

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

### **Reflections from an evaluation of TLRP research projects.**

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#### **Introduction**

Concerns about building research capacity in Educational Research arise from fears that there will be insufficient people able to lead the delivery of quality research in the near future. Drawing on evidence from a recent evaluation of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), this paper explores ways of understanding research capacity building. Capacity building is not just about recruiting sufficient people to the field to do research, but enabling those people in the field to progress so that they are able to sustain and progress Educational Research as an academic field in the future. The scale of the TLRP programme has provided a substantial body of evidence relating to researchers' experiences, and this forms the basis of the Mapping the Ripples project's (MTR) evaluation of the Programme<sup>1</sup>. Based on interview and survey data from research staff, managers and research project reports, this paper describes a range of research capacity building structures and activities. Through an exploration of those experiences which researchers have found most valuable in relation to their own professional development and their research careers, the concept of research capacity building is clarified. In conclusion, the paper presents considerations of how capacity building might be strategised for within research projects, across host institutions, and through future funding initiatives.

#### **The research context in the UK: demographic challenges and policy responses**

It is timely to focus on research capacity building in Education. The ESRC Demographic Review (Mills et al, 2006) revealed the ageing demographic of the research population: 70% of staff in Education are aged over 45, with many senior academics retiring in the next ten years. Evidence suggests that there are insufficient younger researchers who are able to replace these senior academics (Mills et al, 2006: 44), with a possible consequence that the field will become professionally depleted. While there is widespread recognition that expertise needs to be shared and developed between established and beginning researchers (Dyson and Desforges, 2002, McIntyre and McIntyre, 1999), the complex nature and huge scale of the field mean that this process is not unproblematic.

The characteristics of the Educational workforce in the UK are striking in their complexity. For example, the population of researchers who have worked, or are

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<sup>1</sup> More information about this evaluation can be found at <http://www.tlrp.org/capacity/mappingtheripples/>.

working, on TLRP projects is extremely diverse. Table 1 summarises some of the characteristics of this population.

Table 1: Characteristics of TLRP researcher population

Age	From 22 to 68.
Qualifications	No Level 4 qualification or university experience, through to PhD and post-doctoral study.
Employment	Full-time, part-time, fractional (less than 0.5), sessional (employed by the hour).
Contract	Including permanent, fixed-term, seconded from other employment onto the research project.
Professional background	Including academic careers through social science and other discipline areas; professional careers as educational practitioners; work in policy settings.

While there are researchers who have followed a fairly straightforward academic career route through undergraduate and doctoral studies, it is likely that this is far more common in other research disciplines (Mills et al, 2006). Many individuals have moved into research work from earlier careers in Educational practice or policy. The diversity of background is a strength of the workforce, but it mitigates against simple understandings of what the capacity of the field might be or how to design strategies for capacity building in the future. Generally, there is an assumption that research staff are 'beginners', who have not yet acquired the experience and expertise to become more senior academic staff. Because many researchers have previously had careers in practice or policy, it is sometimes assumed that they lack research experience (for example, see Taylor, 2002). However, most researchers interviewed for this project rejected the notion that they were 'early career' or 'beginning' researchers. This was supported by demographic evidence from the MTR survey which showed that, on average, the researchers who had been involved with TLRP projects had 7 years' research experience prior to working on that project. Capacity building activities need to be responsive to the backgrounds and existing expertise amongst research staff. As one interviewee commented for this project, "*I don't want to waste my development time on something that wasn't interesting... Please don't patronise us*". Capacity building opportunities shouldn't target only beginning researchers.

As a field of academic research, education has experienced the same major policy shifts facing other areas of Higher Education (HE) in the UK since the mid-1990s.

