

# PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

**Programme:** Teaching and Learning Research programme (TLRP)

**Director:** Andrew Pollard, University of Cambridge

**Period:** 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002 to 31 December 2002

**TLRP Office**

University of Cambridge  
Faculty of Education  
Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2BX  
Tel: 01223 369631 Fax: 01223 367711  
Website: [www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)



## 1 Introduction

This programme of research into teaching and learning represents a significant strategic investment by the HEFCE, the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Executive and the DfES.

### *Aims*

The TLRP is substantively concerned with improving *outcomes* for learners in a very wide range of UK contexts across the *lifecourse*. In terms of methodologies, it explores *synergies* between different research approaches and aims to build UK *capacity* in conducting high quality educational research. Regarding the application of findings to policy and practice, it supports the *transformation* of knowledge to improve accessibility and works to maximise the *impact* of its research. Innovative use of *ICT* permeates all of these concerns. Further details are offered below.

#### 1. Learning outcomes

The overarching substantive aim of the Programme is to enhance learning outcomes. These are broadly conceived and include: the development of positive learner identities; the acquisition of skill, understanding and bodies of knowledge; the acquisition of qualifications; the development of attitudes and values relevant to a learning society; and the broader values and commitments relevant to individual and community development and civic concern.

#### 2. Life-course

The Programme supports research projects and related activities at many ages and stages in education, training and lifelong learning. The Programme is concerned with patterns of success and difference, inclusion and exclusion through the life-course.

#### 3. Synergies

The Programme promotes multi-disciplinary and cross-sector research. It also supports research using multiple methods for data-gathering and analysis various forms national and international cooperation and comparison. Through such work, it seeks to enrich understanding of teaching and learning.

#### 4. Capacity

The Programme seeks to enhance the UK's capacity for all forms of high quality research and research-informed practice in teaching and learning. Most projects contribute to this, but it is the particular focus of the Programme's Research Capacity Building Network.

#### 5. Transformation

The Programme aims to develop the capability for transforming the knowledge base on learning into effective teaching and training practices. It thus promotes the practical application of new knowledge and its appropriation by practitioners and policy-makers.

#### 6. Impact

The Programme aspires to have a major impact on policy and practice concerning teaching and learning in the UK. Research users are actively engaged in all spheres of the Programme's work, thus enhancing the relevance and validity of the research and supporting the dissemination and application of results.

#### *Contribution to ESRC thematic priorities*

The Programme's primary goal of researching forms of teaching and learning which can enhance learning outcomes contributes very explicitly to the ESRC theme on *Knowledge, Communication and Learning*. In human resource terms, it is also relevant to UK *Economic Performance and Development*. The portfolio of projects across the lifecourse articulates directly with the ESRC theme of *Lifecourse, Lifestyles and Health*. As the Thematic Priorities document puts it: 'peoples' lives, and how they unfold over the lifecourse in relation to education, employment, leisure, consumption and health, are a topic of major national interest'. As indicated through its work on synergy, transformation and impact, TLRP has a very significant interest in knowledge generation and transfer, and with ICT and new technologies.

The variety of settings in which TLRP research is being conducted ranges from schools through college, universities, family, community and workplace, and the affordance for learning provide by these settings is an important theme of the research. In this way, TLRP contributes to the ESRC theme on *Work and Organisation*. Many TLRP projects address the social distribution of opportunities and outcomes through education, thus articulating with the theme on *Social Stability and Exclusion*. Some TLRP projects, such as those concerned with student consultation, address issues within the theme of *Governance and Citizenship*.

TLRP's prominent concern with *research capacity building* also reflects an ESRC priority.

### *Scheduling and volume of activity*

The reporting period, 2002, is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in which TLRP's funded research activity has taken place.

The Programme's research projects started work during 2000 and the last funded activity is presently expected to end in 2008. Within this period, there have been three main phases of commissioning. Phase I (2000-03) supports four networks of projects (three in school sectors and one in post-compulsory education); Phase II (2001-04) supports nine projects (six in school sectors and three in post-compulsory sectors); Phase III (2003-08) will support additional projects in post-compulsory sectors. Building on Phase II projects, four Scottish Extensions (2003-05) have also been supported. Additionally, two Career Development Associates (CDA) (2000- 03) and four research training fellowships (RTF) (2001 to PhD completion) have been funded.

