



The Recent Development of Educational Research in England

Teaching and Learning Research Programme:

Background; Objectives; Priorities; Organization; Experiences; Results; Recommendations.

Alan Brown Associate Director, TLRP





Background to establishment of TLRP

Policy context in late 1990s

Criticisms of educational research

Range of educational research initiatives





The UK education policy context in the late 1990s

- rapid 'reform' throughout the system since the 1988 Education Reform Act
- concern for economic competitiveness and social inclusion
- aspirations for evidence-based policy and practice
- critique of educational research





Criticisms of educational research

Relevance

- Irrelevance to practice in schools
- Very little on post-compulsory education
- Lack of involvement of potential users of the research

Quality

- Theoretical incoherence across the field
- Insufficient use of quantitative evidence
- Research designs insufficiently systematic
- Studies too small to produce convincing answers to 'what works'

Impact

- Poor dissemination
- Weak accumulation of research findings





Educational research initiatives

- Efforts to coordinate and prioritise research (e.g. NERF)
- 2. Synthesis of existing research findings (e.g. EPPI, and systematic reviews)
- 3. New DfES research centres established (e.g. CEE, WBL, NRDC)
- 4. Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP)





Educational research initiatives

1. Efforts to coordinate and prioritise research

National Forum for Research in Education (NERF)

Chaired by a senior medical researcher Members appointed by English government Experienced researchers marginalised Perceived as a means of external control

Evolution into Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE)





Educational research initiatives

2. Synthesis and knowledge accumulation

Evidence for Policy and Practice Initiative (EPPI)

Promotion of systematic reviews

Development of methods for systematic reviews

Evolution into broader forms of research synthesis





Educational research initiatives

3. New DfES research centres established

Centre for the Economics of Education (CEE)
Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning
(WBL)

National Research and Development Centre (NRDC)

Successful but limited engagement of small centres.





Educational research initiatives

4. Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP)

A **programme** - seen as a portfolio of competitively selected projects which address a particular, shared theme – e.g.: learning outcomes.

Designed to:

- *intervene* in the field to enhance research scale, relevance and quality.
- 'add value' to the individual projects through coordination, and thus maximise impact.





TLRP's objectives and priorities

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, throughout the UK

achieved through research that emphasises user engagement, developing expertise and extending knowledge base.





TLRP objectives

Learning:

research with the potential to improve <u>outcomes</u> for learners across the lifecourse. The Programme explores synergies between different research approaches and aims to build UK capacity in conducting high quality educational research. TLRP is committed to the application of findings to policy and practice and to maximise the impact of our research and to present it in an accessible way.





TLRP objectives

Outcomes

broad range of learning outcomes, including acquisition of skill, understanding, knowledge & qualifications & development of attitudes, values and identities relevant to a learning society.

Lifecourse

research on many ages and stages in education, training and lifelong learning; concerned with patterns of success and difference, inclusion and exclusion through the lifecourse.





TLRP objectives

Enrichment

committed to user engagement; working in all disciplines and sectors of education; using a range of methodologies; cooperating with other researchers within and beyond the UK.

Expertise

enhance capacity for all forms of research on teaching and learning, and for research-informed policy and practice.

Improvement

develop the knowledge base on teaching and learning & ensure that the knowledge it develops is applied in practice and policy.





TLRP's ambition

	Low quality	High quality
Low relevance		
High relevance		TLRP?





Organisation: TLRP key features in 2000

- Large (almost £10m in one round of funding, 13 investments,
 c150 researchers, projects up to £1m each, often with large teams)
- Mainly school focused (but lifecourse aspiration)
- Mainly English (but UK-wide aspiration)
- Five years (2000 to 2004/5)
- Central Directors' Team (Charles Desforges, John Kanefsky, FT)
- Capacity building (generating some unease/opposition)





Early experiences up to 2002

- Lack of trust between researchers and 'reformers'
- Disempowering emphasis on research 'deficiencies'
- Methodological and paradigmatic arguments
- Goals and values contested (e.g.: the roles academics should play in society)





Collaborative, 'reflexive activism' to build the social capital of educational research: from 2002

- Affirming the moral purposes of educational research
- developing relationships and networks, sharing perspectives and building alliances;
- working on politically engaged impact and dissemination strategies;
- attempting strategic positioning on long term issues
- promoting collective, open and reflexive debate and action in respect of new challenges;





Challenges: [Results?]

