

# Teaching & Learning Research Programme BULLETIN 02/02

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2002

UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

## Action requested:

- Note impact information offered
- Review EU interests
- Check out RCBN Website
- Send any Thematic suggestions by May 10<sup>th</sup>
- Consider Network Conference attendance if applicable
- Advise on BERA attendance if applicable
- Note date of Programme Conference at Cambridge and advise on attendance
- Check any web links
- Nominate an IT liaison member

### *Programme Office moves*

As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Programme Office is gradually being established in Cambridge through the efforts of Lynne Blanchfield and Suzanne Fletcher. An early job is to check that our communication with each project is as effective as possible.

### *250 Phase III applications under review for shortlisting*

There has been an excellent response to the call for applications on teaching and learning in post-compulsory education. Roughly classified, of the 250 applications received, over 80 concern higher education, and some 20 relate to initial and continuing teacher education. 30 focus on post-16 education, 20 on community or family learning and almost 25 address aspects of adult education. There are over 40 on workplace learning and 25 on issues concerning continuing professional development in a range of settings. Of the total applications, some 35 have an explicit ICT dimension.

The applications are now being considered by a specially appointed College of Reviewers, the TLRP Steering Committee and members of the new Core Programme Team. It is anticipated that shortlisting decisions will be announced in mid-June.

Rather than relying on rumour and imperfect information flows, shortlisted projects will be openly listed on this website. It is anticipated that this may facilitate further discussion of proposals within the research community and expressions of interest by research users. Support for further development of each proposal will be available from a member of the TLRP's Research Capacity Building Network and a member of the Core Programme Team. Final proposals are required by mid-October.

### *Seminar on 'Strategies for Impact'*

This seminar took place on 17<sup>th</sup> April in London. Dr Sandra Nutley from the Centre for Public Policy and Management at St Andrew's University gave a presentation on "What Works in achieving Impact". She then led discussion groups on questions arising from this. In the afternoon the focus switched to priorities for action by both research and policy communities.

Key issues raised in the discussion included:

- Research impact is a fluid, not a static process, and the focus shifts from time to time. This requires careful strategic planning.

- Researchers need to be clear about to whom they are reporting/advising: policymakers, teacher/trainer managers, practitioners, or a combination of these. Only then can strategies for impact be formulated.
- It is difficult to create opportunities for senior policy makers (ministers, chief executives etc.) to engage with research. Policy makers (and practitioners) are often not receptive to research which creates dissonance. The credibility of the source is crucial to overcoming these barriers and in creating a sense of ownership of such issues.
- Incentives and sanctions from bodies with power (Government, assessment and qualification organisations, etc.) are important influences on the organisational cultures which determine, mediate or inhibit openness to research and take-up. The culture of “performativity” is particularly difficult to counter.
- Many practitioners are more interested in “what to do” advice than research complexities. Better mechanisms are also needed for policy and practice to be able to assimilate and use research findings.
- Facilitators/mediators are crucial for improving teachers’ access to research. Effort should be devoted to increasing their numbers and enhancing their role.
- Research ‘champions’ from practitioner or policy-maker communities are a great help – and should be drawn into project work very early.

Sandra Nutley’s paper (with Isabel Walter and Huw Davies) is available at: <http://st-andrews.ac.uk/~cppm/home.htm>. Go to Publications, then Discussion Papers.

### ***Proposals for Additional Impact Funding***

It is understood that a number of projects are considering bidding soon for additional impact funds, and of course it is intended that this source of support will remain open to all TLRP projects right up to the end of the Programme in December 2008. Whenever you need support with impact activities, we would like the process to be as simple and successful as possible.

Recent discussions in the Steering Committee and elsewhere suggest that the following issues might be considered by applicants. There is particular enthusiasm for:

- initiatives seeking to make an impact in relation to findings based on clear evidence;
- proposals that are focused - within a coherent, progressive strategy for impact;
- applications which build on specific user engagement and validation activity whilst also linking with national organisations and agencies that can provide leverage through their own infrastructures and resources;

The Steering Committee is concerned to ensure that the costings for bids are reasonable in relation to the total funds available (for example, large amounts of supply cover are unlikely to be funded and bids at the maximum allowed per annum may come under particular scrutiny). They are also very clear that all applications must be for new activity, which is beyond the scope of the original award.

The details of the scheme remain available on the website and these may be developed in due course to reflect the Programme’s evolving experience. The paper by Sandra Nutley (see above) and the work of the Research Unit for Research Utilisation at St Andrew’s may be helpful when developing a bid.

In any event, please contact Andrew Pollard, Mary James or another member of the Core Team at a *formative* stage to discuss your ideas. We will be pleased to help.

### ***Scottish seminar on Research Capacity***

About 40 people attended the last of three seminars organised by the Scottish Educational Research Association at the University of Stirling on 22 April. These included Kathryn Ecclestone representing TLRP. Delegates debated the future of educational research in Scotland, its distinctive directions and those directions also affecting research in other parts of the UK.