The total number of discrete funded activities (networks, projects, CDA, RTFs) at work during 2002 was nineteen. The approximate number of research staff involved in the Programme over that period is 150.

## **2 Overview of Year**

### *Summary*

2002 was an important transitional year for TLRP. Crucially, the continuity and momentum of the Programme's work has been maintained. There have also been some important new developments.

### *Leadership and administration*

The Programme experienced the retirement from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2002 of Charles Desforges of Exeter as Director and the appointment of Andrew Pollard from Cambridge. A new Directors' team was appointed from 1<sup>st</sup> May, consisting of Deputy Director (Mary James) and three Associate Directors (Alan Brown, Kathryn Ecclestone and John Siraj-Blatchford). They are supported by an administrative team (Lynne Blanchfield and Suzanne Fletcher). With Associate Directors based in Newcastle and Warwick as well as Cambridge, the appointments reflect a distributed model of staffing and contribute to a renewed emphasis on UK and regional engagement.

The administrative transition was smooth. To anticipate future needs, significant further development of the Programme's organisational infrastructure took place throughout the second half of 2002. Such development included the Programme's data-base, website, visual design, events-management, filing and communication systems. The new data-base has the potential to support administrative, accountability and impact needs.

Since May 2002, the new Directors' Team has been active in developing working relationships with project teams and key users. It has been explicit in seeking to work collegially and in recognising that this programme is at the cutting edge of debates and developments in educational research. Challenges to established theoretical, methodological, user engagement and dissemination practices are being faced and key issues are being discussed in an increasingly constructive and open way. Beyond technical concerns, overarching moral purposes of the Programme have been affirmed with particular reference to enhancing learning outcomes and contributing to evidence-informed practice, democratic debate and effective policy making.

*Supporting Phase I and Phase II projects:* The new Directors' Team have taken liaison responsibility for projects within their specialist sectors (James – schools; Ecclestone – further, adult and community education and family learning; Pollard – higher education; Brown – workplace and lifelong; Siraj-Blatchford – ICT). Where CDA, RTFs or Scottish Extensions are linked to projects, liaison responsibility follows. The Directors' Team have presented themselves as 'critical friends' and have begun to develop detailed knowledge of their projects.

*Phase I networks:* These four networks moved towards the end of their funding and have been involved progressively in analysis and consideration of dissemination and impact strategies for 2003. The Programme's supplementary funding scheme supports impact initiatives.

*Phase II projects:* During 2002, most of the nine research teams were heavily involved in data collection and analysis. Annual reports show cumulative progress and most projects are at around their mid-points. Practical difficulties in implementation has led to adjustments in several projects to maintain momentum and the integrity of project objectives.

*Scottish Extensions:* Four small projects were funded for 2003 starts, in part with RPB as well as SEED support. These offer a welcome expansion of work in Scotland. They include a project on early years education – a sector not otherwise addressed within TLRP.

*Phase III projects:* Commissioning for this phase was a major activity during 2002. The specification for this £9m competition for research on post-compulsory education was refined and published early in the year. Four regional consultation meetings were provided for prospective applicants prior to the initial closing date. 256 applications were evaluated and 48 were shortlisted. Substantial further advice was then offered to shortlisted applicants by members of the Directors' Team and RCBN. Final decisions will be made in early 2003.

*User engagement:* Good progress was made during 2002. In addition to active user participation in direct research activity, projects further developed their Advisory Group relationships. Additionally, the new Directors' Team began the process of building relationships with high-leverage users in each sector in which TLRP is researching. Please see Section 4 below for further details.

*Cross-Programme thematic development:* Following extensive consultation activities at the Programme's annual conference, a strategy for the establishment of cross-Programme thematic groups was agreed. These groups are intended to address key Programme issues, add value to project investments and draw on user and researcher expertise from beyond the Programme. Five initial Thematic Groups were initiated. Each addresses a key TLRP objective and are supported by web-based conferencing facilities.

*Capacity building:* All TLRP projects, many with particular strengths in capacity building through user engagement, continued with the activities which are integral to their research designs. RCBN also made important progress during the year. In particular, stimulating editions of its journal were produced and its website was expanded. Analysis of the outcomes of a UK review of expertise and needs was completed. A workplan was negotiated and agreed during the year, with UK-wide provision and engagement of experts from a range of institutions and methodological traditions.

