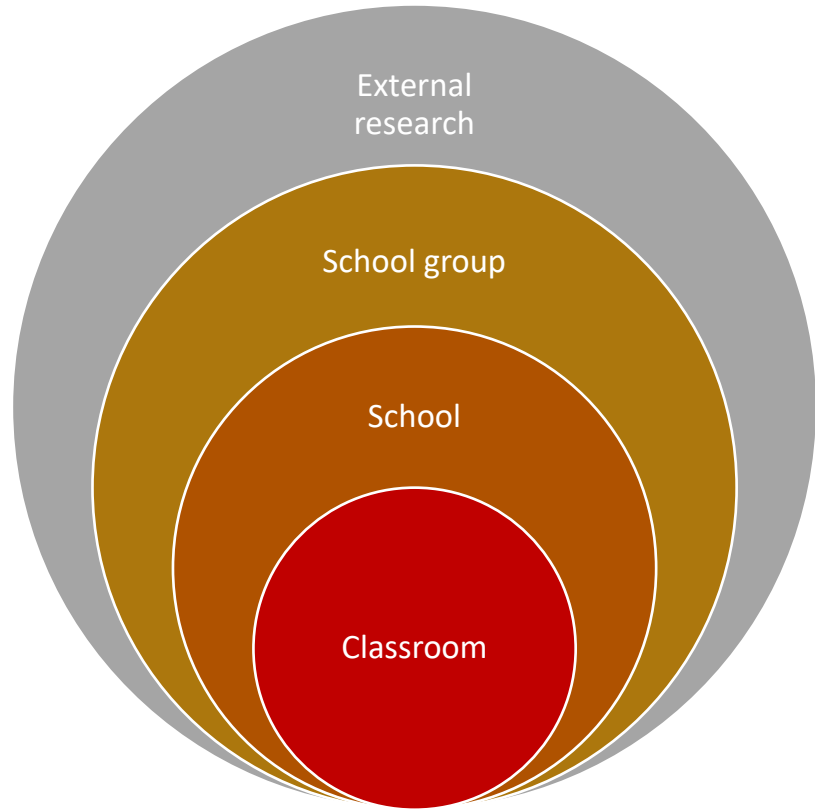


Next steps and outputs

- School **visits** – data collection* (RAs, ethics etc)
- End of term **review** meeting all schools on campus
- Sharing **progress**: publications and conferences
- Formal **write** ups for stakeholder, practitioner and academic audiences
- Seek further **funding** to continue/scale up project



Can school research influence the sector?



- **Macro**
 - Region
 - School group



- **Meso**
 - School
 - Department



- **Micro**
 - Classroom
 - Teacher

QUESTION:
**What is our
(HE) role?**



Link to conference theme: Interdisciplinarity and Collaboration

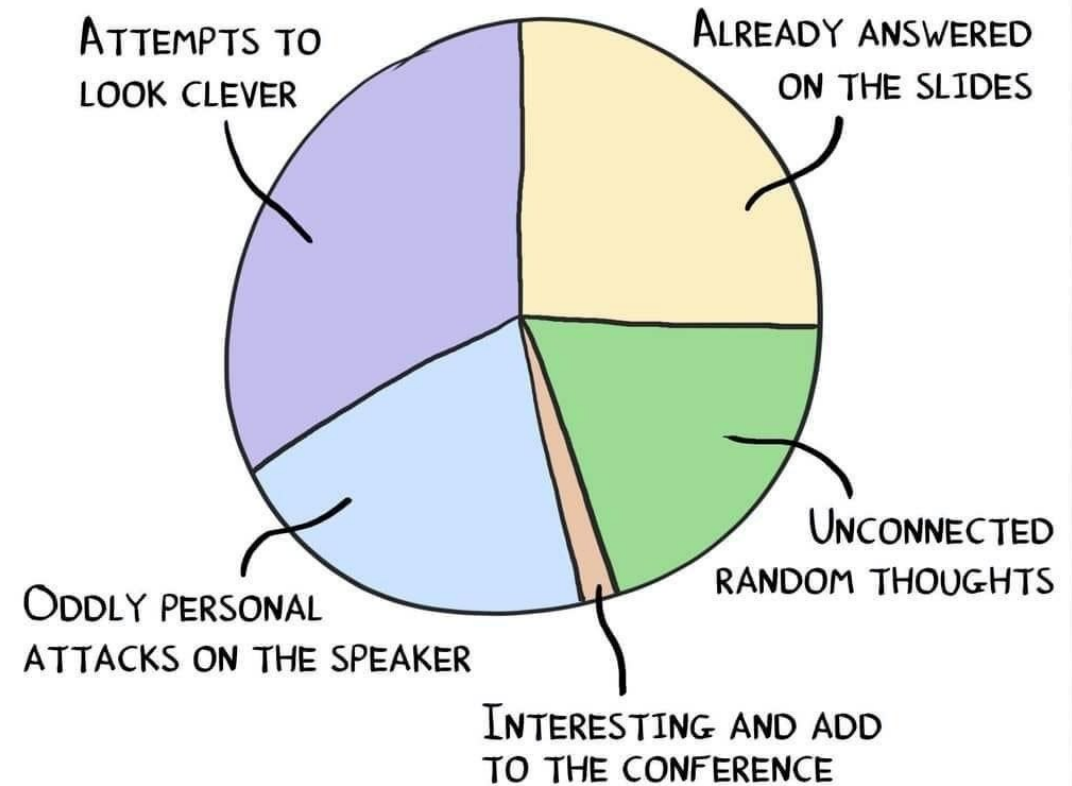
- **Collaboration** between university, external partners and local schools
- We (UoS) acting as a **catalyst** for this project
- Bringing people, ideas and funding **together**
- Interdisciplinary – the **right people on the team** to move the project forward



Questions, comments, insights, suggestions?

QUESTIONS IN ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

A PIE CHART



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References and further information

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- Sharples J, Albers B and Fraser F (2019) Putting evidence to work: A school's guide to implementation. Guidance report. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation>
- Weare K and Bethune A (2021) Implementing Mindfulness in Schools: An Evidence-Based Guide. Guidance report. Available at <https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/implementing-mindfulness-in-schools-an-evidence-based-guide>





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