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Enhancing the Academic Prestige of Nonprofit Studies:

Can impact case studies help?

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IUPUI Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

Abstract

This paper describes the evolution of an evidence-based management-research case study in the UK and has the potential to enhance the profile and status of nonprofit studies in the UK and beyond. Until recently the UK's process to evaluate the research quality of Universities relied on journal quality lists to guide their ratings. However, in recent years, these have been revised to add impact case studies. In response the authors developed a methodology and template for writing impact case studies for the nonprofit sector. The first case study using the new template was produced at the end of 2016, which described an evaluation framework for the Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation 'Place' programme in the U.K. This complex regeneration project involved private, public and voluntary sectors and demonstrated the efficacy of the multi-dimensional collaborative approach taken to help communities regenerate after economic decline.

Introduction

The use of the case study as a teaching aid is well established across a range of academic disciplines and professional education. Medical schools, for example, use clinical cases or the patient case method as a major part of the student learning process (Blumenfeld, 2002). As a teaching technique, case studies can enhance traditional classroom lecturing enabling students to participate and engage in deeper learning. The case illustrates a 'real-world' situation to which lectures and theories can be applied.

Business schools have used case studies in teaching and learning for one hundred years with Harvard Business School using case method since 1912 (Rowley, 2002; Patton and Appelbaum, 2003). These days, through its publishing division, Harvard has one the largest collections of business case studies for education in the world. Within the teaching of accountancy, the case method has been extolled as a possible solution to many perceived shortcomings in accounting education because cases focus on encouraging self-learning and developing skills in critical thinking as opposed to traditional "rote" learning found in technical professional courses.

There are contested histories on how case study method has evolved, how effective it is in enabling management learning and resistance by teachers who see its pedagogical factors as a threat to the lecture's control of the class place. However case studies are firmly established and seen as exceptionally useful compared to conventional lectured based teaching. (Healy and McCutcheon 2010; Bagdasarov et al 2012; Gamble and Jelley 2014; Bridgman et al 2016).

The 2017 NACC conference theme, "Nonprofit and Philanthropy Parables and Cases: What We Learn from the Stories We Tell"; made a request for participants to share their use of case studies and how they are taught to on non-profit courses. This paper responds to the theme

by describing the evolution of an evidence-based management-research case study and how its creation has the potential to enhance the profile and status of nonprofit studies in the UK and possibly beyond.

The nonprofit sector and nonprofit studies in the UK

At the heart of UK civil society is the voluntary sector comprising over 500,000 voluntary organisations of which some 180,000 are regulated charities with a paid workforce of 853,000 people. The estimated value of the voluntary sector in the UK national accounts is £12.2bn, or 0.7% of the country's GDP (NCVO, 2017). These numbers do not account for the significant numbers of citizens who volunteer on an active basis which is estimated to be over 3 million each week, which brings wider social and economic benefits to UK civil society.

Within UK academia there is an active UK voluntary sector studies network (VSSN) which publishes its own journal but it has no ranking and therefore there is little incentive for academics in ranked institutions to publish their research in its pages. Despite the UK launching the first voluntary management postgraduate degree in 1977 and a subsequent growth of programmes in the 1990s the number of academic programmes offered since then has stayed broadly the same. According to the latest VSSN figures, the UK has twenty three University accredited courses which range from single modules on general degrees to dedicated masters in voluntary non-profit studies. The closure in 2016 of two long standing full degree programmes (London South Bank and Sheffield Hallam) being one step back, whilst a new master's degree in philanthropy at Kent University and two new centres focused on philanthropy and charity, re-established at the Open University and the LSE, going one step forward. The current situation in the UK is one of consolidation not growth. Of equal concern has been the lack of replacement since their funding term expired in 2015 of the two ESRC (a prestigious academic funding body

funded by the UK Government) Research Centres that were created to be the catalyst to raise the prestige of nonprofit studies.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF)

The UK has a highly-developed research assessment system which provides the government with a funding allocation mechanism for its public universities, and creates a knowledge economy for the UK. The UK's research excellence framework (REF) exercise is carried out by the government with a view to provide accountability for public funding, to establish common "benchmarking" across universities and to determine the level of public funding universities will receive for research. While the primary purpose of successive assessments has been to inform the government's block-grant research funding, they have also become increasingly important for benchmarking and reputations, for the management and strategic development of research activity, and as markers in the academic careers of individual staff. The exercises have had an underlying aim of providing a general stimulus to improving the quality of UK research, and are highly regarded by the government and by UK university regulators.

