TLRP: a UK adventure in coordinated research for evidence-based policy and practice in education

Andrew Pollard, Director TLRP, Mary James, Deputy Director, TLRP
The context…

• Accelerating change?
• Global economies?
• Technological challenge?
• Growing diversity?
• Multiple identities?

… but ‘education’ and ‘training’ carry on,…much as they have always done…
Background to TLRP

- ‘reform’ throughout the UK education system
- criticisms of educational research (eg: relevance, quality, scale, cumulation)
- concern for economic competitiveness and social inclusion
- aspirations for evidence-based policy and practice
The ‘programme’ challenge:

TLRP funding comes from several sources, focuses on a field which has been criticised for lack of quality and is awash with initiatives with similar goals. Directing a programme like TLRP is similar to … ‘flying a glider made of jelly’.

‘With hindsight … a centre would have allowed for much greater coherence in recruiting studies … and much tighter central management following commissioning.’

Charles Desforges, TLRP Director 1999-2002
Key features of TLRP in 2006

• **Large** (approaching £40m, 70+ investments, 500+ researchers projects up to £1.5m each, often with large teams)

• **All sectors of education** (pre-school to older learners)

• **UK-wide** (England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland)

• **2000 to 2008/9, and then to 2011/12**

• **Directors’ Team of five** (Andrew Pollard, Mary James, Steve Baron, Alan Brown, Miriam David, PT)

• **Capacity building** (in partnership with BERA, SRHE, ESRC, etc)
The Programme’s overarching aim:

‘to lead to significant improvements in outcomes for learners at all ages and stages in all sectors and contexts of education and training, including informal learning settings, throughout the United Kingdom’. 
AIMS:

• Learning
• Outcomes
• Lifecourse
• Enrichment
• Expertise
• Improvement
Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
2. Knowledge generation by project teams
3. Knowledge synthesis by thematic work
4. Knowledge transformation for impact
5. Capacity building for professional development
6. Partnerships for sustainability
## Early user engagement and partnerships

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<tr>
<th>Experience a problem</th>
<th>Partners work alongside researchers throughout the research</th>
<th>Advisers support progress at key points</th>
<th>Users help to transform findings as they become available</th>
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Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Early user engagement and partnerships

Teachers discuss a new project in Northern Ireland
Early user engagement and partnerships

The National Teacher Research Panel, after a TLRP ‘witness session’
Early user engagement and partnerships

Westminster Showcase – with Paul Johnson, DfES
Early user engagement and partnerships

User-researcher discussion at the Westminster Showcase
Early user engagement and partnerships

Cardiff Showcase - with Minister, Jane Davidson
Early user engagement and partnerships

Edinburgh Showcase – with Minister, Jim MacDonald
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Programme development:

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Knowledge generation by project teams

Briefing meetings for researchers
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Knowledge generation by project teams

TLRP Steering Committee at a commissioning meeting
Projects: funding competitions and associations


Phase I

Phase II

Research training fellows

Scottish extensions

Welsh extensions

Phase III

Northern Irish extensions

Associated projects

WP in HE

TEL
Early years and primary education

What are the most effective forms of early years provision?

Can pre-school play with new technologies enhance children’s learning?

Does knowledge-exchange between parents and teachers improve pupil learning outcomes?

How can group-work in small schools be developed most effectively?

Does the development of thinking skills enhance classroom performance?
Early years and primary education

Learning in early school settings
Across school phases:

How can children’s mathematical understanding be enhanced?

Does increased pupil consultation produce educational benefits?

Does ‘learning how to learn’ enhance performance?

Can social inclusion and pressure for performance be reconciled?

Does evidence-based practice in science education improve outcomes?

How can ICT support teaching to enhance pupil learning?
Further and post-16 education:

How can community-based further education be best developed?

What effects do organisational cultures have on learning?

What are the effects of the everyday literacies which learners use in formal education?

