

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000

(Period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2000.)

1 Introduction and contribution to ESRC themes

This major Programme of research into teaching and learning was funded to a total of £12.5 m by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE), the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). It is managed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), through the Director's Office based at the University of Exeter. The year has been primarily concerned with commissioning and building collaborative networks.

1.1 The core objectives of the Programme are to:

- enhance the achievement of learners at all ages and stages in education, training and life-long learning.
- develop the capability for transforming the knowledge base relevant to learning into effective and efficient teaching and training practices.
- enhance the system-wide capacity for research based practice in teaching and learning.
- promote and extend multi-disciplinary and multi-sector research in teaching and learning.

1.2 Contribution of the Programme to the ESRC's thematic priorities

The Programme will make a significant contribution to the thematic priority referring to **Knowledge, Communication and Learning**. The Programme's research themes focus on the acquisition of knowledge and skilled performance.

The research work will seek to promote understanding of effective contexts for teaching and learning and, of necessity, will explore the challenges and opportunities afforded by new technologies. It will promote life long learning at the level of pedagogy.

The Programme also has relevance to other ESRC themes such as People and Technology, Innovation, Social Inclusion and Exclusion and to Economic Performance and Development.

2 Overview of the year

2.1 Phase II Commissioning

2.1.1 At the beginning of the year 2000 Phase I commissioning was complete. The Programme comprised 4 large Research Networks and 2 Career Development Associates (CDAs).

2.1.2 The Phase II research specification, published in November, 1999, attracted 94 applications by the closing date of 21 January 2000. 30 bids were shortlisted in March and revisions invited in the light of feedback from reviewers, referees and Steering Committee comment. The Director's office was heavily involved in consultancy work with the shortlisted projects.

- 2.1.3 In June, the Committee recommended to the Research Priorities Board funding for 9 major research projects to a value of £6.9 million. A competition report was subsequently presented to the Board indicating, amongst other things (a) the very high quality competition (only 10% of bids were funded) and (b) the skewed nature of the decisions across sectors (6 of the 9 successful bids were in the schools sector).
- 2.1.4 In recognition of this skew, bids for further funding (focussing on a more comprehensive Programme research portfolio) were made to the HEFCE. £10.5 million of further funding was subsequently agreed.

2.2 **Research Capacity Support network commissioning**

A report on research capacity had been commissioned in 1999 by the Steering Committee. This indicated system wide gaps in expertise relevant to the conduct of high quality research in the field. Following further consultation the Steering Committee determined to commission a dedicated capacity building operation with an initial brief to enhance research capacity using the Programme projects as a resource and focussing on the development of quantitative methods. A specification was published in March which attracted 5 applications. 2 were shortlisted in June and an award was allocated in November to a team in the University of Cardiff led by Dr Stephen Gorard.

2.3 **National and International Collaborations**

- 2.3.1 International collaborations have been actively pursued with Finland and other Nordic Council countries, with the USA through the National Science Foundation and with Holland through PROO.
- 2.3.2 The Director of TLRP has given keynote lectures to national conferences in the above countries. Through the Academy of Finland this work has led to bids to the EU (through the EURESCOR scheme) for international collaborations in advancing the quality of research in the field (through advanced seminars on theory and methods and through post doc training opportunities).
- 2.3.3 In regard to national collaboration a Programme communication plan was developed, part of which designated a set of 'key collaborators' (ie bodies with high leverage likely to enhance the degree and quality of impact of the research).
- 2.3.4 The Director and Assistant Director have conducted initial negotiations with these bodies (eg NFER, LSDA, NCSL, CoSLA, TTA, EPPI, CIPD, BPS, LGA, ILT, OfSTED) at Chief Executive level with a view to agreeing strategic collaboration. Further negotiations are in progress.

2.4 **Supporting Programme work and quality**

The work of the 4 networks and 1 free standing CDA has been supported by:

- (a) a steady stream of visits, discussions and consultations
- (b) a Programme seminar (2 June 2000)
- (c) operating a system of critical friends involving members of the Steering Committee attached long-term to designated projects and acting as consultants thereto

- (d) The First Programme Conference in November. 170 people attended including very high status international collaborators from the USA, Finland, Holland and Belgium.

