Demand for and impact of educational research in Iceland

NORTH AMERICAN PLATE

EURASIAN PLATE

Mid-Atlantic Ridge

Krafla

ICELAND

Thingvellir
Reykjavik

Mid-Atlantic Ridge

ATLANTIC OCEAN
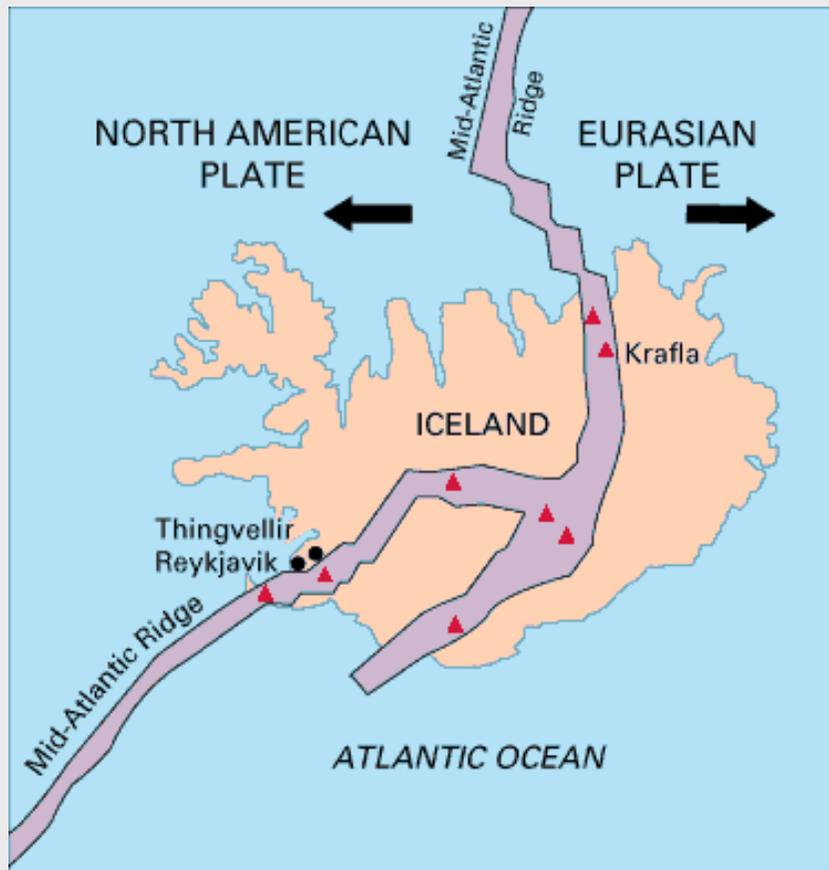
Population 310.000

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OECD Taking stock of Education R & D
Bern, Switzerland
1-2 October 2007

Two themes

- How Iceland came to use the OECD reviews
    - Impact for policy and research
- The demand side of educational R&D in Iceland
    - Use of ERD by policy-makers and practitioners

Evaluation of ERD in Iceland

- Project carried out in Iceland from 2003-2005
- Reported as four studies
  - Academic research (universities),
  - Commissioned research (institutes, the ministry),
  - Development projects (schools),
  - Training and continuing education for adults (policy-makers and the private sector)
- A conference
- Summary and implications – Icelandic and English

The project begins ...

- The evaluation project emerged slowly .....
  - First suggested in spring 2000 – meeting with the chief executive of the Research Council and then a request from IUE to it
  - First person from education in the Research Council, summer 2000
  - Project not approved until 2003, working group appointed by Research Council; data gathering began in autumn 2003
  - Funding – 1/3 Council, 1/3 Ministry, 1/3 to be found
  - The draft report was completed in May 2005.
- Management and staffing
  - Steering committee – wide range of stakeholders represented
  - A key researcher was employed in a 50% post for 20 months and several assistant researchers worked on the evaluation during 2004 and 2005.
  - My own research and writing time :) .....
- OECD New Zealand report brought to my attention by the Ministry

International context

- First proposal (2000) used experiences from:
  - Assessment of research at University of Helsinki late 1990s
  - RAE in the UK
  - Capacity-building report in New Zealand
  - Some developments in the USA – evidence-based research
- Final proposal (2003) and working methods
  - "The impact of educational research" – Australia
- Started with university study and commissioned research (not clear division at first), then school development work and finished with adult and vocational education

BUT .... Kept track of the OECD site ......