How does policy impact on teaching, learning and assessment?
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Further and post-16 education

Working with Further Education students
Learning in community based further education

Aims:
The overall aim of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of the learning cultures within further education (FE) community and outreach provision, and through these to facilitate transformations in the learning cultures in these settings, leading to an enhanced engagement with learning.

Significance:
The focus on community based FE reflects the importance of this aspect of provision in encouraging people who have traditionally been least inclined to participate in formal education. The project will enable us to examine the distinctive learning culture which exists in this aspect of FE provision and to explore ways in which it can be enhanced.

Achievement:
The research has been developed in partnership with two Scottish FE colleges. Staff from the colleges will be involved as researchers on the project, and the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) will be a key partner in the dissemination process. An important objective will be the building of research capacity within the FE sector.

Collaboration and Engagement:
Close collaboration with colleagues responsible for one of the existing TLRP Phase II projects, Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education (The TLU project) has been invaluable in developing the project. The new project will enable us to build on the TLU project, and extend data emerging from it into new areas of work.

Framework for Inquiry:
A distinctive feature of the project is to attempt to bridge across a number of theoretical frameworks in building an understanding of a learning culture. It will draw on social psychological approaches to learner identity and learning relationships, symbolic interactionist theory, situated learning and learning communities, and the work of Boudewijn.

The Programme of Work:
The research uses a mixed method approach involving interviews, focus groups and observations. The initial phases of the research include drawing on the findings from TLRP’s existing TLU project and working with learners and teachers in four community based FE settings to construct a common approach to the action research components of the study. Next, with ongoing analysis of the data and regular dialogue with staff and learners, we will highlight ways in which these learning cultures may be amenable to a range of interventions or changes. The research team will then work with colleagues in the FE colleges to introduce change and evaluate the impact of these changes.

Overall, the research seeks to identify how the learning cultures of community based FE can be transformed and enhanced, and the forms of intervention that will be most appropriate in these settings.

Throughout the research, regular dissemination of emerging findings has been planned in consultation with the college involved, and the wider learning community.

Research Team:
The core team is based in the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning at Glasgow Caledonian University.

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An ESRN Programme of Research into Teaching & Learning
Could we improve student outcomes if we understood teaching and learning better?

How do social and organisational factors affect student learning outcomes?

What is the experience of disabled students at university?

How is musical expertise developed?

How effective is problem-based learning?
The social and organisational mediation of university learning (SOMUL)

Project grant holders: John Brennan, David Jay, Mike Osborne, and John Richardson.

Aims:
- To explore the conceptions of learning underlying the formulation of subject benchmark statements, the approach to and perceived uses of programme specifications and student assessment criteria and methods in three contrasting subject areas.
- To gather evidence from students and graduates in these subjects on their conceptions of learning and personal and professional identity.
- To explore how these conceptions differ according to the social context of study and the principles of curriculum organisation.
- To explore these relationships between learning and the social context of study through a survey of students from a wider range of subjects.
- Working with partner higher education institutions, the new Academy for Teaching and Learning and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, to explore the implications of the study for the enhancement of learning and the greater recognition of all learning outcomes from higher education.

Significance:
Contemporary higher education in the UK is becoming more diverse, both in terms of its student population and the forms of education it provides. This poses important questions for our understanding of the nature and comparability of learning outcomes across an expanded higher education system. These questions lie at the heart of the project.

Summary of the project:
With a focus on three subject areas, the project will explore the relationships between learning outcomes and the ways in which learning is mediated through the different settings in which it occurs. Other subjects will be considered at a later stage of the project.

Research design:
Three main phases:
Phase 1 (January 2004 to December 2004):
- Literature review: contextualising subject cultures and contexts (including benchmark statements), selection of cases, negotiating access and development of research instruments.

Phase 2 (October 2004 to May 2007):
- Empirical investigation of learning outcomes and their social and organisational mediation involving:
  - 5 case studies in each of 5 subjects using surveys, focus groups and individual interviews to follow up entering and exiting cohorts over a period of approximately two years, plus interviews with teaching staff.
  - a wider survey of students from a larger set of subjects.