2.5 Developing the domain : Brain research and learning science

The Steering Committee commissioned a review of brain research relevant to learning. The object of the exercise was to attempt to identify a longer term research agenda likely to involve interdisciplinary work in the field. The report (from Professor Frith and Dr Blakemore) was received by the Committee in November and has been sent out for comment in a wide ranging consultation exercise.

2.6 Highlights

- 2.6.1 It is too soon to make claims about significant research outputs or their input on ESRC priority themes. No element of the Programme has completed a full year's work. It is worth noting however that two of the Networks (that led by Professor Ainscow and that by Professor Rudduck) have reported significant positive commitment to the research from schools and LEA notwithstanding the pressures of competing national initiatives in schooling. These Networks are oversubscribed in terms of demands for engagement with practitioners.
- 2.6.2 The conception and commissioning of a dedicated Research Capacity Support Network might be considered a highly significant achievement.
- 2.6.3 The Programme rationale, structure and objectives have received very positive approval in Europe. Good partnerships are beginning to develop with several European research organisations. These have led to joint bids for funding for collaborative and research training ventures.

3 Programme Activities

3.1 Progress of projects

- 3.1.1 Comment here is restricted to the Phase I networks and CDA awards. The Phase II projects will not start work until 2001.

3.1.2 Phase I progress

- 3.1.2.1 Phase I comprises 4 Research Networks (one with a CDA (Flutter) attached) and 1 stand alone CDA (Newman). There is a total of 30 project investigators in Phase I. There have been 9 site visits.

- 3.1.2.2 Individual Network reports:

- ***Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools*** (Mel Ainscow, Tony Booth and Alan Dyson). This network is aimed at improving attainment for marginalised learners by looking at common elements in their experience, overcoming barriers to their achievement, and sustaining improved practice in LEAs and schools. (start date 1 April 2000).

Progress

A network of 25 schools has been created in the three partner LEAs. During the summer term 2000, introductory training events of one or two days were held in each LEA. Each school has made their participation in the project a part of their development plan. They have also become a focus for co-ordinating the

involvement of LEA and university staff in school projects. Significant effort has also been made to foster the development of the academic research network. Three meetings of the group of ten academic staff have been held, including one residential event. In addition, a strong sub-network has also been established between the three RAS involved in the research.

Difficulties

It has become clear that carrying out applied research of this kind is particularly difficult within the current education context. The reform agenda is demanding of time amongst LEA and school staff.

Difficulties have also been noted in relation to the need to create a 'tight-loose' arrangement for getting the work done in ways that are relevant and feasible within the different contexts of the Network's operation. In this sense, joint planning, good communication and firm timelines are all essential. The team has agreed to write significant interim reports, analysing developments in the three LEAs and 25 schools, at the end of the first year.

- ***Evidence Based Practice in Science Education*** (Robin Millar, John Leach, Jonathan Osborne and Mary Ratcliffe). The Network will advance learners' attainment in science through developments in research-based practice. It will promote the use of research evidence by practitioners, wherever this will improve teaching and learning. (1 January 2000)

Progress

The EPSE Research Network has made good progress over its first year, in establishing working practices within the Network, recruiting staff, developing an infrastructure for effective communication with user groups, inducting practitioners into the work of the Network, and initiating work as planned on all four projects.

Five full Network meetings have taken place during 2000, each attended by all Network research staff in post at the time. A brief information leaflet to use in informing other researchers and practitioners about the EPSE Network has been produced. A Network website has been set up, to provide information about the Network. An Advisory Committee has been established and groups of teachers (and other practitioners) have been recruited as partners in the work.

Difficulties

Teachers are increasingly finding it difficult to participate in meetings during the working week. Finding supply cover is an issue. One of the tensions noted is between fuller practitioner involvement in the development of research instruments, and holding to the planned timetable.

In short, more involvement means more discussion and this takes longer.

