

TLRP Meeting of Minds Fellowship

Mentoring partnership between Dr Debie Galanouli, Queen's University Belfast and Professor Andrew Ravenscroft, London Metropolitan University

The Fellowship started in May 2007. At that time I had worked as a researcher in several research projects and I had also been a co-applicant on a successful bid to a TLRP extension project. However, I felt that I needed further support in order to act as a principal investigator on a proposal for funding. The Meeting of Minds Fellowship seemed to be the ideal opportunity to help me work towards this goal.

After consulting with a colleague at Queen's University (*Professor John Gardner*) we decided that Professor Andrew Ravenscroft from London Metropolitan University was very well placed to act as my mentor with his extensive experience in attracting research funding. I had met Andrew at several conferences and he always seemed approachable so I contacted him and he kindly agreed to act as my mentor.

The topic I wished to pursue is little-researched in the UK but follows on from a TLRP fellowship held by Pete Dudley (2004-05). The focus of the proposed work is Research Lesson Study, a sophisticated professional development approach for teachers which has enjoyed over 70 years of success in Japan but little or no exposure in the UK.

With Andrew being based in London and me in Belfast we knew that we could not meet often, however email allowed us to work together on an ESRC proposal. We had one face-to-face meeting in November 2007 where we went through an outline draft. Andrew was very helpful and with his experience in reviewing similar proposals for the ESRC he offered really insightful comments which helped shape the subsequent drafts.

Since then I have been working on my proposal with other colleagues and we have so far established an advisory group with members from various user groups including the General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and the local education authorities. They are all very enthusiastic and feel that the proposed work is worthwhile and will benefit our target group, which is school teachers.

One of our partners, the General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland is enthusiastic to support the work and have funded a literature review for this area. This will cover the Research Lesson Study concept and other peer-to-peer models of school-based professional development for teachers such as mentoring, modelling, coaching and co-teaching. A 'handy' guide to employing such techniques for senior staff in schools, who have responsibility for professional development aspects of school improvement will be derived from this review and will be distributed to schools.

One may think that a proposal should have been produced and submitted in the 18 months that followed my award of the Meeting of Minds Fellowship. However, I think I achieved quite a lot in this period of time including the completion and award of my PhD and also the award of an ESRC fellowship (January 2009 – January 2010) on the dissemination of the TLRP outcomes to enhance their policy and practice impact in the Northern Ireland context. I was the primary proposer for the latter proposal (in a sense the principal investigator) and the proposal was

undoubtedly influenced by the experience of the Meeting of Minds Fellowship. Both my PhD and this latter proposal were achieved while working full-time on research projects such as the Analysis and Review of Innovations in Assessment (a Nuffield funded project) and the Sesame Tree Evaluation (a Sesame Workshop funded project).

I feel that the MoM Fellowship was an important stepping stone towards the achievement of these two goals, the completion of my PhD and the successful application for the ESRC fellowship, as it allowed me to widen my perspective, to set clear goals and to build my self-confidence through working with an academic from another institution. Now that I have secured funding for my post through the ESRC fellowship, I look forward to completing my ESRC Research Lesson Study proposal and I also look forward to working with Professor Ravenscroft again towards the last stages of the submission process.

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