Phase 3 (April 2007 to December 2007):
- Assessment of the implications for policy and practice at national, institutional and local levels.

Conclusions:
- The project will be carried out in partnership with:
  - The Open University.
  - LTSoN Centre for Business and Management.
  - LTSoN Centre for Anthropology, Sociology and Politics, University of Birmingham.
  - LTSoN Generic Centre.

Research team:
- The principal researchers will be:
  - Professor John Brennan, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, the Open University.
  - Professor David Jay, LTSoN Centre for Anthropology, Sociology and Politics, University of Birmingham.
  - Professor Mike Osborne, Centre for Research into Learning, University of Surrey.
  - Professor John Richardson, Institute for Educational Technology, the Open University.

Contact details:
- More information about the project can be gained from the project director, Professor John Brennan, at the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, The Open University, 344-04 Gray’s Inn Road, London, WC1X 8RF, Tel 0207 7447, Fax 0207 7357 0290, email: jdbrennan@open.ac.uk. The project’s website will be at www.open.ac.uk/learn/SOMUL/index.htm.
Workplace learning

Can workplace cultures be developed to improve learning outcomes?

How do workers understand and develop skills in new technologies?

Can adults’ basic skills be improved through workplace learning?
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Workplace learning

Learning in factory settings
Workplace learning

Learning in office settings
Professional and lifelong learning

How do new teachers learn in early professional development?

How can professional agencies learn to work together to deliver public services?

What is the role of vicarious learning in professional training?

How do graduate professionals learn on-the-job?

How does learning by individuals develop throughout the lifecourse?
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Technology enhanced learning

Commissioning Summer 2006

Major themes are:

• Personalisation
• Inclusion
• Flexibility
• Productivity
A Project:

Learning How to Learn (LHTL) in Classrooms, Schools and Networks

2001 - 2005
Project: the LHTL research team
Project: Research question and sample

How can ‘assessment for learning’ (AfL) be developed into a model of ‘learning how to learn’ (LH2L) and embedded in classrooms, without intense outside support?

5 LEAS, 1 VEAZ, 40 infants, primary and secondary schools, c1500 teachers, c20,000 pupils.
Project: development and research

Development
- Whole-school input
- Audit and action planning
- Workshops and school improvement tools
- Data feedback
- Critical friendship and network meetings

Research
- three level study: classrooms, schools, networks
- questionnaire, interview, observation, documents, performance data
- quantitative and qualitative
- surveys, longitudinal analysis and case studies
Project: conceptual development

- Assessment for Learning (AfL) practices are embodiments of Learning How to Learn (LHTL)
- Learning and LHTL are inextricably related
- LHTL is a family of learning practices
- Learning autonomy/agency has priority and has a collaborative dimension
- Promoting learning autonomy is a central role for teachers
Project: Key finding 1

Assessment for learning (AfL) helps teachers promote learning how to learn (LHTL) in ways which are in line with their own values, and reduces excessive performance orientation. However, it is difficult to shift from reliance on specific techniques to practices based on deep principles.

Advice on AfL techniques is useful in the short term. But progressive professional development requires teachers to re-evaluate their beliefs about learning, the way they structure tasks, and the nature of their classroom roles and relationships.
Project: Key finding 2

Classroom-focused inquiry by teachers is a key condition for promoting learner autonomy. Schools that embed LHTL make support for professional learning a priority.

