

TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE THROUGH IMPACTFUL RESEARCH

AWARD WINNERS
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TO REAL WORLD IMPACT



EMERALD AWARDS
2022/23
REAL IMPACT

Research impact is more than academic achievement; it's about fostering real change. Every year we celebrate the progress that has been made and the researchers who are driving change via the Real Impact Awards. We congratulate all winners and highly commended individuals and thank all contributors who have made this initiative possible since 2018.



• CELEBRATING 5 YEARS • CELEBRATING 5 YEARS • CELEBRATING 5 YEARS •



EMERALD AWARDS 2022/23 REAL IMPACT

Since 2018, the research community has provided valuable insights and stories, highlighting a genuine commitment to positive societal change. Today, researchers continue to stand at the forefront, working on projects that address critical challenges and align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Lessons learnt from the global pandemic have also made their work increasingly collaborative and interdisciplinary, underscoring the importance of our collective efforts to drive change and support research that addresses both global and local issues.

Since our inaugural Real Impact Awards and the signing of our Real Impact Manifesto, our dedication to research impact has only grown stronger. In 2022, we relaunched our Real Impact Manifesto and set out six commitments we believe are important to the research ecosystem and the continued evolution of research impact. We recognise it's going to take a collective effort to solve the challenges of social science research in a global context and deliver sectoral change so we continue to call upon the community to unite and work together for change.

For the 2022/23 Real Impact Awards, we introduced a new award

category: The Early Career Researcher Recognition Award. This new award recognises the efforts of early career researchers who commit to challenging the status quo and drive impact through innovation.

Special thanks go to the [judging panel](#) for their contributions and for shining a light on the award winners and highly commended. Together they bring expert knowledge in impact, knowledge-exchange, policy-making, research funding, library and scholarly communications and interdisciplinary research.

The Real Impact Awards stand as a testament to the dedication and passion of researchers who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to creating a tangible impact on society. The 2022/23 awards highlight the stories of these remarkable individuals and teams, emphasising their pursuit for change and innovation in their respective fields. From local initiatives to global research endeavours, the commitment to impact is evident when the primary goal is to effect positive change in the real world. At Emerald, we are proud to support and champion this work.

A heartfelt congratulations to all for their outstanding achievements!



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INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH AWARD

A woman wearing a pink headscarf and a pink top is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the right with a joyful, open-mouthed smile. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees. The overall mood is positive and hopeful.

*The IDR Award
recognises innovative
research projects that
promote action on
the UN Sustainable
Development Goals and
global challenges.*

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AWARD



EMERALD AWARDS
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Winner

INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH AWARD

PROJECT:

Exploring cultural capital in local communities



Professor Chris Gerrard,
Durham University, UK



Professor Chris Brown,
University of
Southampton, UK



John Castling,
The Auckland Project, UK

"Impact-led research takes me out of my institution and encourages me to explain my work to others. Usually that doesn't involve lectures and seminars... it means communicating through radio, press, TV and social media - in other words the way that most people learn and negotiate their lives."

Professor Chris Gerrard,
University of Durham, UK.



Cultivating Cultural Capital Through Archaeology

In many disadvantaged communities, the lack of cultural capital can hinder academic achievements and limit social mobility. In the North East of England, there lies a pressing concern: poverty. The End Child Poverty Coalition's recent [findings](#) indicated that 38% of children in the North East lived below the poverty line between 2020 and 2021. This number rises slightly to 40% for those living in the town of Bishop Auckland.

Amidst these challenges, a unique initiative by researchers at Durham University's School of Education and Department of Archaeology has sought to harness the town's historical treasures. Professor Chris Brown from the University of Warwick (previously from the University of Durham), Professor Chris Gerrard, University of Durham, and Mr John Castling, The Auckland Project, developed the Exploring Cultural Knowledge in Local Communities project by combining their expertise in education and archaeology. It was hoped that by using archaeology and heritage as a pathway, the team could successfully apply research findings that linked cultural capital to academic attainment, character-building qualities, and social mobility (Brown 2021).

The project aimed to align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The result was an empowering educational programme that tapped into Bishop Auckland's hidden history. Young people and local volunteers were given the opportunity to be involved in a hands-on archaeological operation. Activities included excavations, data analysis, workshops, and public events.

Pathways to Impact

The outcomes of the project have been astoundingly positive. Participants were able to connect with the past, foster a sense of community pride, and increase their cultural capital.

In addition, while preliminary data unveiled that 93% of participants had never partaken in an archaeology or history project before, feedback post-intervention highlighted significant enhancements in participants' self-confidence, mental and physical well-being, and a sense of contributing to something important. Professor Chris Brown said, "Although

small scale, we asked the children taking part what they thought had positively changed as a result of being part of the project and we were delighted with the results."

Part of the project's triumph lies in its interdisciplinary methodology. By amalgamating education and archaeology, the team have managed to create a unique learning environment outside of the classroom. Professor Brown said, "Disciplines and fields like Education and Archaeology are connected to people's lives and the everyday. Archaeology, for example, helps us understand the lived realities of the past; while Education helps us prepare the next generation of citizens for the lives they will lead in the future."

On the importance of impactful research, Professor Gerrard remarked, "Impact needs to make a difference to people in the community. It's not about research papers, but impact should be underpinned by research, and it needs to be sensitively communicated." On how that is conducted, he said, "Impact-led research takes me out of my institution and encourages me to explain my work to others. Usually that doesn't involve lectures and seminars, which make up so much of my normal teaching week. It means communicating through radio, press, TV, and social media- in other words the way that most people learn and negotiate their lives. I don't find that especially easy, it can be outside my 'comfort zone', but I know that's what I need to do."

Reflecting on potential accolades for their endeavours, Professor Brown said, "It's a real thrill and honour to have our commitment to making a difference rewarded in this way".

