

# Capacity building evaluations, obstacles, and initiatives: reflections from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

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Personalising capacity:  
how might we strategise for the capacity building of researchers?

Reflections from an evaluation of the TLRP research projects.

# Capacity building evaluations, obstacles, and initiatives: reflections from the TLRP, UK.

## CAPACITY CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

- Ageing demographic.
- Widespread recognition that expertise needs to be shared and developed
- Diversity of research community: range of qualifications, expertise and career backgrounds.
- Increasing number of fixed term contracts
  - Revised Concordat
  - Launch of Vitae (<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>)
  - TLRP evaluation

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## TLRP'S CAPACITY BUILDING STRUCTURES

### Structures:

- Long term funding
- RCBN - formal learning opportunities
- Conferences
- On-line resources
- Meeting of Minds Research Fellowships



### Wider benefits:

- Networking
- Community building
- Identity formation
- Access to range of resources
- Confidence-building

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## WORKING PRACTICES

*A very supportive and collaborative PI and other research colleagues made this project one of the best experiences of my research career to date. I felt valued throughout the project and the cooperative and collaborative approach of the research team was invaluable both emotionally and professionally. This was a very democratic project which was the most collaborative of my research career. I enjoyed tremendous support from the PI and the rest of the project team and my fellow researchers in particular. The project enhanced my research skills considerably.*

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## RESEARCH PROJECT CONTEXT

### EXPANSIVE

- Interpersonal support from more senior project team members/members of institution
- Supported engagement with multiple communities of practice
- Multidimensional model of expertise with diverse skills of entire research team valued
- Balance between project outputs and researcher's own professional development
- Access and encouragement to attend off-the-job training
- Ongoing commitment to researchers' futures beyond the completion of the project

### RESTRICTIVE

- Limited interpersonal support
- Limited exposure to multiple communities of practice
- Hierarchical valuing of skills with privileging of some team members
- Prioritisation of project outputs over professional development needs of individuals
- Limited access to off-the-job training
- Abrupt ending to the project with no further investment in research staff.

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Research capacity building initiative:	Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2000 – present. Range of research capacity building initiatives at the level of the Programme and the level of individual projects.
Strengths:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant impact upon the professional development of educational researchers.</li><li>• Funding and management of range of capacity building structures.</li></ul>
Obstacles to capacity building:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working conditions of many research staff, particularly insecurity of tenure.</li><li>• Lack of clarity across project teams of what might be meant by capacity building.</li></ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any strategic response to the UK Demographic challenges needs to be responsive to the diversity of researchers.</li><li>• Research projects need to be committed to delivering quality research outputs <u>and</u> to professionally develop their research staff.</li></ul>