School leaders need to create structures and cultures that focus on learning and support teachers in sharing and evaluating innovations in classroom practice.
Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
2. Knowledge generation by project teams
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Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Main strategies

• Conferences (annually)
• Thematic groups/seminar series /consultancies
• Policy task groups
• Sectoral overviews
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Noel Entwistle
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Peter Bryant
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Directors’ Team in discussion
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

TLRP Annual Conference 2005
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

TLRP Annual Conference 2005
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

A TLRP ‘bazaar’
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Yrjo Engestrom and Anna Sfard at a TLRP conference
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Research teams in discussion
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Political, economic and cultural contexts
Informal and formal learning contexts

Learners and learning through the lifecourse
Neuroscience and learning

Curriculum and domain knowledge
Interaction and pedagogy
Information technology
Assessment and learning

Learning outcomes
Educational issues
International comparisons

Teachers, teaching and training

User engagement
Knowledge transformation, impact

Research approaches
Research capacity
Programme development
A TLRP Theme:
Learning Outcomes Thematic Group
2002 - 2004
Theme: Key questions

1. Who are the learners?
2. What is the nature of the learning outcomes?
3. Are there sectoral differences?
4. How is the evidence collected?
5. How will the findings be warranted?
Theme: Document analysis

- Proposals from 30 projects
- End of Year Reports
- Research briefings
- Conference statements on ‘conceptions of teaching and learning’
Theme: seven categories of outcome

- **Attainment** – curriculum-based or measures of basic competence in the workplace
- **Understanding** - of ideas, concepts, processes
- **Cognitive and creative** – imaginative construction of meaning, arts or performance
- **Use** – how to practice, manipulate, behave, engage in process or systems
- **Higher order learning** – advanced thinking, reasoning, metacognition
- **Disposition** – attitudes, perceptions, motivations
- **Membership, inclusion, self-worth**
## Theme: two metaphors of learning (Sfard, 1998)

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<th>Participation</th>
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<td>Individual enrichment</td>
<td>Goal of learning</td>
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<td>Acquisition of something</td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<td>Recipient (consumer), (re) constructor</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>Provider, facilitator, mediator</td>
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<td>Property, possession, commodity</td>
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### Teaching and Learning Research Programme

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ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP)
Thematic Seminar Series

Contexts, communities, networks: Mobilising learners’ resources and relationships in different domains

Background
From a number of sources there has developed increasing interest in learning as a lifelong and life-wide process. This has expanded the domains in which learning is now a concern for practitioners and the range of people who might be considered to have an educational role. It has also raised questions about the relationships between learning in these different domains and how best to mobilise the full resources of learners within specific sites. This situation poses questions on how best to conceptualise a learning context. Once we look beyond the context of conventional sites for learning, allowing ‘context’ to be extended into the dimension of relationships between individual learners and variously defined others, then the limitations of conventional pedagogy come into sharp focus. In a range of domains, concepts of communities, networks and activity systems have come to the fore to help frame our understanding of pedagogy and the possible movement of learning from one domain to another. How such framings constitute a learning context and their implications for learning and teaching across the lifecourse is the primary focus of this seminar series, which will run from February 2005 until June 2006.

By drawing on research at the forefront of knowledge, this seminar series aims to develop methodologically and theoretically...
Our burgeoning knowledge of the brain is set to radically influence educational thinking in the future.

What are the opportunities and issues and how should we approach them?

This seminar series will bring together world experts in education and neuroscience to help guide the development of this new interdisciplinary area.

Programme of events (Word document) - last updated 22nd May 2006

**NEXT (and final) Seminar:** 21st June University of Bristol

**Fifth Seminar:** 26th April University of Nottingham

**Fourth Seminar Event:** 25th January Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol and - RECENT COVERAGE IN GUARDIAN based on this meeting

**Third Seminar Event:** 12th October Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford
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Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Thematic group on diversity and widening participation
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Thematic seminar series on changing teacher roles, identities and professionalism
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Liaison with colleagues in European education programmes
Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Presentation on identity and learning
Annual Conference 2005
Lifelong learning in society

Diagram showing the interconnections between social context, family, learner, instructor, peers, organisational culture, peer culture, and age.
Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
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6. Partnerships for sustainability
Knowledge transformation for impact

Strategic planning to support impact
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Project outputs: newsletters
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Project outputs: special issues of journals
Project outputs:

- Research briefings

Towards Evidence-based Practice in Science Education 1: Using diagnostic assessment to enhance learning

Much research has been carried out on students’ understanding of key science ideas, but this has not led to marked improvement in teaching and learning. As a means of improving practice, banks of diagnostic questions, based on research, were developed for several core science topics. These were used to monitor students’ understanding of key science ideas, and to explore how the provision of research-based materials of this sort can influence teachers’ practices and students’ learning.