Changes within the policy context and related changes in funding have led to HE's subjection to the wider labour market with an associated need to attain new sources of funding and to increase efficiency (Davies and Holloway, 1995). In response, universities have become more entrepreneurial in attracting funding from diverse sources (Collinson, 2000) with a greater focus on bidding for external grants. Competition between universities has increased as they bid for the same pockets of funding (Reay, 2000), and there has been an associated drive to reduce costs and increase flexibility: to deliver quality outputs at a competitive price. Costs can potentially be reduced by employing research staff on fixed-term contracts related to specific research projects. The quality of research outputs is regulated by visible performance measures (Hey, 2001: 76), most prominently through the Research Assessment Exercise. The allocation of quality-related research (QR) funding according to RAE outcomes has led to an increasing concentration of research resources at a select number of HE institutions (Munn, 2007), thereby contributing to a polarisation between research-intensive universities and the remainder of the field (Pollard, 2006) which, in turn, potentially limits collaboration between institutions. While this paper focuses upon research capacity building in relation to research staff, other papers within the symposia focus more explicitly upon the consequences of this changing policy context for research capacity.

The working conditions of early career researchers and the competitive nature of HE problematises opportunities for capacity building with Educational Research staff. Of the TLRP researchers who completed the MTR survey, 67.5% were employed on fixed-term contracts. Contract research is seen to be an inefficient system for training and maintaining a skilled workforce (Collinson, 2000), with the risk that contract researchers fall into "academic spaces characterised by endemic insecurity and low status" unless equitable, supportive structures are established within HE (Reay, 2000). The working conditions of being a researcher in Education have a negative impact upon the workforce, particularly in terms of their motivation and their commitment to their work. As one researcher observed in her survey responses:

*"I enjoy conducting educational research as I think it is very rewarding knowing that what you do for a living could impact and benefit young people's lives. However, the current state of contract research posts means no financial security whatsoever and no real prospects for a better job and with three young children I may have sooner or later to stop being idealistic and get a stable job with a future."*

Respondents spoke about the instability of tenure and the anxiety of being unable to make long term plans because of the lack of financial security. Researchers felt that the anxiety associated with needing to find their next contract generated a constant level of preoccupation which prevented all of the researcher's current energies being committed to their current project. As one respondent observed, a fixed term contract "*interferes with your sense of allegiance*": one is unlikely to commit all of one's

attention to one's current project if one is simultaneously seeking to position themselves in relation to future employment opportunities. Insecurity of tenure acts against the professional development of the workforce and can limit the quality of researchers' work.

Higher Education policy in the UK has made attempts to address the working conditions of research staff. The Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations came into force in 2002 following the EU directive. There has also been an increasing awareness of the need for a new national framework for research careers. Recent policy responses in the UK have included the publication of a revised Concordat to support the career development of research staff. The Concordat aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK, and sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders. This provides a new imperative to review and improve professional development support for research staff, and stresses that researcher positions in the UK should be attractive as careers in themselves, not solely as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions. The management of research staff is awarded a similar level of priority within the Concordat to that awarded to the provision of training and support structures. Synchronous with the introduction of the new Research Concordat in June 2008 was the launch of a new national programme, Vitae, to champion the professional and career development of researchers (<http://www.vitae.ac.uk>). The Programme is funded by the Research Councils to support the personal, professional and career management of researchers in the UK.

In Education, specifically, the TLRP represents a major attempt to build research capacity. The TLRP was the first of the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) investments to explicitly identify research capacity building as a priority and significant attention has been given to this issue by the TLRP over the past 10 years. The Programme was set up in 1998, and the first project began work in January 2000. Since then, TLRP has provided coordination for some 700 researchers in 70 project teams and almost 20 initiatives of cross-programme analysis in the UK. As the Programme nears completion, a substantial body of evidence related to capacity building is therefore available. This paper draws on evidence from an evaluation of the TLRP's capacity building structures and activities, including existing TLRP databases; surveys distributed to early career educational researchers (working on TLRP and non-TLRP projects) to investigate their ways of working and communicating; a survey distributed to awardholders of TLRP projects to investigate good practice within the field; and interviews with a range of research staff. These data sources are summarised in table 2.

The Mapping the Ripples project is theoretically informed by research analysing how work organisations differ in the ways that they create and manage themselves as learning environments (Fuller et al, 2007; Evans et al, 2006; Fuller and Unwin,

2004). These writers have developed the conceptual framework of an expansive-restrictive continuum of workplace factors; this provides a useful vehicle for bringing together the pedagogical, organisational and cultural factors that contribute to workplace learning. These factors include the potential to participate in multiple communities of practice, the generation of multi-dimensional models of expertise, and opportunities to access off-the-job training: each of these recur across our dataset, and will be returned to later in this paper. Together these data lead to a greater understanding of how involvement with the TLRP has shaped and influenced career trajectories and intellectual journeys within the educational research field.