*International developments:* TLRP maintained its links to the National Science Foundation in the USA. European liaison also developed very strongly, building on the Learning Space network.

Agreement with European partners was reached for TLRP to lead an ERA-NET proposal to the EC and a strategic decision to focus TLRP's international work within Europe was taken.

*Research highlights:* The Phase 1 network entitled 'Towards Evidence-based Practice in Science Education' led by Robin Millar, completed a Delphi study showing what 'expert' communities agree about the fundamental nature of science, and thus the most appropriate school curriculum. The team also demonstrated that learning of key ideas in science can be measured using diagnostic instruments developed by the network. Evidence was produced to show how research-informed teaching sequences can improve learning outcomes.

The Phase II project entitled 'The Role of Awareness in the Teaching and Learning of Literacy and Numeracy at Key Stage 2' led by Terezinha Nunes completed a number of powerful experimental studies with high levels of practitioner engagement. The work showed how the design of literacy and numeracy activities is critical to learning outcomes. Materials and procedures for measuring this were produced, and were appropriated by some participating schools for use in their own enquiries.

*Dissemination highlight:* The Phase I network, 'Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning', led by Jean Rudduck has conducted exceptionally strong engagement and dissemination work on pupil voice with organisations, schools, teachers and academics nationally and internationally. A very impressive series of network Newsletters has been produced and publications for different audiences are being worked on. There has been exemplary engagement with government agencies.

### **3 Programme Activities**

#### **a) Programme Chronology**

Steering Committee meetings take place at least once each term, with more during periods of project commissioning. Following the commissioning of Phase III in 2003, it is expected that these will occur on the first Tuesday of March, first Tuesday of July and during the Programme's annual conference in November each year. This conference is an important event, bringing together researchers and users from across the Programme. Additional events, by Phase, Sector or in relation to particular issues, are scheduled as needs arise. Progressively, as each Phase of the

Programme moves towards its conclusion, more impact and dissemination events will be organised. In 2003, there are expected to be four of these in relation to Phase 1, as well as a launch event for Phase III. Thematic Groups have resources for meeting twice each term, but may vary this in relation to their objectives. The new Directors' Team are committed to visiting each project and each key national user organisation a minimum of once each year. For some, engagement will be much more frequent. Key cross-sectoral academic meetings for TLRP representation have been identified so far as the conferences of BERA, AERA, EERA and EARLI and coordinated Programme events will be scheduled for these. Additional sectoral, regional and international conferences will also be selectively targeted.

The Programme gantt chart shows the work as a whole, extended over a thirteen year period from initial conceptualisation to the presently anticipated final coordinated whole-Programme impact (1998-2010). Funded research activity will take place over a nine year period (2000-2008). A long-term strategy has been proposed by the Director to maximise the transformative impact of the Programme through additional engagement with a range of stakeholders (2007-2010).

#### **b) Internal communication**

During 2002, the full Steering Committee met for three 1 day meetings and one 2 day meetings, the latter being associated with the commissioning of Phase III. Between meetings, there are effective links among members by email. The Chair, Deputy Chair, Research Priorities Board member, Programme Manager and Director have liaised regularly when pressing matters arise between meetings. Members of the Steering Committee liaise with specific projects as 'critical friends'. During 2002 there was a review of this allocation and projects were encouraged to involve critical friends via their Advisory Groups. In preparation for Phase III decision-making, six user members of the Steering Committee took advantage of a training session provided on key issues in research design.

The Directors' Team have developed effective ways of working together and there is excellent recognition of complementary skills and expertise. Addressing the potential weakness of a distributed model, a schedule of twice termly meetings, group email lists, electronic discussion facilities and an intranet have been established. An Action Planning and Reporting template has been developed to facilitate coordination and accountability. To support the development of coherent intellectual leadership, each team meeting includes a discussion of pre-circulated readings.

The Director visited ESRC officers at Swindon five times during 2002. A meeting of the whole Directors' Team was held there, thus enabling them to meet with members of the Education, Teaching and Learning team and External Relations Division.

Communication systems have been strengthened through the creation of termly intra-Programme 'Bulletins', whole-project email lists, project nominees for ICT, publication and output matters, the website and electronic discussion facilities. Progressively, cross-Programme administrative tasks are being supported through web downloads and web/data-base links. Inter-project activity has been encouraged through provision of supplementary funding and organising of specific events.