The first research assessment exercise was carried out in 1986 (although not at that stage used for funding), and was then refined and developed through each subsequent exercise: in 1989, 1992, 1996 (at which point it became known as the Research Assessment Exercise or RAE), 2001, 2008, and most recently the Research Excellence Framework or REF in 2014. Looking forward, the next Research Excellence Framework exercise will take place in 2021. At the heart of each exercise has been the notion of peer review, with the quality of research judged by panels of academics grouped into subject units, applying assessment criteria determined by the peers in consultation with the wider academic community (Bence and Oppenheim, 2005).

Each successive Research Assessment Exercise tends to become more sophisticated in its approach, and more transparent in the criteria, than the previous one. To a large extent, this was in response to pressure from those directly involved in the assessment (that is, academics whose work is assessed, submitting institutions, those carrying out the assessment, or a combination of these).

Assessing ‘User Value’ in the Research Excellence Framework

One area of significant interest after the 2008 Research Excellence Framework exercise was the assessment of “user valued research and impact” (HEFCE 2007, HEFCE 2009). This area came about because of the financial crisis of 2007–2008 and impending public sector budget cuts. The UK Government through the Department of Business Innovation and Skills and the university regulator Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) took the view that in order to convincingly demonstrate the value of public investment in research, the REF would need to explicitly assess the value or impact of research on the economy and society. In January 2009 the Secretary of State’s annual letter to HEFCE indicated two main priorities for developing the REF: that it “should reduce the burden on institutions and take better account of the impact research makes on the economy and society”. HEFCE determined a case study approach would likely be the best way to assess research impact, given the intention from the outset to accommodate a wide range of types of impact, and research across all disciplines. For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.

Evaluating user value using Impact Case Studies

The inclusion of case study impact in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 was a substantial development. A pilot exercise was organised as well as extensive communication with participating universities to build stakeholder acceptance and support for the impact element of the REF (HEFCE, 2010)

Feedback from academics raised issues included questioning the assessment of user valued research and impact focused on the implications for curiosity-driven research, and the impossibility of predicting future impact. There was also concern about the inherent difficulties of demonstrating evidence of less tangible or non-quantifiable impacts, particularly on policy making and on public discourse; and the related concern that REF would privilege economic and/or immediately useful quantifiable impacts. These concerns were expressed mostly amongst the arts, humanities and social sciences (HEFCE, 2015).

Institutions involved in the pilot exercise provided case studies rapidly, including many very impressive examples, based on research carried out prior to the 'impact agenda' joining the REF. The quality of case studies in the pilot was variable, and a number of improvements to the format and guidance were identified. Through the pilot and wider discussions, a broad consensus emerged that a case study method would be workable across all disciplines. The REF exercise is carried out by a set of thirty-four subject based panels which are overseen by four main panels. The panels are made up of senior academics, international members and research users. Through the use of peer review, citation data and a broad-based panel structure, the REF seeks to determine levels of quality based on five starred levels: four star, three star, two star, one star and unclassified. For example, four star is defined as, 'quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour' – three star means it is 'internationally excellent', two star is internationally recognised and so on. Taken together, these classifications help panels determine

the overall scoring of a university's REF submission which conveys the research quality of an entire institution. The case study format was refined to include the following structure: Abstract, Summary of Impact, Introduction and Context, Literature Review, Methodology, Description and Findings, Details of Impact and Applicability to Teaching Practice. [See Appendix A. Impact Case Study Template.](#)

The pilot and wider discussions also succeeded in clarifying the very broad scope of impact (well beyond economic benefits), and identifying how the impact element would be applicable to the full range of disciplines. Review panels said that just listing activity and benefits made it very hard to assess the claimed impacts:

“The highest scoring cases in the pilot were those that provided a coherent narrative with evidence of specific benefits. Case studies should not cover a series of disconnected activity or list a wide range of benefits without providing details and evidence.” (HEFCE, 2010).