Table 2 – Summary of data sources

Data Sources	Details
Documentary Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TLRP project annual reports and end of award reports</li> <li>D Space analysis of project outputs and co-authorship networks</li> </ul>
Survey evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three on-line surveys: (i) researchers who had worked, or were currently working on TLRP projects; (ii) researchers in Education with no experience working on TLRP projects; (iii) senior academics with experience of directing or managing TLRP projects.</li> </ul>
Researcher interviewees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 TLRP researchers from a range of projects and a diversity of institutions across the UK</li> </ul>

### **Positive features of the TLRP: what worked and why?**

For this paper, the focus will be upon outlining the most valued of TLRP's research capacity building activities and experiences as a means of clarifying the concept of capacity building and informing future debates. Researchers' experiences of capacity building related to structures built within the overall programme and the working practices of individual research projects. While evaluations of the TLRP's structures were broadly similar, there were major differences across the working practices of individual research projects.

#### a) The TLRP capacity building structures

The capacity building structures of the TLRP programme included:

- the provision of long term funding for research projects (on average, 3 years funding);
- the setting up of a Research Capacity Building Network (RCBN) which provided formal off-the-job research training and a regular researcher journal;

- on-line and text-based resources including a website (<http://www.tlrp.org>), a Dspace digital repository of all publications produced by each of the projects within the Programme, and a range of on-line resources for both practitioners and researchers;
- annual conferences;
- Meetings of Minds Fellowships.

Table 3 summarises respondents' engagement with these structures and their perceived value.

The provision of longer-term funding for research projects was valued by many researchers, particularly those who had previous experience of working on a series of short-term projects. TLRP's commitment to funding projects for an average of 3 years contrasts with the research climate in the UK where many research project are funded for significantly less time. In relation to building their research capacity, the length of TLRP projects afforded researchers a greater degree of participation in research design, data collection, and analysis, and more opportunities to develop expertise. Researchers felt that they were able to award their projects more attention because they were not concerned about their next contract. Therefore, both the research project and the researcher benefitted.

Table 3: Summary of TLRP's capacity building structures and related social practices

STRUCTURES	Long term funding	RCBN	On-line and text-based resources	Conferences	Meeting of Minds Fellowships
<b>SOCIAL PRACTICES</b>	Increased ownership of project working practices and findings	Community participation; network building; access to learning; identity work; validation of practice.	Resource-sharing across wider communities	Community participation; network building; access to learning; identity work.	Facilitation of learning; increased participation in the field
<b>VALUED OUTCOMES</b>	SECURITY FEELING VALUED	MEETING PEOPLE; LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES; GAINING CONFIDENCE	ACCESS TO RANGE OF RESOURCES	MEETING PEOPLE; INCLUSIVITY; LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.	LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES; BUILDING CV

Some researchers valued the provision of RCBN events, although researchers employed on more recent TLRP projects had not been able to engage with training courses due to the closure of the RCBN programme in 2005. While project directors tended to emphasise the importance of research skills-building within the working practices of individual research projects, researchers valued opportunities to attend off-the-job courses. Our data shows that this may cause tensions between directors and researchers within projects. The value in these courses was not always linked to learning new research skills and knowledge: in some instances, researchers felt that attending formal courses was a way of validating their own research practice. As one researcher commented:

*“To me, to know what I was doing – yes, I knew what I was doing – but it was the confidence of knowing that I could do that [...] I actually had a lot of the skills that I needed for it, I just didn’t have the confidence that I needed for it.”*

Within their evaluation of the RCBN provision, Rees et al (2007:765) identify opportunities to interact “with professional colleagues both within and outside of the workplace” as one of the most important aspects of capacity building, and evidence for the MTR project shows that researchers valued the opportunities these courses provided to meet other researchers, and to engage with networks and communities beyond their research projects. Evans et al (2006) identify value in workers having access to ‘off the job’ training and stress the importance of the combined value of learning informally through workplace practices and experiencing more formal learning through external training opportunities. Evans et al (2006: 30) acknowledge the value of recognising the workplace as an important site of learning, but stress:

... if conceiving all learning as situated has the effect of confining workers to a particular workplace, on the grounds that (all) learning is highly context-dependent, their opportunity to gain new perspectives, to cross boundaries, and to participate in other communities of practice will be denied.

