

TLRP and Research Capacities Building

TLRP is committed to fostering research capacities in educational research communities. The Steering Committee has agreed a nine point strategy for the period to December 2008. This new strategy is based on four principles: sustainability (beyond ESRC funding); embeddedness (locating capacities building in ongoing communities of practice); diversity (recognising the contested nature of educational research); dispersion (seeking to distribute capacities building across the HE system). The nine elements are:

Liaison with NCRM and its Nodes

The advent of the National Centre for Research Methods and its nodes offers educational research communities the opportunity to engage in capacities building activities alongside colleagues from different disciplines. Details of programmes of short course provision are circulated by means of a TLRP mailing list **TLRPCapacity**, registration for which can be made via www.JISCMail.ac.uk This generic social science provision replaces the short course provision of the Cardiff Research Capacity Building Network (RCBN).

Continuation of aspects of the RCBN at Cardiff

The journal *Building Research Capacity* will continue with at least two issues per year under the Editorship of Dr. Taylor. The material on RCBN's provision since 2001 and the detailed evaluations of this are being archived in TLRP's D-Space repository as a resource to inform future capacities building activities. Other aspects of the Cardiff website will feed into the development by TLRP of a Virtual Research Environment available to educational research communities.

Continuing Capacities Building Conferences

The Capacity Building Conference series is continuing in order to maintain the links between individual TLRP Projects, TLRP capacities building activities and colleagues involved in cognate work elsewhere. These will focus increasingly on the strategic issues of sustainable

capacities building in educational research communities.

Developing on-line modules as a free educational good

TLRP, in conjunction with the Applied Educational Research Scheme in Scotland (AERS) is developing a suite of 15 on-line Master's level modules in research methods which will be made available to educational research communities as a free resource on shareware principles. Using contemporary RDF web architecture different communities of practice in, for example, the learned societies or Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) will be able to tailor the core training material to their own concerns. HEIs will be free to use the material by, for example, developing assessment and student support structures, and putting the modules through their own validation procedures, in order to have their own M. Res; the 'special interest groups' of learned societies will be supported in strengthening their role in building capacities.

Developing policies and structures

TLRP remains concerned about the way in which career and institutional structures militate against the systematic development of research capacities (both personal and institutional). The work of the Cardiff RCBN, centring on an annual working conference with Contract Research Staff (CRS), will be continued. Particular emphasis will be given to developing the use codes of good practice such as the Concordat or the BERA Charter. A further group with analogous

difficulties in the structure of the academic profession is newly appointed lecturing staff, often faced with incommensurable demands of teaching, research and ongoing professional engagement. As with CRS, TLRP will foster an ongoing group to organise an annual working conference, to develop models of good practice by which to encourage HEIs to address the structural issues facing the 'new blood' of educational research communities.

Establishing TLRP Fellowships

As many have noted, following two decades of lingering crises in British higher education, educational research communities are facing acute problems of succession. In order to foster the next generation of Principal Investigators TLRP is adopting the AERS model of 'Fellowships'. These non-stipendiary posts for one or two years will attach developing researchers to established researchers in TLRP and elsewhere by means of an individual learning plan in the skills of research leadership agreed between the Fellow, their home HEI and the mentor.

Developing networks in Learned Societies

Central to TLRP's commitment to embedding sustainable capacities building in communities of practice are the various learned societies concerned with educational research. TLRP will seek to work with the specialist networks of the learned societies in furthering and formalising their role as capacities building mechanisms. In particular TLRP will encourage such special interest groups to take ownership of versions of the on-line modules by developing extension and exemplification material pertinent to their area of interest.

Developing regional research training consortia

To complement the topic based focus the above initiatives, and to counter the centripetal and competitive tendencies of mechanisms such as the RAE and ESRC's Research Training recognition exercise, TLRP will seek to foster regional research training consortia through which HEIs might share their expertise and

express the solidarity of educational research communities. Based on the regions used by HEFCE, plus Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this will seek to foster such collaborations particularly through the use of the on-line module and the Virtual Research Environment being developed by TLRP under a JISC grant.

Establishing an Advisory Committee

As well as the intrinsic value of an Advisory Committee, it is proposed to establish such a body for this sub-set of TLRP's activities in order to help build a consensus across the educational research communities about capacity building strategies and to provide a possible mechanism for sustaining capacity building activity post 2008. This Advisory Committee would, in particular, draw on representatives from learned societies and sectoral organisations with the intention of developing a sense of ownership of the activities – thus fostering sustainability post TLRP.

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