- Contextual improving evidence-informed decision making?
- Conceptual improving understanding?
- Methodological improving the quality of applied research?
- Transformational improving impact?





Organisation of TLRP in 2008

- **Very large** (£43m in ten rounds of funding, 100+ investments, 700+ researchers, projects up to £1.5m each, often with large teams)
- HEFCE and RC funding (+ all UK governments & JISC)
- All sectors of education (pre-school to elderly learners)
- UK-wide (England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland)
- 2000 to 2008/9, and then to 2011/12
- Directors' Team of five
- Capacity building (in partnership with BERA, SERA, AERS, SRHE, etc)





Experience: Programme development through 'constructive engagement'

- 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

	Partners work alongside researchers throughout the research	Advisers support progress at key points	Users help to transform findings as they become available
Experience a problem	1		
Analyse the issue			
Formulate research			
questions			
Design the project			
Seek funding		+	
Gather data			
Analyse			
Write up			
Disseminate	\	\	↓





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

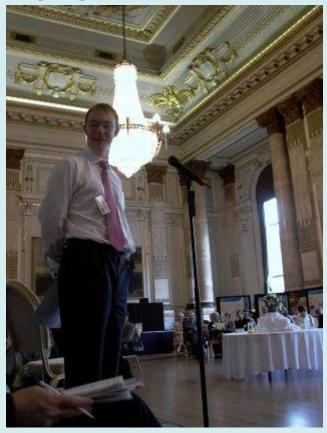


User-researcher discussion at the Westminster Showcase





Early user engagement and partnerships



Westminster Showcase – with Paul Johnson, Chief Economist, DfES, England





Early user engagement and partnerships



Cardiff Showcase - with Minister, Jane Davidson





Early user engagement and partnerships



Edinburgh Showcase – with Minister, Jim MacDonald





Programme development through 'constructive engagement'

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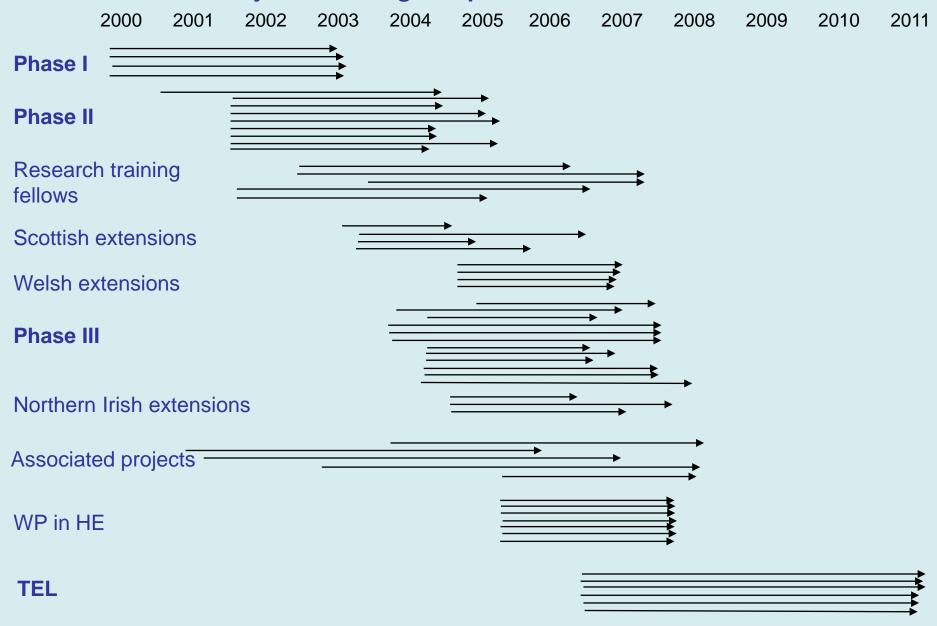