In the final REF Guidance notes it was stated that REF panels will assess impact case studies by the ‘reach and significance’ of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitted unit, as well as the submitted unit’s approach to enabling impact from its research.

User Value Impact Examples on the Research Excellence Framework

The following examples, given in the official guidance, offer submitting institutions some examples of impact in order to stimulate ideas about the kinds of impact that could be developed into case studies where they meet the REF definition of impact.

- Research into the languages and cultures of minority linguistic, ethnic, religious or immigrant, cultures and communities used by government, NGOs, charities or private sector to understand and respond to their needs.

- Providing expert advice to governments, NGOs, charities and the private sector in the UK and internationally, and thereby influencing policy and/or practice.
- Engaging with and mediating between NGOs and charities in the UK and internationally to influence their activities, for example in relation to health, education and the environment.
- Shaping or influence on policy made by government, quasi-government bodies, NGOs or private organisations.

Changes to future Research Assessment Exercises and the consequences for non-profit studies

Support and rewards for impactful research funding staff in non-profit studies who submit case studies:

The REF 2014 Manager's Report sums up the current state of play and the expected direction of travel:

“By explicitly assessing the non-academic impact of research, the REF provides clear rewards for academics and institutions that produced impactful research, and provides a strong incentive for them to seek to maximise impacts from their research in future. ...Clear incentives are now in place to enhance these benefits from research and the REF ought therefore to make a positive, if indirect, contribution to the economy and sustainability in future. However it is not possible in the present report to properly evaluate these effects” (HEFCE, (2015).

There is no precise figure for how much a single impact case study is worth in the UK Research Excellence Framework. This is because payment for all REF activity is in one block grant to the institution, not to the individual. However, Reed and Kerridge (2017) have estimated a figure of £324,000 over a 5-6 year REF cycle. This value recognises the concept of the ‘knowledge

economy’; the fact that knowledge is ‘the driver of productivity and economic growth, leading to a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance’ (OECD, 1996). With university departments submitting multiple impact cases (a minimum of two cases plus one more for each ten members of academic staff). The value of impact cases in the REF along with the rhetoric about universities playing a critical role in the creation of a knowledge economy, the UK government has sought to progressively incentivise an approach to university research (across all disciplines) that is responsive to societal and economic needs. But have these incentives trickled down into reward structures within university departments? If so, what would these incentives look like? Incentives for impactful research would encourage the nurturing of close and productive relationships with professional bodies, policy makers, the media and various economic and business sectors. Staff would also be encouraged, not discouraged, to publish in practitioner journals, reports and books. Combined, the different incentives provide an opportunity for UK non-profit academics to submit case studies to both raise their research profile and value in their institutions and could be a catalyst for an expansion in voluntary non-profit education provision.

Responding the REF Impact Agenda: Building a Non-profit Case Study

Once such case study that meets ~~the~~ REF impact definition and criteria and demonstrates the case study template is The ‘Place’ Initiative case study. While the majority of research-active business school academics are motivated to interact with external organisations some of these interactions lead to impact which ‘fit’ the REF Impact Template better than others. Universities believe that the REF expert panels prefer to see ‘direct’ and ‘linear’ depictions of impact emergence being submitted to the REF, while cases with complicated, long-term and with less readily attributable impacts, and their collaborative generation are to be avoided. The ‘Place’

Initiative case study was included in the shortlist of impact cases for REF2021 on the basis of having good availability of evidence to corroborate the claims of impacts; the specific research results which led to the specific impacts, ~~was attributable to Cass Business School~~ and the research was largely disentangled from other existing expertise or knowledge; the impacts had matured sufficiently for them to be witnessed by others from whom we could obtain testimonies and feedback; and the case reflects the strengths of the institution we describe elsewhere in the REF submission – a high performing non-profit studies research centre and related research publications.