1. Science teachers’ practice, and students learning, can be significantly enhanced by providing teaching materials that embody research findings and insights.
2. Carefully designed probes, based on research, can provide quality information on students’ understanding of key science ideas, and inform subsequent action.
3. The level of students’ understanding of many fundamental science ideas is low, and increases only slowly with age.
4. Feedback tools for quickly ‘measuring’ understanding of key ideas can help focus learning activity and indicate levels of understanding across a class. More should be developed and made available to teachers.

www.tlrp.org
Teaching and Learning Research Programme
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Project outputs:

- Academic books
- Overview books in *Improving Learning* series
- Practitioner materials in *Improving Practice* series
Project outputs:

- Seminar/workshops for policy-makers and key users
- Press-releases, articles in professional journals, user collaboration, etc

Seminar/workshops:

Science Education: Royal Society
Modern Apprenticeships: DfES
Pupil Consultation: QCA and NCSL
Inclusive Education: London and Manchester
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Thematic outputs: special issues of journals
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Programme events:

Conference stand
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Programme events:

Presentation at BERA conference
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Programme events:

TLRP at the National Teacher Research Conference
Policy Task Groups:

Rapidly formed researcher/user groups to focus on contemporary issues

- Personalised Learning
- Science Education
- Teaching & Learning in Schools
- 14-19 Education
- Neuroscience and Education
- Information Technology and Learning
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Policy Task Group outputs: TLRP Commentaries

- Improving teaching and learning in schools
- Science education in schools

Issues, evidence and proposals
Impact:

A TLRP Commentary on Personalised learning

2004
“This is what I mean by ‘Personalised Learning’. High expectation of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child’s needs.

It can only be developed school by school. It cannot be imposed from above.”

David Miliband, North of England Education Conference, January 2004
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Elements of personalised learning

Presentation to Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit, April 2004
Impact: TLRP recognised ....

• The political significance of ‘personalisation’ ideas in relation to choice in public services

• ‘Personalised Learning’ as a constructive policy development

• The holistic thinking about teaching and learning which ‘Personalised Learning’ represents

• The commitment to evidence-informed policy-making
Impact: project evidence used

- Learning How to Learn
- Consulting Students about Teaching and Learning
- Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Group Work
- InterActive Education: Teaching and Learning in the Information Age
- Home-School Knowledge Exchange
Impact: outstanding issues highlighted

- **Conceptualisation**: are the proposed elements of ‘personalised learning’ and their inter-relationships, empirically supported and sufficient?

- **Authenticity**: is this really about ‘personalised learning’, or still primarily about teaching?

- **Realism**: is the ambition and rhetoric over-reaching itself, underestimating the difficulties of change and scaling up?

- **Risks**: what are the major risks?

- **Opportunities**: how can we help?
Impact:

Working with policy-makers is not always easy …… for example:

- Changes of personnel
- Different time pressures and work-flows
- Different priorities and responsibilities
- Different conceptual frameworks and discourse
- Different accountability and incentivisation systems
- Different cultures and structural positions in society
Knowledge transformation for impact

TLRP Director with Charles Clarke, former Education Secretary of State
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Knowledge transformation for impact

TLRP Deputy Director, school student and David Miliband, Education Minister
Educational priorities and TLRP synergies

- Science education
- Personalised learning
- Widening participation
- E-learning
Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
2. Knowledge generation by project teams
3. Knowledge synthesis by thematic work
4. Knowledge transformation for impact
5. Capacity building for professional development
6. Partnerships for sustainability
Capacity building for professional development