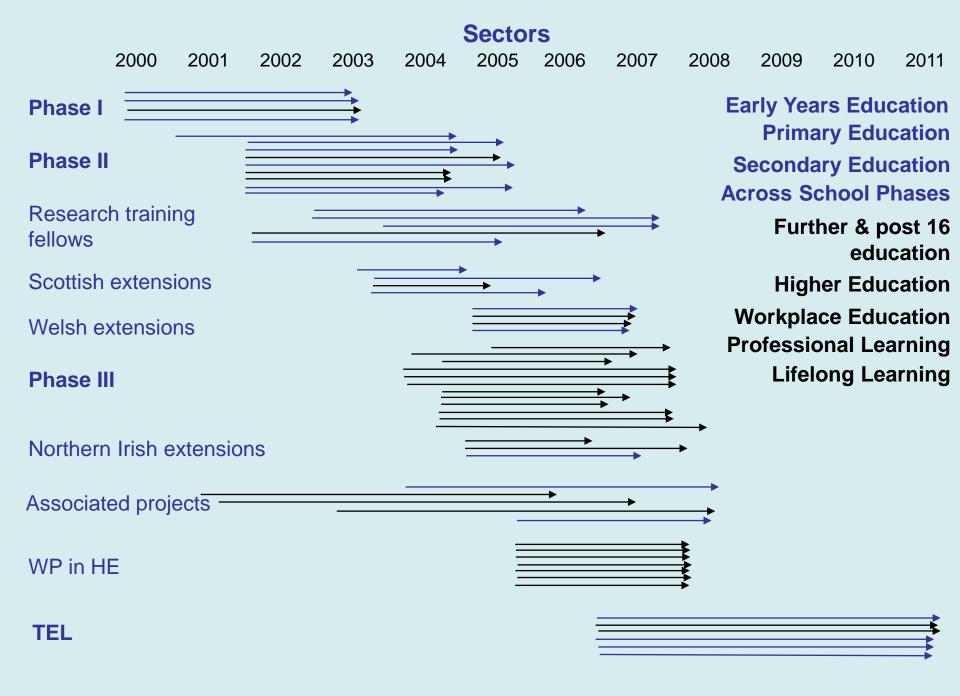
Knowledge generation by project teams



TLRP Steering Committee at a commissioning meeting

Projects: funding competitions and associations









Programme development through 'constructive engagement'

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Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

Purpose

- To analyse, test and synthesise project findings and to relate them to international work
- To prepare intellectually for effective, integrated forms of dissemination