The ‘Place’ initiative stemmed from over four decades of interest by HRH The Prince of Wales in developing and convening partnerships tackling social and environmental issues. HRH had the idea of getting the group of 16 charitable organisations of which he is both the active President and founder of all but one, to work together with the voluntary, public and private sectors to bring about change. He believed that the Prince's Charities are able to contribute to ‘placemaking’ as they collectively cover the natural, social, financial and built sectors and can work together under one umbrella, utilizing a breadth and depth of skills that can be brought together, united by a common purpose and set of principles.

The initiative was first piloted in Burnley, Lancashire, between 2007 and 2010. Burnley's traditional employment base had been in decline for many decades. The town had struggled to recover: its employment growth between 1995 and 2004 placed it 55th of England's 56 largest towns and cities with 13% of its working age population claiming incapacity benefit compared to a national average of 7%. According to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Burnley had extremely high levels of deprivation, ranking the district 12th most deprived nationally (out of 401).

A first report evaluating the Place work in Burnley was published in 2011 (Grant, 2011). The conclusion of the evaluation was that the programme was a unique experiment in ‘building social capital’ that had made a significant contribution to progress in Burnley during its three years of operation. It had built a genuine partnership between the voluntary, public and private sectors in the town which had enabled a wide range of effective collaborative projects to blossom. Despite the recession, the number of private sector jobs in Burnley grew by 6.5% and Burnley is now 10th in the country for private sector growth and number one in the UK for the proportion employed in the manufacturing sector. In 2013 Burnley was named the most enterprising place in the UK by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and became one of only two UK entries in the European Enterprise Promotion Awards.

The Place initiative was then also rolled out to Burslem (part of Stoke on Trent), Middlesbrough/Redcar and Tottenham.

The following ~~is a shortened version of the~~ [is a shortened version of the ‘Place’ Initiative Case Study based on an evaluation framework developed by one of the authors. This Case Study also explains how it itself meets demonstrating the structure developed the REF Impact Template:](#)

The Prince’s Charities ‘Place’ Initiative Impact Framework and Evaluation Case Study

Abstract

The Prince’s Charities Place initiative is an innovative approach to the regeneration of significantly deprived geographic areas that has empowered communities to revitalise social capital. The Place initiative is not a conventional funding programme. Instead it was intended to harness the convening and coordinating skills of the Prince’s Charities as a catalyst for change. Following successful work in Burnley the Prince of Wales tasked his network of charities to work together with the voluntary, private and public sectors in three additional areas of England

– Burslem (Stoke-on-Trent), Redcar/Middlesbrough and Tottenham - to bring about sustainable physical and social regeneration over a three-year period. The evaluation report demonstrated the efficacy of this multi-dimensional, collaborative approach in helping communities regenerate after economic decline.

Summary of Impact

The work had a significant impact on the community, was replicated by others communities, and the evaluation framework was utilized by the government. It is a model for other 'Place' Initiatives in the UK.

~~The project also inspired the Welsh Government to begin a similar project to support the regeneration of communities, again greatly assisted by the robust evaluation.~~

Making sustainable places is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and our success or failure to do this will impact on millions if not billions of people's lives. The work undertaken by The Prince's Charities is based on HRH's belief that entrenched social problems need an integrated response. The Prince's Charities are uniquely placed to bring together core expertise, skills and ability to work across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Prince's Charities are a group of sixteen independent charities of which HRH The Prince of Wales is President (or in one case is patron), fifteen of which have been founded personally by The Prince in the last thirty years.

The Prince's Charities Place initiative is an innovative approach to the regeneration of significantly deprived geographic areas that has empowered communities to revitalise social capital. The Place initiative is not a conventional funding programme. Instead it was intended to harness the convening and coordinating skills of the Prince's Charities as a catalyst for change.