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Associate Professor
Iftekhar Ahmed, University
of Newcastle, Australia



Mr Thomas Johnson,
University of Newcastle,
Australia



Dr Maggie Tang,
University of Newcastle,
Australia

PROJECT:

Improving local resilience to floods in the Hunter Region
to address Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13



Associate Professor
Jamie MacKee,
University of Newcastle,
Australia



Professor Margaret Alston,
University of Newcastle,
Australia



Professor Roberta Ryan,
University of Newcastle,
Australia

“Many of the most pressing challenges facing humanity, such as climate change, disasters, conflicts and public health crises, require impactful research to develop effective, practicable solutions. It allows supporting evidence-based policy and decision-making.”

Associate Professor Iftekhar Ahmed,
University of Newcastle, Australia.



Bolstering Flood Resilience Through Interdisciplinary Research

Climate change, with its escalating challenges, has brought about a surge in disasters. According to the [Climate Council 2022 New Climate Council Report](#), climate change is causing severe rainfall, and the occurrence of these events is expected to nearly double for every additional degree of global warming.

The Hunter Region, located in New South Wales, Australia, has been facing an increasing vulnerability to floods. Notably, significant flooding incidents occurred in 2021 and 2022. To address this growing concern, the University of Newcastle in Australia initiated a project aimed at enhancing flood resilience within the Hunter Region. The project's main objective was to tackle Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 by strengthening the region's ability to withstand climate-related hazards. This initiative was piloted in two council areas with a particular focus on SDG target 13.1, which seeks to "Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries, and indicator 13.1.3, which relates to local disaster risk management.

A Multifaceted Approach to a Global Challenge

Associate Professor Iftekhar Ahmed, Mr Thomas Johnson, Dr Maggie Tang, Associate Professor Jamie MacKee, Professor Margaret Alston, and Professor Roberta Ryan from the University of Newcastle, Australia, combined their diverse academic backgrounds to form a multidisciplinary team. By drawing on their knowledge of disaster resilience, climate change adaptation, built environment, and social sciences and governance, they were able to work together to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and offer actionable insights for policymakers, researchers, and local communities. Their collective efforts resulted in a set of best practices aimed at effectively managing flood risks.

The outcomes of the project have been promising. Knowledge from the research is being integrated into university courses which has fostered a culture of

research-informed teaching. In addition, the team ensured dissemination of their results through peer reviewed publications, conference presentations, and an [informative video](#) to maximise real world impact.

Associate Professor Iftekhar Ahmed shared his thoughts on impactful research, saying, "Many of the most pressing challenges facing humanity, such as climate change, disasters, conflicts and public health crises, require impactful research to develop effective, practicable solutions. It allows supporting evidence-based policy and decision-making."

The project's success can be attributed to its multidisciplinary and local approach.

Associate Professor Ahmed said, "The SDG framework continues to be a template for social, economic, and environmental benefits. It guided our research to link this global framework to the local context of the Hunter Region to explore how adaptive capacity and resilience to the pressing challenge of floods can be improved."

By bridging the gap between global objectives and local realities, the team ensured a holistic understanding of the challenges and potential solutions. Although floods are a global problem, their repercussions are experienced at the community level. By grasping the local consequences of the broader issue, the Hunter Region, with its repeated flood-related challenges, can serve as a small-scale representation of the impacts of climate change and the urgent need for scalable strategies.

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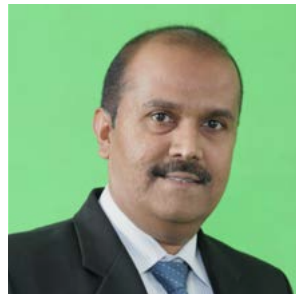
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INTERDISCIPLINARY
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PROJECT:

I am a Girl, I am an Engineer: Inspire and Empower
Impoverished Urban Girls to be Future Engineers



Dr Balamuralithara
Balakrishnan,
Sultan Idris Education
University, Malaysia



Dr Muhammad
Ikhwan Hadi Yaacob,
Sultan Idris Education
University, Malaysia



Dr Chua Yaw Long,
The National Energy
University, Malaysia

“Striving to achieve as many SDG 2030 goals as possible in one research project is important to fulfil the agendas of sustainable development for future generations.”

Dr Balamuralithara Balakrishnan,
Sultan Idris Education University,
Malaysia.



Empowering Poor Urban Girls: Engineering a Brighter Future

In Malaysia, like in many other parts of the world, the perception of engineering as a male-dominated profession creates a challenging landscape in encouraging women and girls to pursue engineering as a profession. According to the [Society of Women Engineers](#), women represent about 7% of professional engineers with practicing certificates in Malaysia. This issue is further compounded when coupled with the hardships of poverty.

However, a transformative initiative spearheaded by Dr Balamuralithara Balakrishnan, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, Dr Mohd Ikhwan Hadi Yaacob, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, and Dr Chua Yaw Long, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Malaysia, seek to rewrite this narrative. The project, titled 'I am a Girl, I am an Engineer' aims to mobilise impoverished urban girls in Malaysia to pursue careers in engineering.

The project focuses on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). On behalf of the team Dr Balakrishnan said, "Striving to achieve as many SDG 2030 goals as possible in one research project is important to fulfil the agendas of sustainable development for future generations".

Inspiration and Empowerment: The Twin Pillars

Two primary themes underpin the project: To Inspire and Empower. Dr Balakrishnan added, "These main two aspects of this project - Inspire and Empower- can carve the right direction for the participants of this project to be future engineers which ultimately increase the number of women engineers in Malaysia".

To empower the next generation of female engineers in Malaysia, a combination of creative and innovative pedagogical techniques, engineering education, and gender studies were used to create an educational module. The project's hands-on activities centred around engineering problem-solving and allowed participants to experience the thrill of engineering first-hand. These activities bolstered participant self-confidence while also enhancing their understanding of the field.