In one example from the MTR data, a researcher felt that her period of unemployment following the TLRP project was, at least partly, attributable to her lack of engagement with wider networks and communities through events such as training courses and conferences. She linked this to a lack of clarity over available funding for her to attend these kinds of events.

The TLRP conference was similarly valued for providing researchers with opportunities to engage with wider communities, both in terms of networking for future employment opportunities and in relation to developing expertise and accessing resources. The conference was also particularly valuable in providing researchers with a sense of a ‘researcher identity’: the notion of belonging to this community of researchers, of taking on the identity as a researcher, was a recurring theme across the dataset. The TLRP conference was the most positively evaluated of the TLRP’s capacity building structures. This corresponds with the mid-term

review of TLRP (Rickinson et al, 2005:32) which recognised that “one of the greatest achievements of the Programme was said to be the success of bringing together a large number of researchers from different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds to engage in conversation and to exchange ideas.”

While the on-line resources are the most recent of the TLRP’s capacity building structures, researchers who made use of these valued them and are keen to encourage others to make use of these. For example, a part-time contract researcher explained:

*“I have introduced D Space to a lot of the staff here because I think that it is a fantastic resource for journal articles, things that you might not otherwise find by using research or other methods of searching for journal articles. D space is fantastic!”*

In this case, the capacity building benefits of the resources extend beyond the individual to other members of her research community beyond the TLRP.

The provision of structures such as the TLRP conferences, RCBN events, and on-line resources provide opportunities for capacity building, but it is only through engagement with these structures that capacity might be built. For example, the conferences would have been significantly less effective in building the capacity of the research workforce if they had not provided opportunities for individuals to engage with one another within a supportive and inclusive ethos.

#### b) Working practices of research projects

Each research project funded within the Programme was required to develop and implement research capacity building activities. The pro forma for projects’ annual reports and end of award reports required the completion of a section on capacity building activities. Archived reports evidence the slipperiness of the concept of ‘capacity building’, with different projects presenting different views of what might be meant by the term. For example, some research projects listed all events which their research staff had attended, while others focused upon opportunities that research staff had to work with more experienced colleagues. Some projects stated that no capacity building activities had been undertaken, although researchers had undertaken both of the above.

Those researchers who felt that they had had particularly positive opportunities for building their research capacity often described these opportunities in ways which bore a close similarity to features of expansive workplace environments (Evans et al, 2006). To illustrate this, one case will be drawn on here. This interviewee had a long history of contract research posts in Educational research but felt that her TLRP project far exceeded the experiences she had had on other research projects. She is enthusiastic about research work: “*I’ve loved that variety and the skills that you pick up along the way*”. Principal investigators on these research projects have been key

influences upon her career and she considers that the TLRP project has had the greatest influence amongst these. Within the survey, this interviewee had commented:

*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.*

In interview, she talked about learning a great deal from both the PI and the project director, particularly in relation to project management. The project was non-hierarchical and the interviewee particularly valued the “democratic nature” of the project which provided many learning opportunities and chances to share expertise through regular fortnightly meetings. Because she felt valued within the research team, she felt that she had the autonomy to decide which capacity building events to attend. In relation to work on expansive workplaces: the research team fostered “an expansive view of expertise [which] entails the creation of environments which allow for substantial horizontal, cross-boundary activity, dialogue and problem solving” (Fuller and Unwin, 2004: 136), knowledge was shared and mutually created, and the researcher’s participation within the project meant that she felt that she could elect to participate in multiple communities of practice through accessing a range of training opportunities. The researcher related the democratic nature of her research team directly to the influence of the TLRP: “*I don’t feel divorced from the funder at all, and the funder has a facilitating touch*”.