- ***Improving Incentives to Learning in the Workplace*** (Helen Rainbird, Karen Evans, Phil Hodkinson and Lorna Unwin). This aims to increase attainment in workplace learning through understanding incentives to learn, and by helping to improve training practice in a wide range of work settings. (1 April 2000)

Progress

Considerable work has been put into developing mechanisms for co-ordinating the five projects that make up the Network. In order to achieve this a Network Administrator has been appointed. A website and a database have been established for publicising the Network. Extensive field work has already been conducted.

Difficulties

The Network has worked intensively on revisions to methodology to meet the ESRC conditions. This process has generated some practical difficulties. The original proposal for Project 2 anticipated c 120 interviews and a limited number of observations.

The revised methodology has to be realistic about the number of cases which can be tracked within the available resources (half time researcher), and has to recognise that the increased demands made on colleges and workplaces will depend on their continuing goodwill and willingness to take part.

- ***Consulting Students about Teaching and Learning: Process, Impact and Outcomes*** (Jean Rudduck, Madeleine Arnot, Michael Fielding, John MacBeath, Donald McIntyre, Kate Myers, Diane Reay and Julia Flutter). The Network's purpose is to enhance motivation, commitment and attainment through the effective use of pupils' perspectives on teaching and learning. It will work with teachers to communicate new dimensions of classroom practice, where there is evidence that student perspectives can make a difference. (1 March 2000)

Progress

All appropriate partnerships have been established and extensive field work has been conducted.

Career Development Associates

- Julia Flutter is researching on *The Historical, Political and Pedagogic Significance of Pupil Voice*, linked to the Network on *Consulting Students*. (included in the Rudduck Network)
- Mark Newman is examining *The Effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning in Promoting Evidence-Based Practice*, comparing a problem-based and a traditional curriculum in post-qualification nursing education. (1 February 2000)

Progress

The design of the study continues to evolve and the details of the research methods are being established. These developments have been discussed in more detail in a series of methodology working papers produced by the principal investigator.

4 Internal Communication

- 4.1 There have been 3 meetings of the Steering Committee; one Programme seminar (2 June); one Programme Conference (9/10 November); extensive telephone and e-mail exchanges; 9 visits to networks by the Director/Assistant Director.

5 External Communications

- 5.1 Both the Programme and its constituent projects have submitted for ratification by the Steering Committee, plans for user engagement and participation.
- 5.2 Each Phase I operation has established a website, offered briefings or newsletters to appropriate constituencies, has users on their advisory group, has direct user involvement in the research and has established connections with appropriate training bodies.
- 5.3 All these activities are mirrored at the Programme level. An Assistant Director (Dr Kanefsky) has lead responsibility for ensuring that Programme research makes an appropriate impact in policy and practice considerations. There is a Programme Communication Plan established in consultation with a wide range of potential users.
- 5.4 The Programme issued its first Newsletter in September. Three versions were prepared, focussed on Primary, Secondary and Post-Compulsory sectors and these were sent to the head teacher of all schools, to colleges and other educational institutions in the UK, and a wide range of policy organisations and other stakeholders. The Newsletter included a reply-paid card for interested parties to be included in the Programme's database and over 1,000 individuals returned these. The Newsletter was very well received and created a strong brand identity for the Programme.
- 5.5 A set of key collaborators has been identified with a view to securing high leverage for impact and engagement and negotiations with these bodies at Chief Executive level are well advanced (see para 2.3.4).
- 5.6 Practitioners and other research users have been involved in all Programme activities (seminars, the Programme Conference, meetings).
- 5.7 Programme publications (see Annex A (by Network))
- 5.8 There has been extensive contact with overseas academics in Finland and the USA. The connection through the Finnish Academy has led to collaborative bids for EU funds for advanced level conferences on research strategy, theory and methods development and training. Connections with the US have developed with the NSF and the NRC. Plans have been aired for joint conferences and mutual research placements. Connections are developing with the Dutch PROO.
- 5.9 Scientific representation has been engaged in through (a) the Director's membership of NERF (b) the presentation of papers at national and international conferences.
- 5.10 **Future Programme Developments**
- 5.10.1 Reports on 'key collaborators strategy' and on the 'Brain Research and Learning Sciences' are being prepared for the Steering Committee in June 2001.
- 5.10.2 In support of Phases I and II user/researcher seminars will take place in Cardiff (30 March) and York (10 May); two Intra Programme seminars will occur in London (22/23 May) and Sheffield 6/7 June; planning is in train for the Second Programme Conference (Birmingham, November).
- 5.10.3 Progress is confidently expected on the Eurescor bids (which have advanced to detailed contract stage) and on the Nordic Council bids. These are expected to materialise as seminar and conference series, the former on advancing theory and practice in large scale research, the latter on advancing understanding of knowledge transformation for impact.