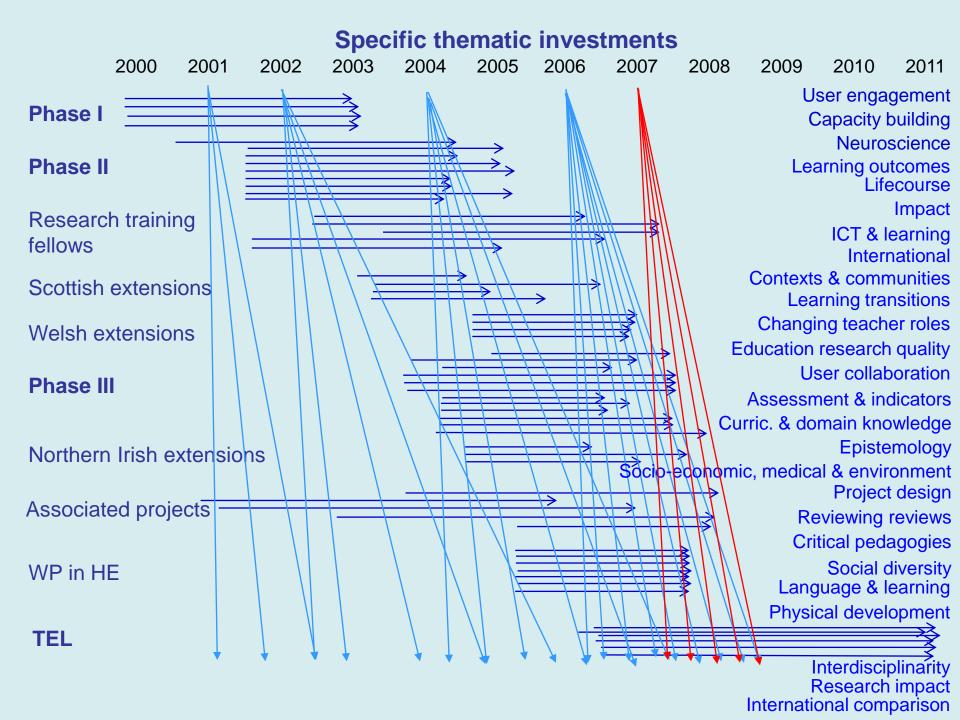




Knowledge synthesis by thematic work

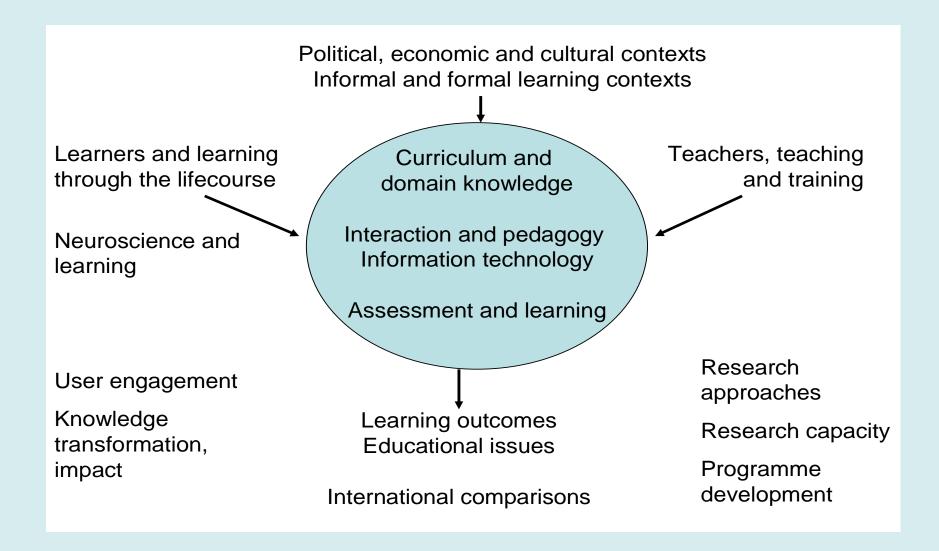
Main strategies

- Conferences (annually)
- Thematic groups/seminar series /consultancies
- Policy task groups
- Sectoral overviews













Knowledge synthesis by thematic work



Research teams in discussion





Knowledge synthesis by thematic work



Thematic seminar series on changing teacher roles, identities and professionalism





Knowledge synthesis by thematic work



A TLRP 'bazaar' with research users





Knowledge synthesis by thematic work



Liaison with colleagues in European education programmes





Knowledge synthesis by thematic work



International researchers at a TLRP conference





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Knowledge transformation for impact



Project planning with Media Fellow







Project outputs: newsletters

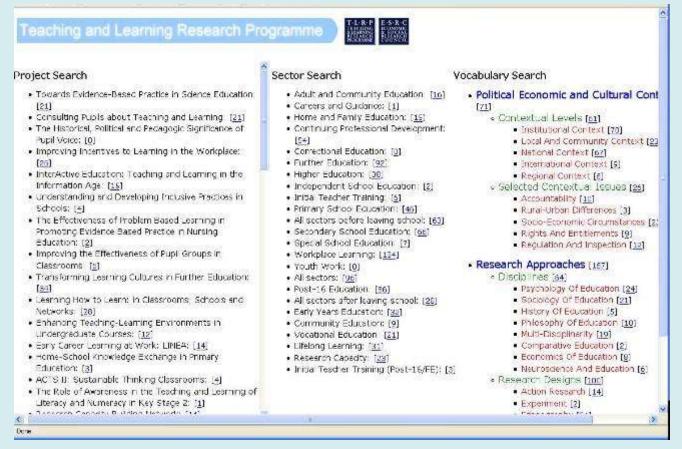




Knowledge transformation for impact

D-space and ESRC Society Today

One entry does it!







Project outputs: **Events**

- 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





Project outputs: Research briefings

50 so far

Teaching RESEARCH Learning BRIEFING

June 2003 Number 1

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.

- Science teachers' practice, and students' learning, can be significantly enhanced by providing teaching materials that embody research findings and insights.
- If findings and ineights from research are francisted into specific practical implications, or teaching materials, the Bellhood and scale of their impact on practice is greatly increased.
- Carefully designed probes, based on research, cen provide quality information on students' understanding of key science ideas, and inform subsequent action.
- 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.
- The level of students' understanding of many fundamental science ideas is low, and increases only slowly with age.
- Current teaching approaches in science do not result in widespread understanding of many core ideas. Levels of understanding of a fee key ideas should be monitored systematically over time, to inform curriculum decisions.