Walter Humes from the University of Strathclyde offered a clear, and provocative overview of 'current orthodoxies' in education policy and practice after the RAE and within the political context - as framed by growing preoccupation with 'evidence-based policy and practice'. A policy-oriented perspective was offered by Judy Sebba from the DfES who explored opportunities and tensions created by evidence-based reviews commissioned by DfES and the National Educational Research Forum.

The seminar also spent valuable time discussing in-depth what really counted as 'good practice', 'impact' and 'research capacity' and, if we could agree what these were, what role SERA had in promoting these features of research. The quality of discussion and commitment evident at the seminar, and the carefully thought out responses to key issues facing Scottish educational research, provide crucial messages for the TLRP as it develops good practice, impact and capacity.

### ***LearningSpace – Crossboundary European Scenarios on Learning***

This is a small EU funded project with representatives from Finland, Norway, Iceland, Spain and the UK. The primary objective has been to foster international cooperation. The group met in Cambridge in late April and TLRP was represented by Andrew Pollard and David Wood. A representative of the European Commission was also present and was clearly interested in the initiative. Some of the present activity of LearningSpace can be found on its website at: [www.edu.helsinki.fi/learningspace](http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/learningspace)

Although LearningSpace is a very small initiative with under a year to run, it appears that there is considerable potential for a much larger bid for international collaboration under the EU's 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme ([www.cordis.lu/fp6](http://www.cordis.lu/fp6)). In particular, linking into Priority 7, Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society, it is proposed to form a network of national research programmes on teaching and learning. The concept of a network of programmes is potentially powerful and it is expected that TLRP will participate in the 'expression of interest' and, in due course, a full bid. Charles Desforges is preparing a paper on international developments in teaching and learning which is likely to be very helpful in considering this. If any colleagues are particularly interested in this development, or have particularly strong contacts within European research programmes, then it would be helpful if they could make contact with Andrew Pollard.

On a project-topic by project-topic basis, the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework may also be worth considering for international developments and extension. Expressions of interest are required by June 6<sup>th</sup> 2002.

### ***Programme Newsletters***

The next edition of these, in school and post-compulsory versions, are in preparation. Distribution is expected in late-June. Our thanks to John Kanefsky and to those who have assisted him in preparing materials.

### ***Research Capacity Building Network***

It has been excellent to see the second edition of the RCBN journal, the extremely useful website and the start of what is expected to be a significant programme of research capacity building events. Thanks to all those who completed the questionnaire. If you have yet to complete the return, you can download it from the RCBN website. RCBN plans for future provision, based on the survey outcomes and other consultation, are being actively developed.

### ***Development of Programme Thematic Work***

A major structural development for the Programme, to begin at the start of next academic year, is the use of cross-Programme themes to address important, shared issues in a concerted way. Four or five themes will be supported each year, drawing on interested colleagues from within the Programme and other experts from user and research communities across the UK. Normally, each thematic group will consist of between six and eight people, and will meet six times during the year to share and develop ideas. A member of the Programme Team will facilitate each group's programme. Contributions to thematic discussions by colleagues who are not members of the group will be possible through the Programme's web facilities and also in more conventional ways. The first objective for each group will be to review the major issues in respect of their theme, drawing on cases within and outside the Programme as appropriate. Then, through debate and cumulative discussion, they will be expected to do what they can to *move forward* understanding of these issues. By the end of the academic year, presentations at appropriate conferences will be the normal expectation for each Thematic Group, with appropriate publications to follow.

Themes for 2002/03 will be proposed by Andrew Pollard at a Steering Committee meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Some initial ideas were listed in his 'Initial Thoughts' paper in Research Intelligence and this is still available on the TLRP website. Any comments on that list, or suggestions for more appropriate themes, will be most welcome. Please try to email them to [ajp67@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ajp67@cam.ac.uk) before May 10<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Network Conference***

Our four Phase I Networks are to have their own conference forming an opportunity for Network participants to meet and share their preliminary outcomes and ideas about the process of networking, arranged for 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at the Rutland Arms Hotel, Bakewell, Derbyshire. The event will be co-ordinated by Mary James and all projects in Phase I networks are invited to send researchers and other participants. (Please contact Suzanne Fletcher: [sf207@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sf207@cam.ac.uk) if you haven't done so already.)

The meeting will not require detailed preparations of papers etc. although plans for future joint publications/outputs on common themes may be one outcome. The provisional aims of the meeting are:

- to exchange information on network activities and outputs;
- to describe, analyse and evaluate structures used in network development;
- to consider impact strategies of particular relevance to networks.

This will be an important opportunity to share, compare and develop insights from Phase I network experiences. We would like each Network to be represented by at least four to six people to convey internal diversity and to make it a fruitful event.