5.10.4 Funding has awarded for a Phase III of the Programme. Much of the summer of 2001 will be occupied in a national consultation exercise to shape a research specification. Planning for this is in hand.

Annex A

Publications

Programme papers:

- Conference Desforges, C. (2000). Familiar challenges and new approaches : necessary advances in theory and methods in research on teaching and learning. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Cardiff, 7 - 9 September 2000.
- Conference Desforges, C. (2000). Putting educational research to use through knowledge transformation. Keynote lecture to the Learning and Skills Agency Conference, Coventry, 12 December 2000
- Occasional Paper Blakemore, S. and Frith, U. (2000). The implications of recent developments in neuroscience for research on teaching and learning. A consultation paper prepared for the ESRC - Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

Research Network: Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices within Schools

- Conference Ainscow, M. (2000). Understanding the Role of Research in Developing Inclusive Practice, European Education Research Association, Edinburgh.

Research Network: Towards Evidence-based Practice in Science Education

- Conference Leach, J. and Scott, P. (2000). The concept of learning demand as a tool for designing teaching sequences. Paper prepared for the meeting Research-based Teaching Sequences, Université Paris VII, France, November 2000.
- Conference Ratcliffe, M., Collins, S., Leach, J., Millar, R. and Osborne, J. (2000). Towards Evidence-based Practice in Science Education (EPSE) - an ESRC funded Teaching and Learning Research Network. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Cardiff, 7 - 9 September 2000.
- Journal Article Millar, R., Leach, J., Osborne, J. and Ratcliffe, M. (2000). Evidence-Based Practice in Science Education (EPSE): a new Research Network. *Education in Science*, 190, 12 - 13.

Research Network: Improving Incentives to Learning at Work

- Conference Evans, K. (2000) 'British Discourses on Key Competences', DgfE Conference Education in Transforming Societies, Georg-August University, Goettingen, Germany, September (Literature review contributed to this conference paper).

- Conference Fuller, A., and Unwin, L. (2000) 'Apprenticeship Past and Present : The changing relationship between community and apprenticeship in England'. Paper presented at the International Conference for Teaching and Learning within Vocational and Occupational Education and Training, 21st - 24th September, Georg-August University, Goettingen.
- Conference Hodkinson, P., Rainbird, H., Evans, K., Senker, P., Unwin, L. (2000). 'Incentives and Barriers to Learning in the Workplace : a research agenda', Working Knowledge International Conference, University of Technology, Sydney, 11 - 13 December.
- Occasional Paper Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2000) National Report on Apprenticeship in Great Britain, report prepared for the University of Milan and Trento Ministry of Labour as part of comparative study of apprenticeship in Europe.
- Research Network: Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning**
- Book Schratz, M., Jakobsen, L., Meuret, D. and MacBeath, J.W. (2000). Self-evaluation in European Schools : a Story of Change, London : Falmer Press.
- Chapter Fielding, M., Fuller, A., and Loose, T. (2000). Taking pupil perspectives seriously, in G.Wouthworth and P. Lincoln (eds.). Supporting Improving Primary Schools, London : Falmer, pp 107 - 121.
- Chapter Rudduck, J., Wallace, G. and Flutter, J. (2000). 'Students' voices : what can they tell us as partners in change?', in K.Stott and V.Trafford (eds.), Partnerships : Shaping the Future of Education, London : Middlesex University Press, pp 10 - 26.
- Journal Article Demetriou, H., Goalen, P. and Rudduck, J. (2000). Academic performance, transfer, transition and friendship : listening to the student voice, International Journal of Educational Research, 33, 425 - 441.
- Journal Article Doddington, C., Flutter, J. and Rudduck, J. (2000). Taking their word for it : can listening, and responding to pupils' views give new directions for school improvement? Education 3 - 13, 28, 3, 46 - 51.
- Journal Article Fielding, M. (1999). Target setting, policy pathology and student perspectives, Cambridge Journal of Education, 29, 2, 277 -287.
- Journal Article Rudduck, J. and Flutter, J. (2000). Pupil participation and pupil perspective : 'carving a new order of experience', Cambridge Journal of Education, 30, 1, 75 - 89.