Capacity building: Phase 1
Activities and training within the Programme

Particular priorities:

- design, conduct and management of quantitative studies
- enhancing their theoretical and conceptual bases
- combination with qualitative approaches
- utilisation of inter-disciplinary theories and methods
- transformation of research-based knowledge for practice
Capacity building for professional development

Practical guidance for mixed-methods research
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Capacity building for professional development

Members of the Phase 1 Research Capacity Building Team
Capacity building for professional development

Capacity building: Phase 2
Embedding in the social practices of researchers

• Capacity building conferences
• Developing online resources
• Linking with NCRM
• Developing networks in learned societies
• Career development
• Fellowships
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Capacity building for professional development

Members of the Phase 2 research capacity building team
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Phase 2 liaison with
ESRC’s National Centre for Research Methods

and with BERA, HEA, UCET, etc
Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
2. Knowledge generation by project teams
3. Knowledge synthesis by thematic work
4. Knowledge transformation for impact
5. Capacity building for professional development
6. Partnerships for sustainability
Partnerships for sustainability

TLRP publication partners: Routledge, SAGE, Continuum
Partnerships for sustainability

TLRP knowledge management partners: British Education Index, Evidence in Education Portal, ESRC Society Today
Partnerships for sustainability

Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies

TLRP information technology partners: CARET, JISC, ESRC Society Today
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

Partnerships for sustainability

TLRP ‘practitioner applications’ partners – Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education and Continuum Books
Partnerships for sustainability

High-leverage user organisations: NCSL, NIACE, LSDA, QCA, DfES, etc
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Partnerships for sustainability

Learned societies: SERA, BERA, SRHE, SCUTREA, AcSS
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Partnerships for sustainability

Gilbert Review of Personalised Learning

Public Services Improvement Policy Group

Review of Primary Education

Politically independent work with government and political parties
Partnerships for sustainability

2006 Annual Conference, Glasgow

Govt: SEED, ETLLD, etc

Acad: SERA, AERS
  • Learning
  • Equity
  • Transitions

Partnerships with UK countries:
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England
Partnerships for sustainability

- Primary education review: Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Personalised Learning review: DfES
- 14-19 review: Nuffield Foundation
- Workbased learning and career review: Institute for Employment Research
- Higher Education: Higher Education Academy

SAGE Handbook: T&L in Schools
SAGE Handbook: T&L in Lifelong Learning

Partnerships with other funders for cross-sectoral overviews
Some strategic bodies, additional to DfES and HEFCE, in the recent development of UK educational research.
Some strategic investments expected to ‘follow on’ from TLRP’s multi-project phase (mainly ESRC’s shown)
### Partnerships for sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>HEFCE Department for Education and Skills</td>
<td>£23,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Departments of Education</td>
<td>£425,000</td>
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<td>ESRC</td>
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<td>EPSRC</td>
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<td>JISC</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>£37,225,000</strong></td>
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**Funders:** HEFCE, ESRC, EPSRC, UK government departments
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Programme development:

1. Early user engagement
2. Knowledge generation by project teams
3. Knowledge synthesis by thematic work
4. Knowledge transformation for impact
5. Capacity building for professional development
6. Partnerships for sustainability
Teaching and Learning Research Programme

registration

Please complete as many of the boxes below as apply to you (those marked * are mandatory). This information will be held under the terms of Data Protection Registration Z6641083. Information may be shared across the TLRP Programme. It will be used exclusively for purposes of research and, in particular, for the presentation of information, results or findings about educational research. When the form is complete, click on the submit button at the end of the form, and we will contact you in due course.

Person in Organisation:
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- Address2:
- Town / City:
- Postcode:
- Organisation Type(s):
- Organisation Sector(s):
- Project(s) of Interest:
- Your Interest(s):
- Your Area(s) of Expertise:
- Have you completed this form for your own: Organisation or TLRP Project:
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- Your Projects:
- Notes:

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