- Wanted an "outsider" view/context for interpretation of results
- Prepared a summary of the OECD results (in English)

Involvement of policy-makers and practitioners

- Dissemination/shared ownership was emphasised
  - A web-site was maintained while the evaluation was in progress.
  - Three newsletters were sent to over 800 stakeholders informing them of the progress of the study.
  - Several guests were invited to meetings of the working group.
- An open conference was held as part of the evaluation process at the end of February 2005
  - The conference included a presentation on the OECD reports
  - First results discussed in five workshops at the conference
    - Workshops based on questions from the generic template
  - Most of the 150 people attending had earlier participated in the data-gathering phase of the evaluation – as key informants, by sending in publications, by answering questionnaires
- Studies written up separately,
  - available on the web-site of the Research Council

Reviewing the OECD reviews – why?

- What could we learn from others?
  - England – could be a "benchmark" for us of what might be possible
  - Some similarities with the situations in New Zealand and Denmark
  - Learn from Mexico not least because of our differences

- QUESTIONS:

  Who needs - what knowledge - created by whom - for whom - for what purpose - in what time frame - at what cost?

- Generic template
  - Ten questions, with subsidiary questions

Four dimensions of ERD extracted from the OECD reports

Extent and quality of knowledge about the current educational system	Strategies, priorities, funding and quality
Distribution, coordination, dissemination and knowledge transfer	Research capacity, teacher training and capacity building

Lessons from ERD in OECD countries

Extent and quality of knowledge about the current educational system: •Knowledge of systems variable across the countries – the collection of information requires careful definitions and the preparation of standards	Strategies, priorities, funding and quality: •Absence of a strategy for research (though emerging in England) •ERD too often considered a linear process •Needed to find a balance between research and development
Distribution, coordination, dissemination and knowledge transfer: •Needed an "intermediate space" – a forum for dialogue and tracking •Gap between dissemination and impact	Research capacity, teacher training and capacity building: •Absence of quantitative skills and studies •Research is not obviously a career pathway

Issues arising from the four Iceland studies

1. University-based educational research	2. Institute-based educational research
Academic freedom and status Responsibility and choice Research cultures and capacity building	Standards and their purposes Educational research and decision-making Research, monitoring and feedback
3. Development work in schools	4. Development work in the private sector
The starting point for projects Dissemination and impact Projects, choice and culture	Information-gathering and responsibility Coordination, cooperation and collaboration The private sector and academia

Themes in the summary and implications

- Capacity – strengths and skills
- Impact of knowledge
- Information – collection and accessibility
- Funding of research
- Research areas and methods
- The status of the researcher