Annex B

Conferences/Workshops attended

(CD = Director; JK = Assistant Director)

18 January	(JK)	TTA Workshop on panel reviewing
2 February	(CD)	ESRC Annual Lecture (D Blunkett)
4 February	(CD/JK)	Programme Workshop on Capacity Building
9 February	(CD)	West Sussex Head Teachers Conference
9 March	(CD)	ESRC Review of Thematic Priorities
21 March	(CD)	TTA Workshop on User Engagement
31 March	(CD)	Hammersmith Head Teachers Conference
3 April	(JK)	Goodison Group seminar on User Engagement
14 April	(CD)	Learning and the Brain Seminar
2 June	(CD/JK)	Programme Research Seminar
7/9 June	(CD)	Keynote presented to Finnish Academy Conference, Helsinki
30 June	(CD)	Paper presented to Institute of Education Conference on 'Creating Lifelong Learners'
1 July	(JK)	IPD/SKOPE Seminar
13 July	(JK)	HEFCE Nurse Training Seminar
9 September	(CD)	Keynote lecture to Annual Conference of BERA
11 September	(CD)	DfEE Research Liaison Seminar
20 September	(CD)	Presented paper in ESRC staff briefing seminar series
28 November	(JK)	LSDA Research Seminar
29 November	(CD)	Presented paper to NUT Conference on ICT
11 December	(JK)	Presented paper to Annual Research Conference of LSDA

Annex C

Directors' Activities

- 1 These comments cover the work of the Director and the Assistant Director. Detailed numerical references relate to specific activities enumerated in the attachment.
- 2 **Adding value.** We have bought added value through contributions to debate on research designs and communication planning particularly during the commissioning phase and, with one network, post conditional-commissioning. This work has been face-to-face resource greedy. We have also added value through designing and implementing a critical friend system of support from the Steering Committee and through the organisation of a conference and a Programme seminar.
- 3 We have **provided intellectual leadership** in the above instances. In addition we have led in shaping conceptions of educational research and its impact in discussions with researchers and users and in international collaborations and developments.
- 4 Perhaps because of the unusual nature of TLRP we have been particularly busy in **user engagements**. This has been worked in to consultation processes, research planning, advisory and support work and communication planning. User engagement has been an essential and organic process throughout. That being said, some users are perceived as offering more leverage than others in potential impact. We have worked to identify these 'key users' and to develop strategic partnerships with them. Additionally we have engaged in all the predictable user engagement strategies of conference presentations to practitioners, distributing a newsletter to all UK providers in compulsory school years, all HE/FE providers and a host of other post compulsory sector/private sector providers.

The print run for our newsletter was 40,000.
- 5 **Inputs to public policy debates.** We are not in a position to comment on the several current high profile education debates because we have yet to collect substantial bodies of relevant evidence. We have however, contributed to strategic debates about educational research through the Director's involvement with NERF.
- 6 **Inputs to ESRC Debates.** We have engaged fully in these as appropriate. We attend Centre and Project Directors meetings, participated in the Thematic Priorities revision exercise and in several foresight exercises.
- 7 **A channel of communication for the ESRC.** Through reports to the Steering Committee we have been in a position to feedback to the ESRC any issues we find in the field.