To inspire, participants were connected with professional female engineers via social media. They demonstrated their own success and showcased the exciting aspects of their career, proving that engineering is not bound by gender. By introducing impoverished urban girls to successful female engineers, the project challenges societal norms and reshapes perceptions. These real-life role models serve as a testament to the potential success awaiting these young girls in the engineering field.

The initiative has made significant strides in reshaping the future of many urban girls in Malaysia. Dr Balakrishnan said, "This project has had a vast impact on impoverished urban girls by setting up a proper path for their future careers and, most importantly, breaking the cycle of poverty in their respective societies. It helps them become good role models to whom their community can look up to."

Reflecting on the project's recognition, Dr Balakrishnan said, "It is motivating me to carry out more impactful research in-line with SDG 2030 goals and to contribute more to society". He added, "Millions of thanks to Emerald Publishing for choosing our project for the award. I believe that we as the academicians and researchers can change this world to be a better place for our future generations."





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INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH AWARD

PROJECT:

Advanced Digital Building Performance and Cost Assessment Network (ADiLE) for Post Disaster Building Assessment



Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
(UTM), Malaysia.



Professor Dr Mohd
Shafry Mohd Rahim,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
(UTM), Malaysia.



Associate Professor
Dr Mohd Saidin Misnan,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
(UTM), Malaysia.



Dr Zuhaili Mohammad Ramly,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
(UTM), Malaysia.

“Impactful research needs a high personal commitment to understand real societal problems before starting scientific investigation.”

Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed,
Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia.



Streamlining Post-Disaster Building Assessment: The ADiLE Initiative

In Malaysia, a country susceptible to natural disasters like floods, the prompt and accurate evaluation of building conditions is essential for effective recovery efforts.

Led by Associate Professor Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed, Professor Dr Mohd Shafry Mohd Rahim, Associate Professor Dr Mohd Saidin Misnan, and Dr Zuhaili Mohamad Ramly from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, the ADiLE (Advanced Digital Building Performance & Cost Assessment Network) system aims to address this need. The project aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 11, focusing on creating sustainable cities and communities by offering a methodical approach to post-disaster building assessment and budget allocation.

A Practical, Technological Solution

The ADiLE system is a computer-based platform that integrates intelligent databases with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology and artificial Intelligence for enhanced asset management. This tool is designed to assist engineers in collecting essential on-site data for building rehabilitation. By merging insights from structural engineering and computer science, the system introduces a new model for categorising building damage patterns. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the team's ability to address flood risks in Malaysia more effectively. In addition, by streamlining the assessment process, the system can expedite recovery efforts, ensuring communities rebuild faster and more efficiently after disasters. Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed said, "Prompt and accurate building evaluation is essential for effective recovery efforts".

The tool has far-reaching implications and potential for application in various sectors. It is an invaluable asset for a range of stakeholders, such as government bodies, real estate developers, and financial institutions. By offering a reliable method to data collection and processing, it significantly reduces the margin for human error, and therefore be leveraged for informed decision-making in building rehabilitation projects. With its adaptable methodology and technology, the system also has the potential for global application, particularly in regions prone to natural disasters.

To this end, the team are exploring partnerships with international organisations to adapt the system for diverse geographical and infrastructural conditions. Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed said, "Our aim is to make the ADiLE system a global standard for post-disaster building assessment, thereby contributing to more resilient and sustainable communities worldwide".

Advancements, Awards, and Commitment to Research Impact

In discussing the role of personal commitment in research, Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed emphasised the importance of understanding the real-world issues at hand. He said, "Impactful research needs a high personal commitment to understand real societal problems before starting scientific investigation". This view has guided the team's approach, leading to notable successes and multiple recognitions for their efforts. A significant milestone in their research journey was their inclusion in the Leaders in Innovation Fellowships – Newton Fund Programme, a collaboration between the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng UK) and the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT). During this year-long programme, the team refined their products and further developed a consistent, real-time asset management system. The project has also received substantial support from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, including two grants.

On receiving the additional recognition of an Emerald Real Impact Award, Dr Sarajul Fikri Mohamed on behalf of the team said, "We were very honoured but thankful to the Emerald team and all judges who selected our project to receive this prestigious award".

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MOBILISING RESEARCH
INTO ACTION

Recognises the efforts and commitments to meaningfully connect research and action to deliver societal change, with a special focus on international collaboration.



MOBILISING RESEARCH INTO ACTION



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Winner

MOBILISING RESEARCH
INTO ACTION

TEAM:

Young & Resilient Research Centre



Professor Amanda Third,
Young and Resilient Research
Centre, Western Sydney
University, Australia



Ms Lilly Moody,
Young and Resilient Research
Centre, Western Sydney
University, Australia



Dr Girish Lala,
Young and Resilient Research
Centre, Western Sydney
University, Australia

“Doing impactful research means actively reflecting and constantly learning. It requires a daily commitment to translating and communicating ideas.”

Professor Amanda Third,
Young & Resilient Research Centre,
Western Sydney University, Australia.



A Collaborative and Data-Informed Approach to Global Challenges

The Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University, Australia, has taken steps to address issues that young people face in today's world. Led by Professor Amanda Third, Dr Girish Lala, and Ms Lilly Moody, the team are committed to placing the voice of children at the heart of their work in a coordinated, global, and intergenerational effort.

The team cultivate partnerships with child-facing organisations to establish intergenerational dialogues across multiple countries, with a goal to gaining children's insights on regenerative solutions that enable them to thrive. Their work primarily aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3) and Quality Education (SDG 4), as well as elements related to climate change, violence prevention, and innovation, connecting it to SDGs 13,16, and 9 respectively.

The team amplifies the voices of children through their Distributed Data Generation (DDG) methodology. This approach enables increased partnership, inclusivity, and empowerment compared to traditional data collection methods. By actively involving children and young people in the research process, the DDG methodology ensures that their perspectives and insights are authentically captured to inform outcomes intended for their benefit.

A Rewarding Journey to Impact.