Consultation
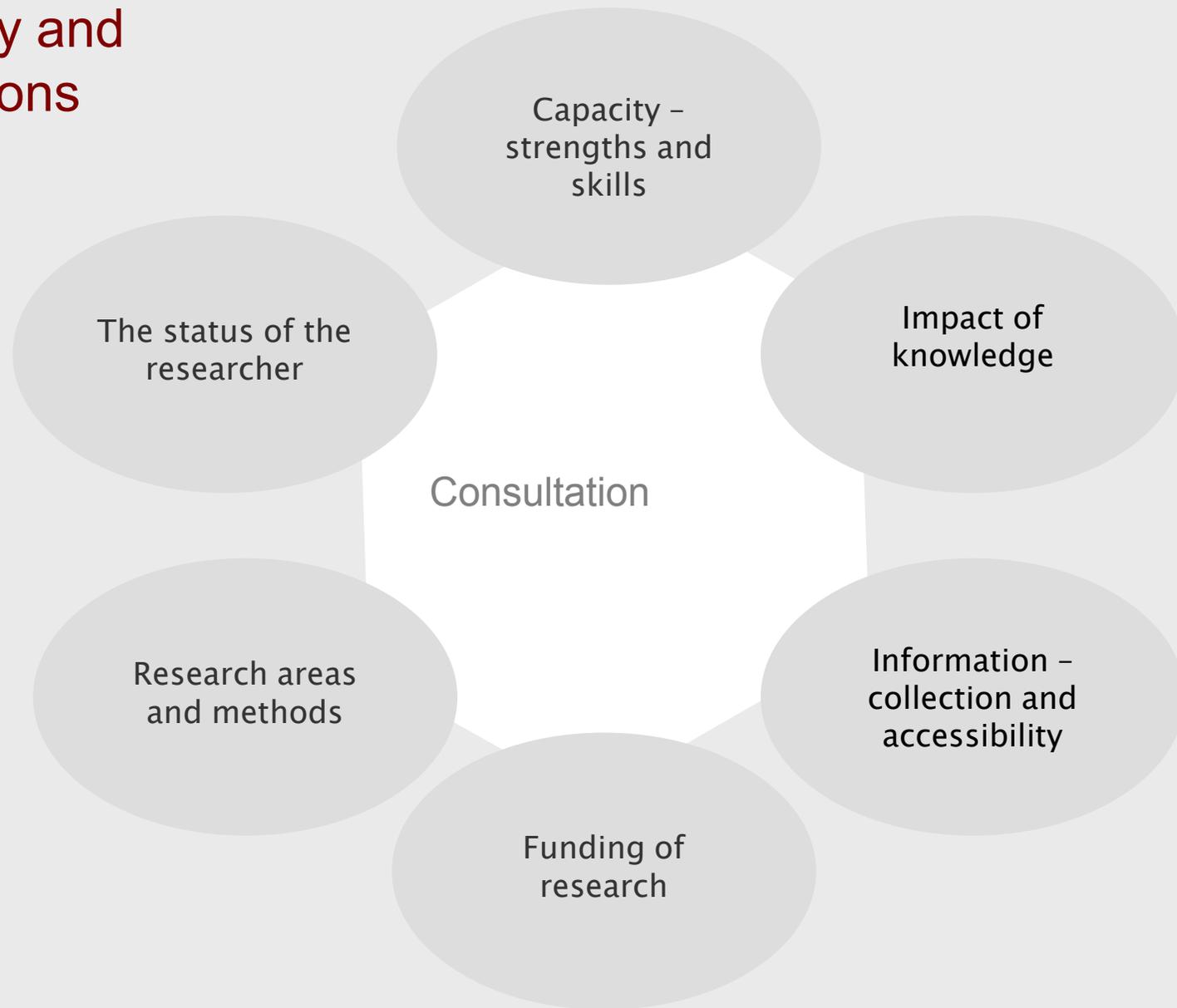
Parallel activities since 2000

- Icelandic Association of Educational Research established in 2002
- Journals
  - one new on-line in 2002 (university), part peer-reviewed
  - one new 2003 published by the Association, peer-reviewed
  - one older printed, now a cooperative project and twice a year, peer-review
- PhD program established 2002 – now have 17 students
- NERA conference 2004, ECERA 2006,
- Two Nordic conferences 2008 – teacher education and science education
- Two options in graduate programs from 2007
  - A professional "five year" teacher degree (3 + 2) + 3
  - A researcher degree 3 + (2 + 3)
- Incentives – bonuses from the performance fund at IUE increased three-fold
- Establishment of research groups and centres at IUE
- Application in 2004 for a research programme (targeted funding) – not successful
- Higher success rates in competitive funding schemes