Each Place has had, at some point, the benefit of both a 'Place Coordinator' (a senior level secondment bringing skillsets from the civil service) with awareness of the potential links with local and central government and a Business in the Community (BITC) 'Business Connector'. Business Connectors are talented individuals seconded from business, trained by BITC and placed in communities of greatest need to build partnerships that tackle local issues.

The Place work fits into a wider concept of 'regeneration' which has been part of public policy and planning for at least 30 years. However, as so often in relation to social policy, there is no single definition of 'regeneration'. There are different dimensions of regeneration which include:

- Social factors (impacting upon social capital and cohesion as well as education and health)
- Economic factors (impacting upon physical renovation and employment)
- Cultural factors

Underpinning Research Literature Review

The main underpinning research for this project stemmed from the author's (Dr. Grant)'s development over the past ten years of methods to analyse and evaluate complex multi-project social programmes against a set of evaluation criteria. This in turn built upon work he initially undertook in this area whilst Director of Operations for, in turn, Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund. The key theoretical ideas are expounded in his book *The Business of Giving: The Theory and Practice of Philanthropy, Grantmaking and Social Investment* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) as well as in subsequent applications of these techniques for organisations as diverse as the Parole Board for England and Wales in 2008-2010 and the Nationwide Foundation 2009-2013.

In working with the Prince's Charities over the past three years a number of themes in addition to the Key Objectives have arisen that have significant bearing upon the work being undertaken and the issues that the Place initiative has touched upon. The following are the most critical.

- Inter-sectoral partnership. What does previous evidence tell us and has the Place initiative been successful in overcoming some of the problems identified in previous research?
- Social capital. To what extent has the Place initiative been a stimulator of social capital? How is social capital connected with regeneration?
- How crucial is the regeneration of heritage areas and buildings in the overall regeneration of geographic places?
- To what extent is the development in young people of non-cognitive skills a vital factor in regeneration and what part can youth social action play?

In summary the underpinning research established that weaknesses of previous regeneration projects were linked to the following:

- Failure to include all sectors on an equal power basis (including project identification and evaluation design)
- Failure to tackle geographic regeneration as a multi-faceted issue
- Failure to include measurement of critical 'soft' outcomes, especially social capital
- Failure to provide 'real time' feedback on progress to participating individuals and organisations

Methodology

A team from Cass Business School led by Dr. Grant worked alongside the Prince's Charities to develop an integrated evaluation framework capable of demonstrating both the individual outputs and outcomes in each area and to enable an overall picture of the impact of the Place Project to be delivered. The framework drew on the experience of Burnley which prioritised:

- Supporting the regeneration of the built environment, especially the heritage buildings.
- Raising educational performance, achievement and aspiration in schools.
- Developing enterprise in the town and supporting local businesses.
- Supporting opportunities for young people to give them the skills to move into the labour market.
- Promoting community cohesion and developing the appreciation of a multi-faith, mixed heritage community.
- Instilling local pride and creating a positive image in the region and nationally for the town to become attractive for investors and big employers.
- Promoting the value of a healthy lifestyle and helping the town to be more sustainable.

1. — Though these objectives were amended to fit local needs and priorities they are, broadly, similar in each Place. ~~There were two key considerations Dr. Grant had to and his team took in developing the evaluation of the programme:~~ urban regeneration programmes in developing the evaluation. The two most obvious factors ~~here~~ were that:

1. Not all three sectors were equally engaged

~~2.~~ The projects were too narrowly focussed on one or two areas – for example physical regeneration or education or employment or health, rather than all equally.

~~3.~~ The evaluation had therefore to be able to measure progress through outputs towards outcomes and impact that overcame these issues.

which aggregated every individual project and graphically represented outputs and outcomes in a simple ‘traffic lighted’ summary page that was available in real time to everyone involved in all sectors.