On the topic of impact, Professor Third said, "Doing impactful research means actively reflecting and constantly learning. It requires a daily commitment to translating and communicating ideas." In line with this ethos, the Centre has engaged with over 6,000 young individuals and 100 organisations across 78 countries. They have facilitated children's contributions to a range of dialogues such as online safety, children's rights, and health and wellbeing. As these reflections from the participants show, the methods positively impact children themselves:

"I think this workshop was helpful and a great way for children to get involved and help benefit other children as well." – Child participant, United Kingdom

"Workshops like this are a chance to let your ideas out finally." – Child participant, United Kingdom

"My opinion was heard." – Child participant, Bulgaria

"[It's important] that children from all backgrounds are welcome and that their voices matter"

– Child participant, Australia

The impact generated from this work can be seen in its outcomes and applications as well. Through its global reach, the team have gathered diverse insights from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and used the data to create co-research tools, reports, guides, and apps that are used in areas like research, policy, teaching practices and curriculum resources. The insights gained have also had a direct effect on global policy and practice, informing governments, industry, service providers, and technology companies. The information has been utilised by international child rights advocates such as UNICEF, and informed global policies such as the [UNCRC General Comment 25 on children's rights](#) in relation to the digital environment. The team's research has also had an impact on the ground. Projects like Online Safety in the Pacific have developed evidence bases for child protection interventions in countries like Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Kiribati.

The Young and Resilient Research Centre's approach has not only championed youth voices, but has also paved the way for tangible global changes. Their dedication to collaboration, inclusivity, and actionable insights has set a benchmark for impactful research, influencing both policy and practice on an international scale.

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MOBILISING RESEARCH
INTO ACTION AWARD

PROJECT:

Waterproofing Data Project

Professor Joao Porto de Albuquerque,
University of Glasgow,
UK

Professor Maria Alexandra Cunha,
Getúlio Vargas Foundation,
Brazil

Professor Alexander Zipf,
Heidelberg University,
Germany

Dr Rachel Trajber,
National Centre for Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning,
Brazil (CEMADEN)



“Impact can begin even before a project is started: when we listen carefully and attentively to the people that will be impacted by our research”

Professor João Porto de Albuquerque, University of Glasgow, UK.

Waterproofing Data: Empowering Communities to Build Resilience to Flooding

According to the [World Economic Forum](#), an estimated 1.81 billion people, or 23% of the world population, face significant flood risk. The need for a new approach to flood resilience is becoming increasingly crucial. The team behind the Waterproofing Data Project is committed to mobilising research into action through revolutionising how flooding data is collected, processed, and used.

Led by Professor João Porto de Albuquerque from the University of Glasgow, UK, the team include partners in Brazil (Fundacao Getulio Vargas and CEMADEN/National Centre for Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning) and Germany (Heidelberg University). The project employs transdisciplinary and participatory approaches to co-produce action-oriented research on data innovations that deliver equitable, just, and sustainable outcomes. The Waterproofing Data Project also significantly contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13, Climate Action, and SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals.

Community Data Generation and Analytics: The Waterproofing Data Project's Approach

The [Waterproofing Data Project](#) departs from traditional flood risk management strategies, such as the use of expensive sensors, and instead adopts a 'citizen science approach'. This approach mobilises the local community to generate data themselves, for example, through the self-construction of rainfall gauges and the recording of rainfall. The information is collected via a mobile app and mapped across a web dashboard to improve flood monitoring and early warning capabilities. Through this, citizens also acquire a critical understanding of the local flood risks in their neighbourhoods, empowering them to advocate for infrastructure improvements and risk-reduction strategies.

The citizen science approach is also supported through several translation activities, including an open-access model curriculum for schools and local communities, data-driven exhibitions, and a YouTube channel. The activities have been hugely successful and have engaged more than 400 students and community volunteers from 26 schools, as well as 18 civil protection agencies in more than 20 cities across Brazil.

Saving Lives, Generating Real Impact

The Waterproofing Data Project's work has proven to be life-saving. In May 2022, two young participants in Jaboatão dos Guararapes, Brazil, used rain gauges they had built as part of the project to measure rainfall. They entered this data into the Waterproofing Data app and, recognising the signs of impending danger, quickly alerted their community to an imminent flash flood. That month, flash floods and landslides in the broader Pernambuco region claimed 133 lives and displaced 25,000 people. Thanks to the timely action of these citizen scientists, their community was able to mobilise and move to safer ground and prevent any fatalities in their immediate area.

In harnessing the power of citizen science, the Waterproofing Data Project has equipped communities with life-saving flood data knowledge, contributed to the UNs SDGs, and made a profound impact. The team is now working to bring this approach to other countries facing flood and other disaster risks.

Professor João Porto de Albuquerque offered advice for others starting out on their impact journey. He said, "Impact can begin even before a project is started: when we listen carefully and attentively to the people that will be impacted by our research, we can start changing not only our perceptions but also our research agendas and ways of working towards achieving real impact".

[See the project in action](#)

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PROJECT:

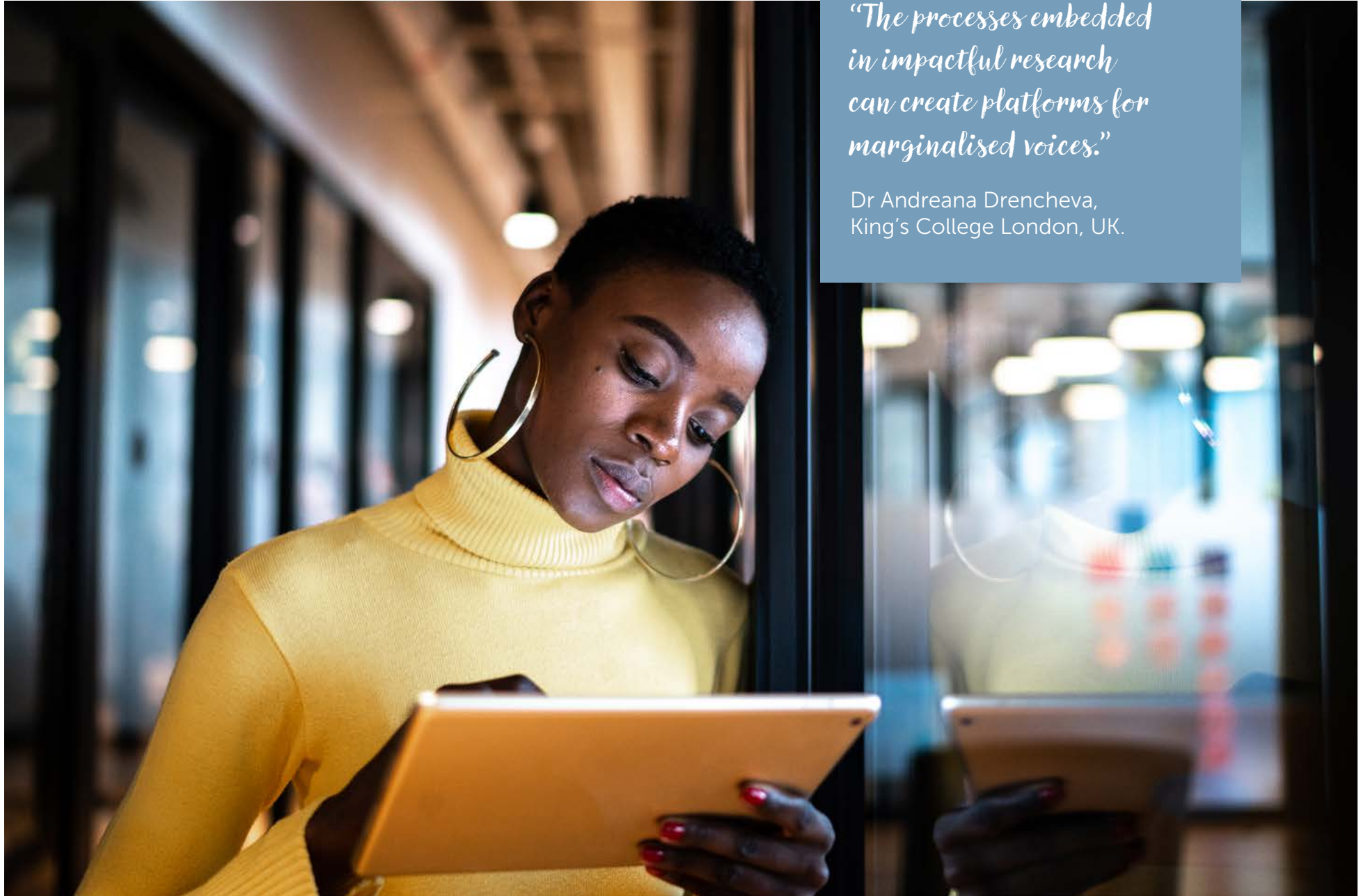
Doing Good/Staying Well



Dr Andreana Drencheva,
King's College London, UK



Dr Wee Chan Au,
Newcastle University Business
School, UK (previously at
Monash University, Malaysia)



“The processes embedded in impactful research can create platforms for marginalised voices.”

Dr Andreana Drencheva,
King’s College London, UK.

Supporting Young Social Entrepreneurs: Enhancing Wellbeing for Sustainable Impact

Social entrepreneurship is a process that involves the use of entrepreneurial principles to create and implement solutions to social, cultural, or ecological issues. According to the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), its main purpose “is not the maximisation of profit but the attainment of certain economic and social goals”.

Social entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in addressing issues such as social exclusion, income inequality, fragmented civil society, or climate injustice, and contribute to the achievement of many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, social entrepreneurs work with high levels of uncertainty, resource constraints, contradictory demands between social change and financial success, traumatic and emotionally challenging experiences in supporting service users who face significant risks, and heroic portrayals of what it means to be a social entrepreneur. Thus, they face unique wellbeing challenges that jeopardise the impact and sustainability of their work, including burnout. These challenges are amplified for young social entrepreneurs who may lack robust support networks or may not have had opportunities to develop skills and methods to maintain and enhance their wellbeing.

In an international collaboration between Dr Andreana Drencheva, King’s College London, UK, Dr Wee Chan Au, Newcastle University Business School, UK, and two civil society organisations in Southeast Asia (Impact Hub Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and Social Innovation Movement, Malaysia), these wellbeing challenges were examined. The team worked with young social entrepreneurs across Cambodia and Malaysia to co-create an initiative that enhanced their skills and wellbeing for sustainable social entrepreneurship. The initiative included research, a wellbeing toolkit, a cohort-based wellbeing programme, the embedding of the toolkit into education and support programmes, and public conversations about the importance of social entrepreneurs’ wellbeing.

The research involved in-depth interviews with 65 social entrepreneurs, including those from refugee backgrounds, and an ethnographic study with multiple social enterprises. The findings were published in academic journals as well as mainstream outlets. The wellbeing toolkit, co-created with young social entrepreneurs, provides tools for reflection, planning, and learning to encourage changing attitudes and practices to maintain or enhance wellbeing. The toolkit has been downloaded and used by over 200 social

enterprises and support organisations. In addition, the cohort-based wellbeing programme led to long-term changes in the social enterprises and personal lives of 20 young social entrepreneurs.

The impact of this international collaborative initiative is growing, enhancing wellbeing-related experiences, attitudes and practices among social entrepreneurs. It has also embedded wellbeing into support programmes, sparked open dialogues on wellbeing, and contributed to shifting the narrative in social entrepreneurship toward authenticity and vulnerability.