Parallel activities since 2000

BUT

- Merger in 2008 with UI

- UI aims to be one of 100 best in world – academic pressure/drift

- Research Institute at IUE merged with continuing education - no longer a mediator between researchers and the field

Follow-up activities since 2005

- The final report published in October 2005 – presented to the Minister at the Annual ERD conference

- Presentations of the report were made to the Science Committee of the STPC and senior members of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Nov/Dec 2005

- Keynote presentation at the Bi-annual conference of the Icelandic Association for Educational Research in November 2005.

- The association of local municipalities held a conference drawing on some of the recommendations in March 2006.

- The Research Committee and project managers at the IUE have used some of the recommendations in developing policy.

Follow-up activities since 2005

BUT

- Attention on Bologna and the higher education curriculum

- A new curriculum at the IUE introduced in 2006 and 2007

- Educational sciences will be one of five schools at the UI from 2008

Demand

- The demand for educational research and development
- Context
  - basic teacher education at university level since 1971 and pre-school and sport since 1998
    - 40-43% time for research as part of salary
  - national testing institute since early 1980s
  - development projects since late 1980s

What sort of research did university researchers say they were doing?

Reporting of activity 1998-2002 (800 docs.)	Mainly teacher education %	Mixed UI %	Mixed UA %
Basic research	28	46	51
Applied research	32	26	33
Evaluation	20	7	14
Development project	14	11	13
Advisory work	7	5	6
Reviews of research	15	16	16
Total	**116%***	**110%**	**133%**

*It was possible to categorise some research more than one way.

How did university researchers disseminate their results?

Reporting of activity 1998-2002	IUE %	UI-Ed %	UA %	All of UI* %
Peer-reviewed (e.g. journals)	5,9	15,2	16,2	33, 0
Not peer-reviewed (e.g. reports)	34,9	26,9	21,5	23,3
Talks and posters	53,1	50,7	54,5	20,5
Other – books/ chapters/theses	6,0	7,1	8,8	23,2

For whom did researchers think they were writing for?

Producers Targets* (800 documents)	Academic research	Master's research	Institute-based research	Private sector
Scientific community	58%	100%	6%	20%
Policy-makers	44%	25%	95%	65%
Practitioners	61%	56%	31%	68%
General public	7%		10%	9%

* More than one target possible

Development projects

- Sources of ideas
  - Graduate education courses
  - Textbooks
  - Group visits overseas
- Teachers driven by their professionalism
- Few connections with researchers in Iceland
- Adapted ongoing work to advertised themes
- Did not read Icelandic research
- Association for School Development established in 2004