www.tirp.org

Teaching and Learning Research Programme

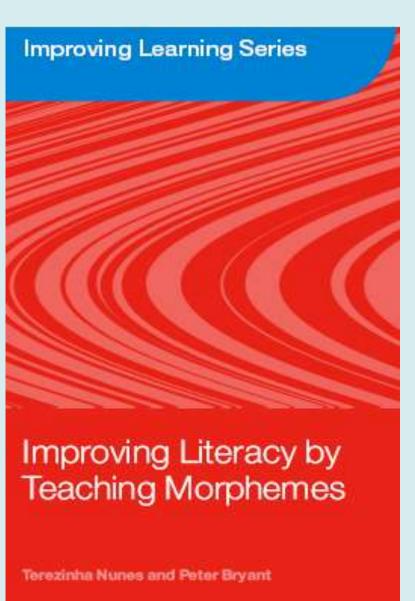




Project outputs: **Books**

- Academic books
- Overview books in Improving Learning series
- Practitioner materials in Improving Practice series









Knowledge transformation for impact

Project outputs:

Innovations

- DVDs
- Drama
- Poetry
- Downloads







Thematic outputs:

special issues of peer reviewed journals (40 so far)







Programme events:



TLRP presentation at an educational conference





Programme events:

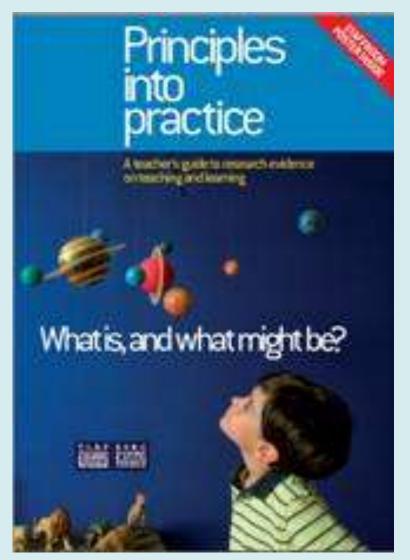


Conference stand





Distribution to all UK schools









Teaching and Learning Research Programme





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TLRP reaction to Brown speech

November 2007

TLRP Director Professor Andrew Pollard has commented on a major speech on Education given by the Prime Minister (pictured) at Greenwich University on 31st October.

"Much of Gordon Brown's vision for education is supported by evidence from educational research and points in encouraging new directions. I particularly welcome the emphasis on the child 'in the round', on culture and



aspirations, on the importance of parents and social influences, and on making sure that we have good teachers who have high status and engage in continuous learning to enhance their professionalism."

But Professor Pollard warned that school education is still dominated by high-stakes assessment which can undermine authentic learning and constrain teachers and schools. He said: "The world-class standards in education which Gordon Brown wants will not be achieved until this issue is faced directly and a more appropriate balance is achieved. The next phase of educational reform would be considerably helped by a National Review of Assessment and Learning."

Professor Pollard added: "I welcome the PM's statement that: 'As we start to move to personalised testing, we must keep assessment under review to ensure that it supports learning and achievement and does not dominate teaching.'

A national review of the evidence on assessment and learning would ensure that

TLRP News





Media coverage:

Including:

- Professional organisations
- Local press and radio
- Times Educational Supplement
- Times Higher Education Supplement
- Broadsheets
- Guardian website
- BBC website
- The Learning Curve
- The Today Programme
- Newsnight





Policy Task Groups:

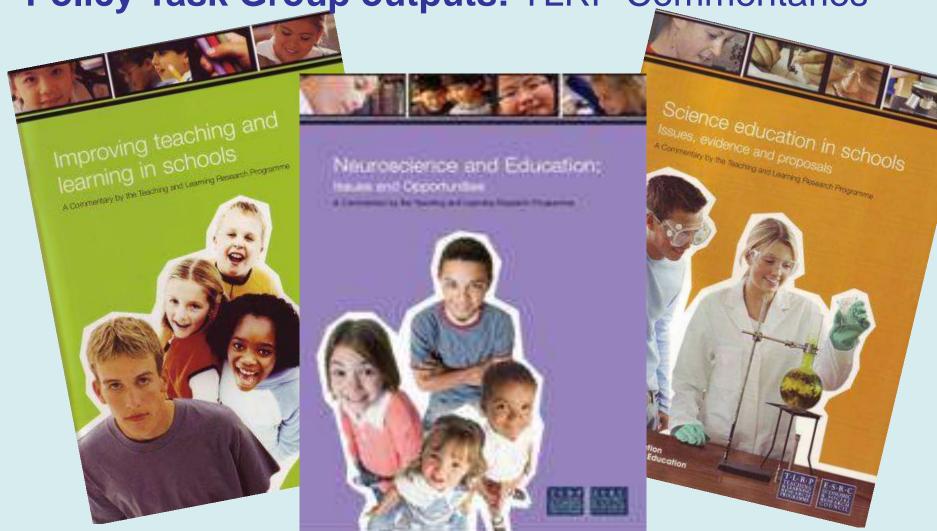
Rapidly formed researcher/user groups to focus on contemporary issues