Co-creation for Impactful Research

Dr Wee Chan Au describes the project’s as, “co-created with stakeholders to address challenges that matter to them through rigorous research”. However, she also adds that the key element for the success of the project lies in the process. She said, “The processes embedded in impactful research can create platforms for marginalised voices, provide them with additional access to resources, create new opportunities for reflection and collaboration, and catalyse peer support and advocacy networks beyond the scope of the research project”.

Upon being honoured with a Real Impact award, the team expressed both pride and a renewed sense of responsibility in the pursuit of impactful research. They said, “Being selected for a Real Impact award demonstrates that this work is valued”. Furthermore, on behalf of the team Dr Drencheva said, “We also hope that awards like this one will raise awareness of research impact amongst social entrepreneurs and society broadly, thus increasing public trust and engagement with research to benefit all”.





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DRIVING THE
IMPACT AGENDA

*Celebrating the efforts
and commitment to
strategically embed
impact within a
research environment
or to drive
impact culture.*



DRIVING THE IMPACT AGENDA



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Winner

DRIVING THE
IMPACT AGENDA



Professor Sara Dolnicar,
The University of Queensland,
Australia



Associate Professor Ya-Yen Sun
The University of Queensland,
Australia



Ms Jenna Farmer,
The University of Queensland,
Australia

INITIATIVE:

Low Harm Hedonism



Dr Danyelle Greene
The University of Queensland,
Australia



Dr Anna Zinn
The University of Queensland,
Australia



Dr Bettina Grün
Vienna University of Economics
and Business, Austria



Associate Professor
Marius Portmann,
The University of Queensland,
Australia

Supported by: Ms Csilla Demeter, Mr Peter Lewin, Miss Sarah MacInnes, Mrs Dorine Von Briel, Mr Oscar Zhu and Miss Qingqing Chen.
The University of Queensland, Australia

“Curiosity drives basic research. Basic research informs research that creates change. It is the entire process that is deeply rewarding.”

Professor Sara Dolnicar,
The University of Queensland,
Australia.



Revolutionising Sustainability: The Low Harm Hedonism Initiative

Given the global climate crisis, the need for radical behavioural change is urgent. In 2022, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres declared that we are “on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator”. In addition, tourism alone accounts for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Recognising this pressing issue, the team behind the Low Harm Hedonism Initiative at The University of Queensland, Australia, are committed to harnessing their research to take pragmatic steps in reducing the environmental impact caused by tourism. It draws upon several areas, harnessing the power of basic theoretical research to inform field work. The Initiative also aligns its efforts with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 12; Sustainable Consumption and Production).

The Low Harm Hedonism Initiative works by partnering with businesses and applying evidence-based behavioural change interventions based upon theory-informed measures. By applying theory with practice and measuring performance in real-time, the initiative has made significant and immediate strides in reducing excessive waste and energy consumption. Some results so far include a [42% reduction in unnecessary daily room cleans](#) in a hotel through a sharing intervention, and a [63% reduction through a change in the default cleaning schedule](#). In addition, the initiative has reduced plate waste generated by families at a breakfast buffet by 38%, and even achieved a 7% reduction in plate waste at a hotel buffet in China by using a simple table sign. In the area of energy conservation, they have also reduced in-room heater electricity use in student accommodation by 60% by altering the default operating mode of the heaters.

Innovation and Impact: The Low Harm Hedonism Approach

Through the application of behavioural change strategies that are based on a new theory of pro-environmental behaviour, the Low Harm Hedonism Initiative drives real impact,

bridges the gap between theory and practice, and directly influences actions surrounding consumption. Reflecting on the importance of impactful research, Professor Dolnicar said, “The desire to create change automatically leads to an impact-orientation of research. But it is important to understand that frequently it is necessary to engage in basic research in order to be able to then translate it into impactful research.” In addition, she emphasised the importance of resisting pressures from research metrics. “Today universities like to use research metrics to quantify the performance of their researchers [...] it is important to resist, as much as possible, those pressures. Research metrics encourage quick (but typically insignificant) wins, the very opposite of what discovery and creating change are about.”

The Low Harm Hedonism Initiative’s pragmatic approach to sustainability in the tourism industry is commendable. Their work, driven by idealism and a commitment to impactful research, offers a valuable model for addressing the pressing challenges of the global climate crisis.

Reflecting on being selected for a Real Impact Award, on behalf of the team Professor Dolnicar said, “We are deeply honoured. We do not ever do any work to improve our research metrics or to win awards, so it is even nicer for our work – that’s driven purely by idealism – to be noticed and acknowledged in this way.”

[View the initiative in action](#)

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DRIVING THE
IMPACT AGENDA



“Impact is about making a positive difference to the real lives of real people through ensuring that the authentic voices of stakeholders inform the research.”

Professor Nicola Martin,
London South Bank University, UK.



Advocating for Authentic Autistic Involvement in Research

Academia, while vast and varied, often overlooks the nuanced perspectives of specific communities. One such overlooked group is autistic researchers, who, despite their invaluable insights, face systemic disadvantages in employment and genuine involvement in research. Professor Nicola Martin from London South Bank University (LSBU), UK, seeks to rectify this.

Professor Martin holds many roles and responsibilities, including leading the Critical Autism and Disability Studies Research Group (CADS) at LSBU. CADS seeks to ensure that research concerning autism is influenced and actively conducted by properly employed and adequately supported autistic researchers. The group is driven to produce tangible outcomes that effectively enhance the lives of autistic individuals.

In collaboration with esteemed autistic colleagues, Professor Martin established The Participatory Autism Research Collective (PARC). This groundbreaking initiative is designed to facilitate the professional development of autistic researchers by offering them a platform for peer support. Her association with the charity Employment Autism and her foundational role in The Westminster Autism Commission further underscores her unwavering commitment to addressing the unique employment challenges faced by autistic researchers.