If you have suggestions for the programme please contact Mary on [mej1002@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mej1002@cam.ac.uk). Administrative questions should be addressed to Suzanne on [sf207@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sf207@cam.ac.uk).

### ***BERA Conference, Exeter, 12-14 September***

Subject to acceptance of our proposal, the TLRP Core Programme Team of Andrew Pollard, Mary James, Alan Brown, Kathryn Ecclestone and John Siraj-Blatchford will be contributing to a symposium on TLRP. The idea is, quite simply, to report back to the research community on recent developments and to seek their comments, advice and support. It is anticipated that we will, over the years, want to draw on the goodwill and expertise of many UK colleagues who may not, formally, be within the Programme. This event is intended to increase participation and to give opportunities for people to ask questions about the Programme, to discuss its goals and progress, and to make suggestions.

Thanks to those project teams who have indicated that they will be presenting at BERA – so far, this includes work from projects directed by Mel Ainscow, Stephen Gorard, Martin Hughes, Jean Rudduck, Ros Sutherland and Phil and Heather Hodgkinson (and possibly Mark Newman). We may want to highlight these inputs and it would be helpful to know if anyone else is expecting to present.

### ***Full Programme Conference, Cambridge, 23-24<sup>th</sup> September***

The dates and venue for this event are now confirmed. The conference will be held at the Marriott Hotel at Huntingdon, just North of Cambridge. This is an excellent hotel for conference purposes and we also intend to arrange some supplementary events with a Cambridge flavour. The provisional aims of the event are:

- exchange information on aims, activities, progress, difficulties;
- consider common themes and issues;
- begin to develop a more collective sense of purpose;
- review and plan opportunities for support and synergy across the Programme.

Comments on these aims and ideas for the conference are welcome and should be sent to Suzanne Fletcher on [sf207@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sf207@cam.ac.uk) for discussion amongst the Programme Team.

We aim to make this event as inclusive as possible for all those directly involved in the Programme. Suzanne is collating information from each project on who is able to come. Subject to an overall maximum for the event, each project is invited to bring as many active team members as they wish, together with an associated research user. If you or your team has not already done so, please advise Suzanne concerning your attendance.

### ***Website***

The TLRP website went live from Cambridge from May 1<sup>st</sup>. It has a very simple address – [www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org).

Although the Exeter address will re-direct automatically, it would be helpful if those responsible for project websites could alter any links that are currently posted so that they will, in future, read:

<http://www.tlrp.org>.

John Siraj-Blatchford and colleagues in Cambridge are working on various further developments of the site, including capacity for more interactivity for both project teams and research users. It is hoped to introduce these new features in September. They are also working on a simple, 'start-up' website model that can be used by any project that would like assistance in providing their own site.

Additionally, John is aiming to develop further understanding of existing sites so that we can promote projects most effectively through the main Programme site.

It would be helpful if each project could contact John with the name of a person with whom he could liaise on IT matters of a conceptual (ie: not necessarily a technical) nature. In due course, we will be able to move our whole provision forward together. John's email is [js303@cam.ac.uk](mailto:js303@cam.ac.uk).

### ***Programme badging***

This issue has been mentioned before and we need to keep it alive for a bit. Indeed, there has been an recent ESRC review of the issue across all the work they fund. The comments below are compatible with the expected conclusions of that review.

It is intended to maintain a 'light touch' within the Programme, but it is fair to say that there is considerable variety in the ways in which TLRP and ESRC is represented on our notepaper, newsletters, papers, cover sheets, ohts, websites, etc. However, as people externally gradually begin to consider what TLRP has achieved, it is extremely important that our collective programme of work is identified and recognised for what it is.

It would therefore be helpful if, when considering new outputs, or reprinting or revising existing materials, colleagues could think about this issue. Basically the Programme request is extremely simple. It is to have the two logos of TLRP and ESRC (in that order and in a range of standard sizes) on the bottom right hand corner of all outputs. To save on print costs, when colours other than black are being used, use of ESRC's dark blue is suggested for *both* logos. ESRC prefers its logo to be in its dark blue, but will accept black. The TLRP position will be exactly the same. There will of course, be exceptions for design or cost reasons, but this simple pattern is to be the Programme's default expectation. All other aspects of design are unconstrained and diversity can flourish!

During this term, a portfolio of examples of the use of this default design for various applications will be circulated to Project Directors. In due course, the logos will also be available for download from the project website. With your help and over time, our public presentation will become more coherent.

### ***Finally***

Do get in touch on any matters arising from this bulletin. The Programme Team are likely to be extremely stretched over the next two months – getting to know each other, coming to terms with the new job, setting up new office systems, working on Phase III shortlisting and subsequent support, developing contacts with projects and research users, organising future events, etc, etc – but we are strongly committed to working with and for the Programme as a whole. We will be pleased to hear from you.

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