Programme events included a two day conference in June with representatives from all four Phase I networks. Work on publications, outputs and media strategies followed, with three meetings of a Publications and Other Outputs Group during the Autumn 2002, production of an TLRP Output Strategy paper and provision (in 2/03) of media training for representatives of all Phase I networks and the Directors' Team. Regarding Phase III commissioning there were three regional consultation meetings prior to application and three for shortlisted project applicants.

The highlight internal event of the year was the TLRP annual conference. This took place in September at Huntingdon, near Cambridge. In response to project team requests, it focused firstly on sharing information and understanding between projects as a means of promoting greater interaction and synergy between them. Second, key ideas for cross-Programme thematic development were discussed together. More generally, overarching purposes of the Programme as a whole were considered. Feedback on this event was extremely positive.

c) **External communication**

Significant preparation for major phases of the Programme's dissemination and impact work was undertaken during 2002. A user/researcher seminar on impact strategies was held in April. The issues raised there were taken further by the Publications and Other Outputs Group, with representatives from each project. This group met three times to develop an agreed cross-Programme strategy in preparation for the first round of findings in 2003. Among many ideas for project or Programme outputs, agreement was made on priorities. These include the early identification of 'key findings', the use of 'briefings' to promote these and of 'pamphlets' to provide more elaborated accounts. Additionally, the Programme will support the production of

'gateway books' to provide accessible, user relevant introductions to more sophisticated academic sources on each project. RoutledgeFalmer (Taylor & Francis) has been selected to publish this series and offers exciting book and journal synergies for paper and electronic media. The planned progression in printed outputs will be mirrored through a hierarchy of web-based resources and the Programme's relationship with the British Education Index and other specialist data-bases are under consideration. The Programme's Thematic Group on Transformation and Impact will work further on the long-term strategy. This is one of five Thematic Groups which were established at the end of 2002. Each of them has user representation within its membership.

The Programme website was completely redesigned during 2002 and is now hosted by the University of Cambridge's Centre for Research into Educational Technologies (CARET). Further developments are anticipated, particularly with a view to improving search facilities and increasing user accessibility.

The design of the Programme's newsletter was enhanced during the year and 33,000 copies of the schools edition and 4,000 of the post-compulsory edition were produced for circulation. The issue of TLRP's external presentation was considered and raised with project teams during the year. Consistency in the use of ESRC and Programme badging has improved. Towards the end of the year, a corporate design specialist was commissioned to advise on TLRP's future outputs.

#### **d) International Scientific Representation**

Europe: LearningSpace, an EC network, moved towards a conclusion during the year. Meetings to finalise outputs were held meetings in Cambridge and Helsinki. TLRP has made important contributions to this, particularly in relation to providing examples of doctoral research training. Building from this cooperation, TLRP was asked to lead a 2003 ERA-NET proposal and work on this began, with very helpful ESRC support. Partner countries are those with comparable programmes on teaching and learning. These include, Norway, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden and France. Alan Brown coordinates TLRP's work in Europe and attended the 2002 EERA conference in Lisbon.

US: The National Science Foundation hosted a group of TLRP researchers in a successful study visit on design experiments. Professor Kelly provided a report intended to benchmark TLRP's procedures and commissioning effectiveness with those of other countries. TLRP was asked by

BERA to represent the association at the 2003 meeting of AERA and a symposium has been arranged.

Pacific Rim and Australasia: The Directors' Team received visitors from Singapore and New Zealand and Australia with specific enquiries about the Programme. In Singapore, a new centre on pedagogic research has been established with the National Institute for Education and has requested a close working relationship with TLRP. In relation to New Zealand, the Programme was visited by a senior Education Ministry official and supported the Cambridge study leave of another Ministry research coordinator. There were a number of contacts with members of Australian universities.

Members of TLRP projects have many other international links and presented at events across the world. Information on these activities is available in project reports.

### **Links with Research Users**

Established TLRP strategies for developing user engagement have been affirmed. All projects are encouraged to work closely with users in their research sites to enhance validity and relevance, and to develop links with appropriate bodies with high impact leverage. In many cases, this is formalised through Advisory Groups. On behalf of the Programme as a whole, the Directors' Team is particularly active in relation to the development of links with national bodies.