A Paradigm Shift in Autism Research

The outcomes of Professor Martin's work have been considerable. Professor Sir Simon Baron-Cohen from Cambridge University praised her work, stating that her contributions have, "revolutionised the way we view autism at Cambridge". Most profoundly, her research has resulted in the development of training materials for university practitioners. These materials, approved by the Department of Education, have since been disseminated to over 1,000 practitioners.

Professor Martin's work also contributes to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Her commitment to ensuring that autistic researchers are properly employed and supported aligns with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. By addressing the structural disadvantages faced by autistic academics and advocating for their fair remuneration,

Professor Martin champions the reduction of inequalities within both the academic and broader societal context. Furthermore, her research also focuses on enhancing the educational experiences of autistic students, resonating with SDG 4: Quality Education. By ensuring an inclusive and equitable education environment, Professor Martin promotes lifelong learning opportunities for autistic researchers. Lastly, her focus on employment challenges and efforts to create a more inclusive academic environment align with SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Personal Journeys Informing Professional Endeavours

Looking back on her journey to impact, Professor Martin expressed her pleasure in working with respected autistic scholars, such as Dr Nick Chown and Dr Damian Milton. In addition, she said, "Impact is about making a positive difference to the real lives of real people through ensuring that the authentic voices of stakeholders inform the research".

Professor Martin also shared a deeply personal experience: she is a bereaved parent. Channeling her experiences, she has written a book under the pseudonym N Praske, titled [Love in the Present Tense](#).

Between her personal experiences and professional pursuits, there is a profound depth and authenticity of Professor Martin's commitment to creating meaningful impact. Her unwavering dedication to inclusive research, coupled with her personal insights, make her a deserving recipient of the prestigious Real Impact Award.





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EARLY CAREER
RESEARCHER AWARD

Recognising the efforts of early career researchers in trying to challenge the status quo to drive the impact agenda.



EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER AWARD



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RESEARCHER AWARD



“Impact is the amount of change that you (or your projects) create in a context. Impact can be intended or unintended, positive or negative.”

Dr Gabriela Nuri Baron,
University of Auckland, New Zealand.



Amplifying Conservation Through Participatory Design

Dr Gabriela Nuri Baron is a Design Strategist from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her mission is to make a difference in the world by improving conservation initiatives from the grassroots level.

Through leveraging her expertise in strategic design, Dr Baron mobilises communities to participate in local conservation efforts. Through her work, Dr Baron adopts a systemic approach to address a range of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goals 11 to 17. Her initiatives encompass solutions for marine ecosystems, sustainable cities, as well as fostering partnerships to achieve these goals.

Challenging the Status Quo in Design and Conservation

Dr Baron believes that by, "leveraging complex know-how, creating simple, easy-to-use, and understandable tools, and teaching through agile, learning-by-doing experiences", she can make her most significant impact. Driven by this vision, and by making the use of participatory design a foundation for her work, Dr Baron has made a lasting impact and successfully engaged stakeholders in New Zealand and beyond.

Dr Baron is a founding member of a new Design School at the University of Auckland. The school aims to radically challenge the traditional role of designers by prioritising purpose-centred design, positively molding the world's future designers. She said, "Our vision is that future designers will no longer contribute to the social and environmental crisis we are experiencing but will use their skills to propose alternative models of pluriversal well-being". This vision extends to her teaching. Students are taught to facilitate participatory design spaces that are transdisciplinary in nature and centred around community partnerships.

Extending her reach further, Dr Baron has co-created the [Design for Conservation Toolkit \(D4C\)](#). The objective of the toolkit is to create a conservation-centred resource that is adaptable and versatile enough to fit any project and context while allowing customisation to best suit place and culture.

She said, "Throughout this project, we have intended to create a methodological bridge that enables collaboration between different stakeholders, understanding that they might come from diverse backgrounds, races, cultures, and systems of knowledge".

The D4C toolkit has been openly available on a digital platform, free for anyone to download, adapt, and re-share. As of August 2023, the tools offered on the platform have been downloaded on seven continents, 73 countries, and 514 cities.

A Legacy of Impact and Collaboration

Dr Baron's work has not only enhanced the quality of conservation efforts. It has also inspired stakeholders and communities alike. Reflecting on the importance of impactful research, Dr Baron said, "Impact is the amount of change that you (or your projects) create in a context. Impact can be intended or unintended, positive or negative. I believe that sharing power is another way to achieve impact. You provide tools and let go of the expectations of how people will use them."

Her advice to others embarking on their impact journey resonates with her own experience. She said, "I would advise everyone to aim to align with their values and true purpose. With passion and hard work, you can challenge existing paradigms and forge new paths towards positive change."

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"Effective and efficient translation of research to practice is needed to realise impact. Bridging the gap between research and practice requires close collaboration between academics, practitioners, policy makers, and citizens."

Dr Taylor Willmott,
The University of Adelaide, Australia.



Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice: Dr Taylor Willmott's Impactful Journey

Dr Taylor Willmott of The University of Adelaide, Australia, is an early-career researcher focused on developing collective action based solutions to address the worlds 'wicked problems', such as climate change, violence, and chronic disease.

She advocates for translating research into effective practice through collaborative and community-led research, and champions partnerships between academics, practitioners and policymakers, to achieve her vision of delivering high-quality research that leads to social impact.

Driven by a transdisciplinary ideology, her innovative projects have reached thousands of people, creating a lasting impact on society and the planet. Her work addresses the need for academics to demonstrate impact beyond the academy, contributing to the economy, society, environment, or culture.

Partnered Research for Complex Problems

Dr Willmott's commitment to impactful research began while working with government and industry partners. She noted, "My experiences have allowed me to see both the potential and limitations of academic research". Driven by a desire to make research accessible, translatable, and scalable, Dr Willmott has been instrumental in the planning, co-creation, design, implementation, and evaluation of over 25 partnered research projects, attracting more than \$1.3 million.