<b>RESEARCH PROJECT CONTEXT</b>	
<b>EXPANSIVE</b>	<b>RESTRICTIVE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal support from more senior project team members/members of institution</li> <li>• Supported engagement with multiple communities of practice</li> <li>• Multidimensional model of expertise with diverse skills of entire research team valued</li> <li>• Balance between project outputs and researcher’s own professional development</li> <li>• Access and encouragement to attend off-the-job training</li> <li>• Ongoing commitment to researchers’ futures beyond the completion of the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interpersonal support</li> <li>• Limited exposure to multiple communities of practice</li> <li>• Hierarchical valuing of skills with privileging of some team members</li> <li>• Prioritisation of project outputs over professional development needs of individuals</li> <li>• Limited access to off-the-job training</li> <li>• Abrupt ending to the project with no further investment in research staff.</li> </ul>

Table 4 reframes the expansive-restrictive workplace continuum within the context of data from the MTR evaluation. These statements link to the subheadings of the next section of this paper.

### **How might we understand ‘research capacity building’?**

The Mapping the Ripples project elicited a substantial body of evidence of what researchers considered to have been central to their own research capacity building. Their responses can be seen to congregate around the key features of the expansive workplace.

#### a) Interpersonal support

The metaphor of catalysis is useful in understanding the success of capacity building by the TLRP and, perhaps, more widely. Including a catalyst increases the rate of reaction: in relation to this data, the involvement of a catalyst also increases the value that an individual researcher can derive from capacity building structures. The researchers who derived the most value from the TLRP’s capacity building structures tended to be those who received interpersonal support from a key person or key persons who catalysed, or increased the rate of, the researcher’s engagement with these structures. The researcher could, of course, get to the capacity building structures by themselves but having a key person or key persons who acted as a catalyst meant that the researcher tended to access more, and more appropriate, structures more quickly and elicited more value from them. The roles taken by these key people included:

- Acting as gatekeepers, introducing researchers to new communities of practice and supporting their sense of being a valued member of those communities;
- Providing mentoring, particularly in relation to helping researchers reflect upon their own practice;
- Coaching - pushing researchers to achieve their potential and raising the researchers’ perspectives of their own abilities.

The provision of an effective catalyst increased significantly the value which researchers elicited from the capacity building structures evaluated above.

#### b) Supported engagement with multiple communities of practice

Linking closely with the role of key people as ‘gatekeepers’, evidence from this evaluation highlighted the impact that personal introductions to key people at conferences had for individual’s sense of belonging to these networks and communities. Researchers linked the feeling of being welcomed and included within a community to their overall positive experience of professional development. Other examples included the case of a practitioner researcher who was accompanied on

her first visit to the research sites. She felt that this enabled her to be more effective in building her research relationships within this site. The sense of welcome received from the TLRP management and administration teams was identified by many researchers as a strength of the programme.

c) Valuing of the entire research team

The most positive evaluations emerged from researchers who felt that they were valued and supported within their research teams. These researchers felt a sense of ownership over their work within the research team. A smaller group of researchers spoke of doing the “*donkey work*”, being at the “*bottom of the work hierarchy*”, feeling marginalised and having a lack of status within the project team. Within some projects this contributed to a perceived two tier project structure, encapsulated, perhaps, by Reay’s (2000) metaphor of senior academics doing the “head work” while more junior colleagues did the “leg work”. This polarisation had a negative impact upon researchers’ professional development: in some cases, resulting in researchers electing to leave the field of Educational research. The sense of being valued also linked to the nature of fixed term research contracts: researchers who felt, or who had felt, underpaid and unappreciated considered themselves as being less likely to work at one’s full potential and less likely to continue working within the field in the longer term.

d) Balance between project outputs and the researcher’s own professional development

Some research teams focused primarily on the delivery of research outputs, other research teams sought to generate a balance between the longer term professional development needs of research staff and the shorter term aims of the research project. This balance was not always an easy one: for example, researchers might want to attend research training which did not link to the immediate needs of this particular research project. Some research projects restricted the researcher’s professional development by focussing almost exclusively on meeting specified research aims both in relation to the directed use of researchers’ time and in relation to funding. Some researchers felt that little investment was made in their own professional development, other researchers were provided with up to 20% of their working time being devoted to their own professional development. A recommendation emerging from the MTR evaluation is that all research project should have at least 2 explicit sets of goals: research outcomes and the professional development of research staff.

e) Access and encouragement to attend off-the-job training

As discussed above, the merits of engaging with learning opportunities beyond the project are diverse: these might links to developing new networks, developing one’s identity as a researcher, gaining access to a bank of resources, and validating one’s

own research practice. Researchers felt that their professional development had been limited in instances where funding had not enabled attendance on research courses and other related events.

f) Ongoing commitment to the researcher's future.