Impact on practice

Research projects; incentives and funding agencies do not encourage school-based developmental work
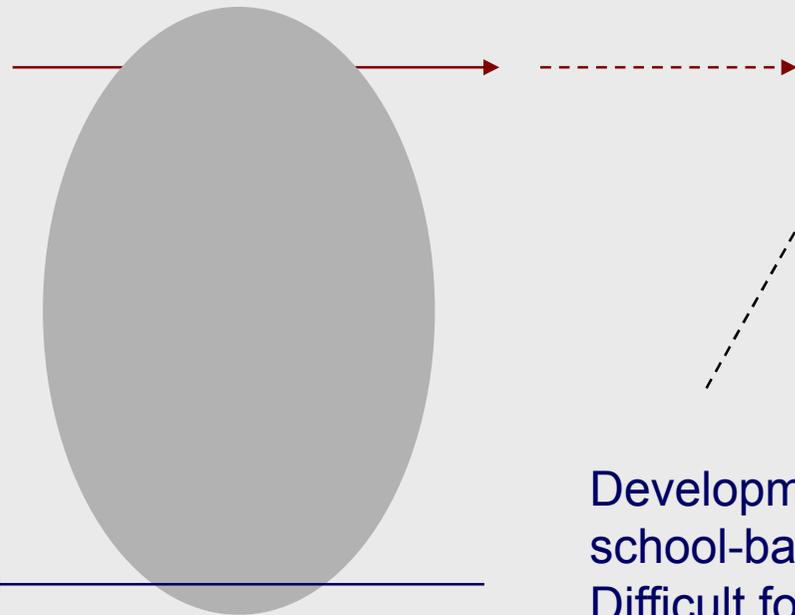
Conference papers
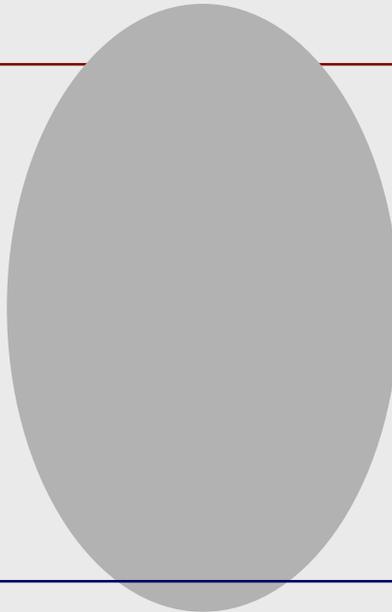
Articles

Few teachers attend conferences

Reports

Talks

Interschool visits

Development funds for school-based work; Difficult for researchers to get grants from national funds

Impact on policy

Research projects;
do not necessarily
reflect policy
initiatives

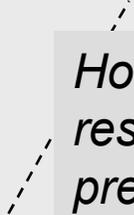*How should
projects be
selected?*

Papers

Articles

*How should
results be
presented?*

Policy-makers don´t
read research; results
used if advisors
recommend them; rely
on some commissioned
research

National
curriculum

Other
policies

International
declarations

Need to <u>create</u> a demand and meet it

- Researchers, practitioners, policy-makers
  - Need to make and use an intermediate space
  - Need to facilitate coordination and cooperation on the use of existing resources in research and development
  - Need to collaborate at an institutional level on issues such as graduate education
  - Need to identify areas of educational importance that would benefit from cooperation and coordination

Thank you

Academic status and impact in the field
based in part on work done by David Labaree