Members of the Directors' Team visited almost all designated 'key user' organisations, and begun to develop, or build on, personal contacts. In particular, they have negotiated the potential for cooperation and synergies. More specifically, since May 2002, face-to-face meetings have taken place with members of the: TTA, QCA, OfSTED, SEU, NCSL, GTCE, ATL, UCET, LSC, Welsh LSC, AQA, LSC, NCFE, LSDA, HEFCE, LTSN, ILT, ESCALATE, NIACE, CIPD, UK-Refer-Net, PDF, BERA, SRHE, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Inspection service, Scottish Executive Education Department and the Department for Education and Skills in England, UNESCO, IBM, RegioNet.

The Programme's database was significantly developed during 2002 to enable the integration of user information as a basis for targeted dissemination and impact activities. Users are represented on all Thematic Groups. The Programme agreed to publish a series of 'gateway books' explicitly targeted at users.

## Future Programme Developments

TLRP is at a critical stage in its development. Large-scale and simultaneous commissioning, data-gathering, analysis, user engagement and dissemination work will go on throughout 2003 in different parts of the Programme. The diversity of these activities is very considerable and the pressures on the Programme Team are likely to be significant. Among the specific developments planned for 2003 are the following:

1. Post-Phase III review and finalisation of Directors' Team portfolios.
2. Sectoral overviews of whole-Programme activities and contributions.
3. Analysis of the conceptual underpinnings of 'research programmes' *per se*.
4. Consideration of TLRP as a case-study of interactive social science.
5. Proposal of 'associate project' status to enhance coverage of key issues or sectors.
6. Pro-active development of sectoral project and user, thematic and cross-Programme activities by each member of the Directors' Team.
7. Thematic Groups to begin to make tangible contributions within their fields.
8. Encouragement of new cross-Programme initiatives.
9. Promote UK-wide capacity building activities coordinated by RCBN.
10. Commission next phase of research capacity building provision.
11. Develop and negotiate new forms of Research Training Fellowship provision.
12. Promote Phase I initial findings. Support events for each of the four networks, with cross-Programme promotion. User Briefings and Gateway books to be produced. Press and media activity to be arranged with ESRC Media Fellow and External Relations.
13. Phase III to be launched in ESRC's Social Science Week.
14. Review cross-Programme project designs, evidence and forms of warrant.
15. Convene a cross-Programme conference facing warrant issues constructively.
16. Investigate use of large-scale data-sets in TLRP, and potential.
17. Investigate potential for project-related systematic review activity.
18. Annual TLRP conference to involve *all* projects (phases I, II, II, Scottish Extensions, Career Development Associates, Research Training Fellows) providing opportunities for cross-Programme exchange.
19. Deepen engagement with key Phase I and II users in relation to published and emergent findings.
20. Further targeted engagement with key Phase III users following commissioning.

21. User database to be developed further, with cross-Programme integration of data where possible and with particular attention to Phase I impact activity.
22. Continued development of audience-differentiated portfolio of electronic and paper outputs, based on strategic partnerships with BEI, Taylor & Francis, etc.
23. Continued exploration of television possibilities for Programme.
24. Encourage development of Phase II media and dissemination strategies
25. Preparation for media training for selected Phase II project spokespersons.
26. Further development of the Programme website, including publication and management functions and improved search facilities.
27. Development of cross-Programme IT-based output media.
28. Coordinated conference participation in BERA, EERA, EARLI, AERA, AARE/NZARE.
29. Budget monitoring. Initiatives to maximise use of resources in relation to Programme objectives and to engage energy of Programme participants.
30. Lead an EC 6<sup>th</sup> Framework ERA-NET bid on behalf of European partners.
31. Further development of the Programme's long-term impact strategy.

Further development of a long-term impact strategy in relation to projects, sectors, UK devolution and cross-Programme themes is an initiative of a different order to most of those above. This has been discussed by the Steering Committee and will be developed further through an extended process of consultation. The proposition is that the potential and full impact of TLRP investment is unlikely to be fulfilled by 2008. The funding period for knowledge generation is not quite the same as the necessary funding period for knowledge transfer. A contemporary, inclusive and user-engaged knowledge transfer initiative, modelled on the National Commission on Education of the 1990s but with specific post-devolution provision, could build on the momentum and profile of TLRP.