For this evaluation the information collected through the Frameworks was supplemented with 70 semi-structured interviews with key staff and partners engaged in the Place initiative, several of whom were interviewed more than once during the evaluation. However, it is important to recognise the core nature of the ‘Place’ initiative is emphatically not a series of output-driven ‘projects’. There was no intention that the initiative would, in fact, create any new projects at all, its purpose, as with the Business Connector programme, was catalytic and one of coordination and collaboration. As such the issue of attribution is not as significant in this evaluation as it might be in other such reports. Achievement of the objectives is far more critical than who was responsible for bringing them about, even if this had been feasible. Interestingly there have been a small number of very significant new projects which would not have happened without the Place initiative (for example a youth skills programme devised and run by the British Army) but in the majority of cases the change has occurred due to many different organisations working across sectoral boundaries.

This methodology has now also been adopted by the Welsh Government in the evaluation of their Cynefin project, which was directly inspired by the Place programme.

Description and Findings

The interview themes demonstrated that overall, the 'Place' initiative has:

- Enabled the building of trust relationships between individuals, organisations and sectors (so contributing to all three elements of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking).
- Strengthened networks (for example those of the voluntary sector and between businesses and social entrepreneurs).
- Provided examples of linking social capital between local and national organisations, for example with the Army that could act as exemplars elsewhere. This is an exceptional outcome for such a low-cost project and examples elsewhere are rare.
- Provided support for voluntary associations at a crucial time of economic hardship and for small businesses and social entrepreneurs (critical in Tottenham for example, which was recovering from significant social unrest in 2011).
- Established regeneration partnerships that demonstrate an equality of power. Burnley Bondholders, High Tide (Middlesbrough) and Burslem Regeneration Trust that are helping drive forward business development, employment skills and integration with schools and the voluntary sector.
- Benefitted from the great personal commitment and leadership of the Prince of Wales himself which has been a significant unifying element.
- Championed an integrated approach to regeneration. The Place initiative has been a strategic collaboration. If this had been individual organisations it would have been inevitable that their concerns and priorities would have dominated and this might have led to a 'piecemeal' or disjointed approach that would have been less likely to have achieved 'buy in' from local authorities and other key stakeholders.

- Proved the value and reality of the Prince of Wales concept of a ‘community of place’, expressed as ‘Place, Pride, People’, needing to exist to underpin significant social regeneration.

During the course of the Place initiative the Prince’s Charities have evolved a model for the initiation and development of inter-sectoral partnership. In broad terms this involves:

1. Community consultation in the form of an Enquiry by Design or Community Planning Workshop.
2. Bringing private sector leaders into a dialogue with the public and voluntary sectors through a specific event such as a community planning forum.
3. Creation of a new or utilisation of an existing forum for partnership between all stakeholders (Business for Burnley/Burnley Bondholders; High Tide (Middlesbrough) and the Burslem Regeneration Trust are examples).
4. Bringing in a Business Connector and Place Coordinator seconded from the private sector and civil service.

Through this model real community engagement has been possible and ownership of the overall plans for regeneration shared between the sectoral partners, helping overcome the power imbalance issues seen in traditional community regeneration projects.

Details of Impact

The work developed a new and innovative evaluation framework for complex, multi-faceted regeneration programmes involving private, public and voluntary sectors. It is being taken up by others as a new way to determine the impact of similar geographic regeneration projects. The project has had a significant influence on future programmes of all of the Prince’s Charities that were involved. It has helped inspire the Prince’s Regeneration Trust’s new £20

million plus Investment Bond and gave the Cabinet Office confidence in extending its secondment of senior and ‘fast track’ civil servants to one of the Prince’s Charities, Business in the Community (BIC). There are now 33 individuals working for a year with BIC in place-based roles throughout England.

The ‘Place’ Initiative and evaluation framework impact on both national government policy and implantations at regional and local government as well as its influence on other developments. For example, the project inspired the Welsh Government to begin a similar project to support the regeneration of communities, again greatly assisted by the robust evaluation. Dame Julia Cleverdon, Special Advisor to the Prince’s Charities, stated that ‘Dr Grant’s leadership in developing a professional framework for evaluation as well as bringing a vital external perspective and objective view on outcomes and direction, has ensured that the ‘Place’ project has created a consistent, replicable and transferable model for local communities
~~This section provides the detail and evidence base to the impact summary and covered the impact on both national government policy and implantations at regional and local government as well as its influence on other developments. Of particular note was its use by a f~~Former UK Prime Minister Sir John Major ~~—who cited Dr. Grant’s work in a number of policy speeches on the future of UK Society.~~ The very nature of impact means that this activity continues and will be monitored until the final date of the REF submission.