Those researchers who identified key people as having been transformative in their professional development often spoke at length about the nature of these relationships. Central to the relationship was a sense that the more senior colleague had an ongoing commitment to the researcher based on an appreciation of the expertise which the individual currently had and a sense of the potential that person might realise in the future. One researcher described how her key person had placed high expectations on her and repeatedly pushed her out of "her comfort zone":

*"she got me thinking about what I should be publishing, what I should be reading – really directed me in terms of career development and pushed me – there were times when [she] was asking me to do things that I thought I couldn't possibly do, but I knew why she was asking me to do them."*

Prior to this, the researcher had felt that she was 'drifting', now she feels that her career and her ability have been transformed. Some researchers linked capacity building to the realisation of their potential; this researcher felt that her key person had recognised potential beyond that of which she thought she was capable. In these instances, the key person sees beyond the end of one particular research project or researcher contract, taking a longer term perspective on the career and development of the individual.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The capacity problem facing the UK is that there are insufficient younger researchers within the Educational Research field who are able to replace the senior academics who are nearing retirement (Mills et al, 2006: 44). While there are capacity issues to be addressed around the recruitment of new researchers to the field, the capacity of the researchers currently working in the field also needs to be built so that they are able to take on these senior roles. Across all academic disciplines, the government is seeking to address capacity building issues: making research roles more attractive and sustainable, and reviewing and improving professional development support for research staff. The field of Education is well placed to inform this debate due to the prioritisation of capacity building early within the TLRP programme. This has resulted in a substantial body of evidence relating to capacity building, both in relation to explicit capacity building structures and to working practices within research projects.

Findings from the MTR evaluation of this evidence suggest that future capacity building strategies should include commitments to:

- 1) Motivate researchers to engage in their own professional development. Researcher motivation can be encouraged through the provision of longer term, well-funded research contracts which enable researchers to make a greater commitment to their current research project and to gain greater insights throughout the research process, rather than only being involved in parts of the research process. Opportunities to maintain coherent and sustainable research careers need to be made more visible within the field. The effective management of research staff within research teams and institutions needs to be a priority area: this has also been recognised in the recent Concordat. Good practice in research management corresponded closely to aspects of expansive learning environments, including: supported engagement with multiple communities of practice; a balance between the project's outputs and the researcher's own professional development; a multidimensional model of expertise being supported throughout the research team; and access and encouragement to attend off-the-job training. If the UK is to successfully build the research capacity of the field of Educational Research, all research projects should have at least two principle purposes: to achieve the research aims of the project and to professionally develop research staff.
- 2) Build structures through which researchers can build their research capacity. The structures set up within the TLRP programme were generally favourably evaluated. Researchers particularly valued opportunities to engage with multiple communities of practice and to build networks through events such as the TLRP conference, and to access off-the-job training. Capacity building structures should encompass the development of research skills, methodological competence, theoretical knowledge and the raising of awareness of substantive issues. Researchers' engagement with these structures should be researcher-led: the diverse nature of the research population makes it unlikely that all opportunities will be suited to all research staff.
- 3) Evidence from the TLRP programme shows that (1) and (2) can be sufficient to build research capacity: motivated individuals can gain value from available structures. However, if we want to build research capacity effectively, we also need to strategise for constructive relationships between the researcher and key individual(s) within their research team/host institution/wider field who provide direction, motivation, and access to opportunities, networks and resources. We have conceptualised these relationships as being catalytic: increasing the value that an individual might be able to gain from existing capacity building structures. We would recommend that good practice in this area is made more explicit and strategised for in future projects. Providing a catalyst is a means of generating far more value from investment in capacity building.

This research is based on the Mapping the Ripples project which evaluated the research capacity building within the TLRP. A full report of this research is available at <http://www.tlrp.org/mappingtheripples>.

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