Impact		Status	
		Low	High
	Low	A	B
	High	C	D
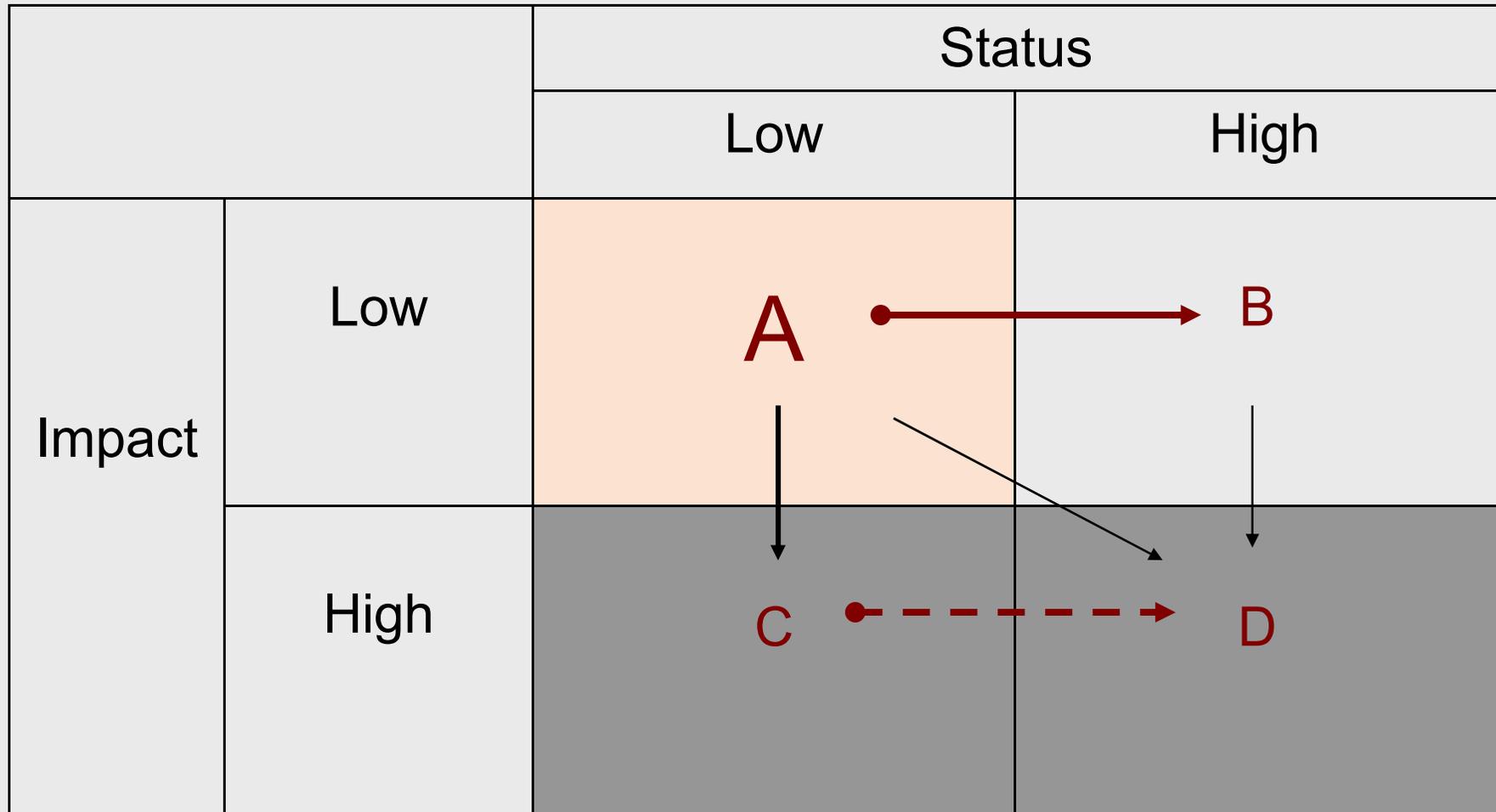
Options - Route A ▶ B

- Raise status, retain low impact

	Towards	Hard – experimental research?
		Pure – basic research, disciplinary based?
		Speculative
		Of "academic" interest – publish in journals?
		Detached from the field under study – experimental?
		Draws on a specific terminology – disciplinary based?
A reasonably accessible terminology	Risk losing	
Distributed disciplinary base		
An egalitarian culture		
Nearness to the field		

Options - Route A ▶ C

- Increase impact, retain low status

	Towards	
		Applied research?
		Soft science – based on "educational principles"?
		Problem-solving
		Of interest to practitioners – publish in teacher journals?
		Relevant to the field under study – action research?
		Connections with development projects

Procedures for peer review		
Speculation	Risk losing	
Elite researchers		
Development of new concepts and terminology		

Options - Route B ▶ D

- Maintain high status and increase impact

		Links between research and development
		Wider range of skills used in EDR
		More cooperation in definition and collection of data
	Towards	Writing for different audiences
		Revision of incentive schemes
		Targeted research

Freedom of choice		
Established relationships	Risk losing	
Nearness to the field		
Fuzzy reporting procedures		

Options - Route A ▶ D

- Raise status and increase impact

		Links between research and development
		Wider range of skills used in EDR
		Innovative peer-review procedures
		New indicators of progress
	Towards	More cooperation in definition and collection of data
		Writing for different audiences
		Revision of incentive schemes
		Targeted research

Freedom of choice	
Established relationships	Risk losing
Nearness to the field	
Fuzzy reporting procedures	