Applicability to Teaching Practice

~~This section was innovative development in the template. Both the ‘Place’ project and the evaluation have been utilised in teaching on the Cas~~
Business School Master’s programmes, both in the Charity Masters and the Business and Society module on the MSc Management. Students utilise the case study to construct ‘mini’ case studies from their own research on nonprofit organisations. They also analyse elements of the data from

the evaluation against theoretical evaluation models including realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, 2004). [The case study has been utilised as pre-reading for class discussions on the challenges associated with cross sectorial working in wider business school modules and how to value patronage on different modules in the Charities Masters programme.](#)

Conclusion

The Place initiative was a unique and high profile intervention that had a “magic cocktail” of cross sectorial engagement coupled with royal patronage. However, unlike traditional management case studies there was no “bottom line” or management crisis to debate. It was in essence a “good news” story. Creating a case study for both teaching and research impact therefore required some further thinking. Drawing upon guidance from the 2014 REF, which had provided a set of principles on what a range of impacts could be and a template that could be used, this was adapted into a more prescriptive guidance template and the introduction of a new section on “Applicability to Teaching Practice”.

[The case study has had some further benefits by highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of nonprofit studies as opposed to a traditional single discipline focus. In particular giving a clear evidence base that a nonprofit impact case study can add value in the absence of the traditional bottom line. As the case study has been highlighted as a best practice example by the University it is now encouraging other academics researching nonprofit organisations to write up their own impact research for case study REF submission.](#)

The ~~‘Place’ Initiative~~ case study will be submitted into the next REF and will highlight to the institution the research contribution which nonprofit studies can make and raise the profile for non-profit education. We also believe the template has international transferability and would

welcome correspondence from other teaching nonprofit academics that have developed their own case study templates or wish to use the one we have described.

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Appendix A: Impact Case Studies Template

The purpose of the Case Studies series is threefold:

1. To document pieces of work that have had a demonstrable impact on society and thus contribute towards the REF Assessment framework
2. To highlight any transferable findings that others can learn from
3. To have the ability to be utilised in teaching both at Cass and elsewhere

Each case study should have applicability in all three of these areas.

To use this template it might be best to save it with these instructions and then open a fresh copy where you can eliminate the instructions. Using the Word format will allow you to embed images, diagrams etc. To embed an image go through the normal Insert process for images.

You can choose to delete some sections if they are not relevant. Those that are not essential are clearly indicated. It would be helpful if you retained the fonts and font sizes in your case study presentation. However please do not include any formatting (such as headings) this will be done at the editing stage.

Complete the Title section below and then delete these paragraphs.

Title:

1. Abstract

A statement of your research/consultancy aims; a statement on how you went about finding the possible answer and a statement on what the key results were.

Key Words: At the end of the abstract list the key words that will help guide people to this piece of work. There should be between six and (no more than) ten of these. In the example these might be: regeneration; social capital; partnership; heritage; Prince's Trust; Business in the Community; Big Society

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2. Contents

You can insert your own contents list (but don't do it via formatting and the 'references' tab in word) but this isn't essential.