Dr Willmott believes that, "Effective and efficient translation of research to practice is needed to realise impact. Bridging the gap between research and practice requires close collaboration between academics, practitioners, policy makers, and citizens." Her initiatives include delivering sector engagement and professional development workshops to over 6,000 people, facilitating more than 50 co-design workshops, training peer leaders for capacity building, and leading youth advisory groups in local communities.

A prime example of Dr. Willmott's innovative approach is her coordination of a six-part podcast series, '[Collective Engagement for a Social Purpose](#)'. Developed as an alternative method for sharing insights from the Australian Research Council funded Discovery Project (ARC-DP210100858), the series is a collaboration with the GovComms Institute, a network of over 2,000 professionals. Dr Willmott's work addresses the need for a more innovative research impact mindset by offering a platform where academics and practitioners can exchange and disseminate research findings in an accessible format, overcoming the limitations of traditional academic research dissemination.

A Legacy of Impact and Collaboration

Reflecting on her journey, Dr Willmott emphasises the importance of impactful research. She said, "Impactful research will always contribute either knowledge, skills or resources to the beneficiaries it is intended to. With impactful research, one works collaboratively to co-problematise, co-design, and co-produce solutions that contribute to addressing societal real-life problems."

Dr Willmott's contributions have elevated the quality of research output and reached a diverse audience, including academics, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public. As she ventures into new areas of exploration, her work continues in the spirit of making real, lasting impact. Her advice to others embarking on their impact journey resonates with her own experience. She said, "Be persistent, pragmatic, and patient. Celebrate all the wins – big and small!"



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“Find something you are passionate about because your passion will motivate you to overcome any obstacles you might find.”

Dr Mphahlele Ramashego Shila,
University of South Africa.



Empowering Education Through Technology: Dr Mphahlele Ramashego Shila's Impactful Journey

In a world where technology is rapidly transforming education, Dr Mphahlele Ramashego Shila of the University of South Africa has embarked on a mission. Driven by her early experiences as a substitute teacher, she has dedicated herself to leveraging technology to support learners experiencing reading difficulties.

Her innovative projects have reached thousands of teachers and students, creating a lasting impact on education in South Africa and beyond. Her work addresses Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which is to, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

An Online Teaching and Learning Revolution

Dr Mphahlele's commitment to driving the impact agenda began with her struggles as a substitute teacher from 1998 to 2004. She said, "In the different schools where I worked for that short period, I identified learners experiencing reading difficulties and felt helpless for being unable to support them due to my short stay". When she secured a permanent post in 2005, she pursued further studies in inclusive education, igniting her passion for exploring innovative ways to enhance support. She initiated a project called Online Teaching and Learning for School Teachers. She has presented workshops and webinars that have attracted over 3,000 teachers across South Africa and beyond. Collaborating with Open Education for Better World (OE4BW), Dr Mphahlele then went on to develop a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and a short course for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) lecturers. Her efforts also extended to publishing articles, book chapters, and leading research projects, including a collaboration with the South African Department of Basic Education.

Her innovative approach to education is best captured in her words. Dr Mphahlele said, "I started this project in April 2020 during the Level 5 lockdown thinking of learners who might be missing out on teaching and learning activities. Of course, I had to empower the teachers with online teaching skills for them to ensure that no child is left behind, especially in the rural areas where connectivity and technological devices are limited."

A Legacy of Impact and Collaboration

Dr Mphahlele's implementation has addressed unmet needs for the development and application of a healthy research impact mindset. Her MOOC, Short Learning Programme for TVET lecturers, and a Multi-University Post Graduate Support Network (MUPSN) have opened research platforms as well as encouraged collaborative publishing.

Reflecting on her journey, Dr Mphahlele emphasises the importance of impactful research. She said, "Impactful research will always contribute either knowledge, skills or attitudes to the subjects it is intended to. With impactful research, one contributes to the body of knowledge that can help in addressing societal real-life problems."

Dr Mphahlele's work has not only enhanced the quality of education in South Africa, but also inspired teachers and students alike. As she continues to explore new horizons, including gamified teaching and collaboration with Microsoft, her legacy continues to leave an indelible mark on the landscape of education. Her advice to others embarking on their impact journey resonates with her own experience. She advises, "Find something you are passionate about because your passion will motivate you to overcome any obstacles you might find".

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Real Impact. *Are you in?*

All the Real Impact Award winners, past and present, are making an incredible difference to society with the important work they are doing. However, we recognise there's still many barriers and unhelpful traditions that often make it difficult for the research community to reach their full potential and make a real impact.

In 2022, we relaunched our Real Impact Manifesto and set out six commitments we believe are important to the research ecosystem and the continued evolution of research impact, from academic metrics to societal benefit.

We are calling upon the community to unite and work together for change. Will you join us in creating a fairer, more equitable environment where research can have a real-world impact and those within it can reach their full potential?



Together, let's:

Think differently.

Challenge ourselves to find alternatives to traditional academic metrics and rewards.

Innovate.

Find new formats and channels to disseminate research to reach a wider audience.

Co-design.

Co-design services that help researchers and research managers develop healthy practice.

Celebrate.

Highlight and reward examples of research that is driving real change.

Be Inclusive.

Develop more equitable and accessible ways to publish research.

Join up.

Build partnerships and networks, both informal and formal, which support researchers

If you're passionate about change, then please add your name in support of these six commitments.

Visit: emeraldgrouppublishing.com/are-you-in



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WE BELIEVE EVERYONE CAN MAKE A REAL IMPACT.

SO IT'S OUR GOAL TO EMPOWER PEOPLE
TO DO JUST THAT.

EQUIPPING DECISION MAKERS.

CHAMPIONING FRESH THINKING.

HELPING MAKE SMARTER CHOICES.

TOGETHER, WE DISCOVER, INNOVATE AND PUT
INTO PRACTICE WHAT REALLY MATTERS.

BECAUSE THE MORE WE EMPOWER,
THE MORE WE MAKE IT REAL.

Join us in making a **Real Impact**.