3. Summary of Impact

This section should briefly state what specific impact is being described in the case study. This should be a relatively short (half a page) summary of the impacts (both actual and potential) of this piece of work with references to:

- The outcomes of the work itself on, for example, organisations and/or beneficiaries
- Wider outcomes for the voluntary sector as a whole (or even wider to other sectors or society as a whole)

Examples of impact might include:

- Economic, commercial, organisational impacts such as: improved effectiveness of workplace practices; contribution to improved social, cultural and environmental sustainability; understanding, developing and adopting alternative economic models (such as fair trade); enhanced corporate social responsibility policies; or, more effective dispute resolution.
- Health and welfare impacts such as: the development or adoption of new indicators of health and well-being; influencing policy or practice leading to improved take-up or use of services; improved standards in training; improved provision or access to services; or, improved health and welfare outcomes.
- Impacts on practitioners and professional services such as: changed practice for specific groups (which may include cessation of certain practices shown to be ineffective by research); influence on professional standards, guidelines or training; influence on planning or management of services; use of research findings by professional bodies to define best practice, formulate policy,

or to lobby government or other stakeholders; or, practitioner debate has been informed or stimulated by research findings.

4. Introduction and Context

The aims, context and things you think are linked to the aims. Remember to reference any work you are quoting from other sources. References should be inserted using the 'reference' tab as endnotes.

5. Literature Review

This is a section where the existing literature that may impact on case study is reviewed and discussed. It is possible that you may not have constructed a literature review so this can be left out as long as you remember to include any references to other people's work etc. This section should be no more than about 2 pages long.

6. Methodology

How you went about the piece of work and why these methods were selected. Perhaps one page.

7. Description and Findings

What happened, what were the results of your work and what answers do they give you? You could insert images or diagrams that support your observations. Between two and no more than about six pages. This should include (where possible):

Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

This section should outline the key research insights or findings that underpinned the impact, and provide details of what research was undertaken, when, and by whom. References to specific research outputs that embody the research described in this section, and evidence of its quality, should be provided in the next section.

Details of the following should be provided in this section:

- The nature of the research insights or findings which relate to the impact claimed in the case study.
- An outline of what the underpinning research produced by the submitted unit was (this may relate to one or more research outputs, projects or programmes).
- Dates of when it was carried out.
- Names of the key researchers and what positions they held at the institution at the time of the research (where researchers joined or left the HEI during this time, these dates must also be stated).
- Any relevant key contextual information about this area of research.

References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

This section should provide references to key outputs from the research described in the previous section, and evidence about the quality of the research.

Include the following details for each cited output:

- Author(s).
- Title.
- Year of publication.
- Type of output and other relevant details required to identify the output (for example journal title and issue).
- Details to enable the panel to gain access to the output, if required (for example, a DOI or URL), or stating that the output is listed in REF2 or can be supplied by the HEI on request.

If the research was funded by a grant this section should include:

- Who the grant was awarded to.

- The grant title.
- Sponsor.
- Period of the grant (with dates).
- Value of the grant.

8. Details of Impact

What were the results of your work and what answers do they give you? You should refer back to the original question that you would have stated in the Introduction. How do the results inform the question? What impacts did the work demonstrate? What might be the longer term impacts? Are there any sources that can corroborate your impacts? This should include a narrative, with supporting evidence, to explain:

- How the research underpinned (made a distinct and material contribution to) the impact
- The nature and extent of the impact.

The following should be provided:

- A clear explanation of the process or means through which the research led to, underpinned or made a contribution to the impact (for example, how it was disseminated, how it came to influence users or beneficiaries, or how it came to be exploited, taken up or applied).
- Where the research was part of a wider body of research that contributed to the impact (for example, where there has been research collaboration with other institutions), the case study should specify the particular contribution of the submitted unit's research and acknowledge other key research contributions.
- Details of the beneficiaries – who or what community, constituency or organisation has benefitted, been affected or impacted on.
- Details of the nature of the impact – how they have benefitted, been affected or impacted on.

• Evidence or indicators of the extent of the impact described, as appropriate to the case being made.

• Dates of when these impacts occurred.

This section should list sufficient sources that can corroborate key claims made about the impact.

These could include, as appropriate to the case study, the following external sources of corroboration (stating which claim each source provides corroboration for):

• Reports, reviews, web links or other documented sources of information in the public domain.

• Confidential reports or documents.

• User feedback or testimony from users and beneficiaries (maximum of five)

9. Applicability to Teaching Practice

How might this case study be utilised in teaching contexts? Don't worry if you can't pin this down in too much detail. One page

10. End Notes and References