- Personalised Learning
- Science Education
- Teaching & Learning in Schools
- 14-19 Education
- Neuroscience and Education
- Challenge & Change in Further Education
- Expansive apprenticeships
- Widening Participation in HE
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Children's Services for the future





Policy Task Group outputs: TLRP Commentaries







Programme development: through 'constructive engagement'

- 1. Early user engagement
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Capacity building for professional development

Particular priorities:

- design, conduct and management of quantitative studies
- enhancing their theoretical and conceptual bases
- combining quantitative and qualitative approaches
- utilisation of inter-disciplinary theories and methods
- transformation of research-based knowledge for practice







Capacity building for professional development

Embedding in the social practices of researchers

- Capacity building conferences
- Developing online resources
- Linking with NCRM
- Developing networks in learned societies
- Career development
- 'Meetings of Minds' fellowships





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Partnerships for sustainability: technology experts

Virtual Research Environments

D-space

Web-site development



TLRP information technology partners: CARET, JISC, ESRC Society Today, BEI

Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies







Partnerships for sustainability: organisations



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





Partnerships for sustainability: political parties

Gilbert Review T&L – '2020 Vision'

department for education and skills creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Public Services Improvement Policy Group



Review of Primary Education



Politically independent work with government and political parties





Partnerships for sustainability: Governments

EG: 2006 Main Conference, Glasgow

TLRP + Scottish Govt + SERA and AERS

- Learning
- Equity
- Transitions

Placement fellowships



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





Partnerships for sustainability: public bodies reviewing evidence

- Primary education review: Cambridge/Esmee Fairbairn
- 14-19 education review: Nuffield Foundation
- Work-based learning review: Institute for Employment Research
- Lifelong Learning review: NIACE
- Higher Education 'observatories': HE Academy
- 'Mental Capital and Wellbeing Foresight project: OSI

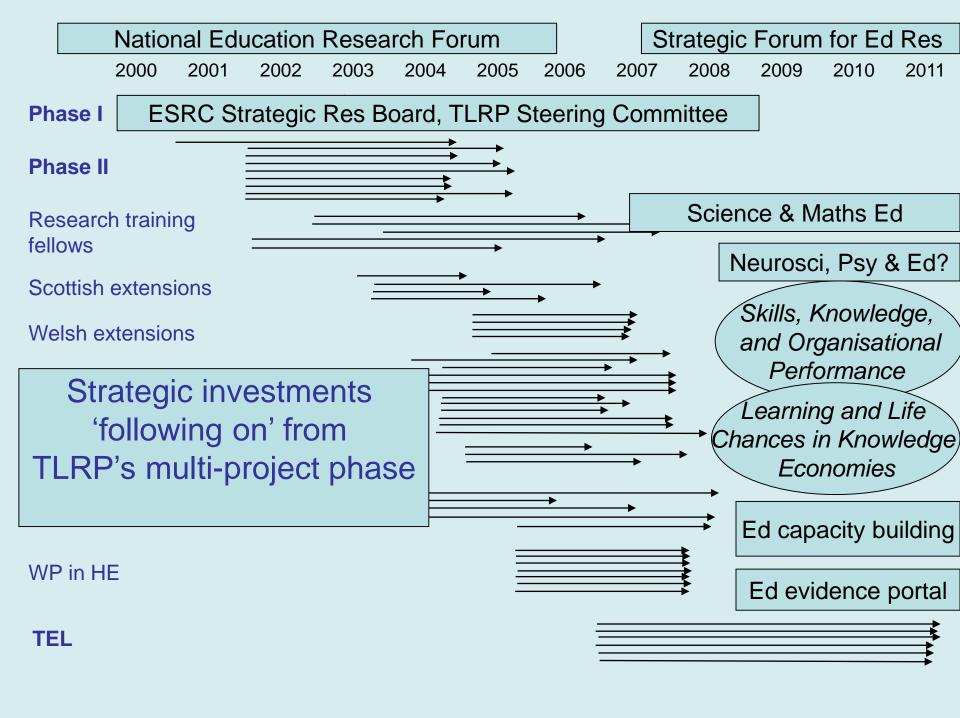
Partnerships with others for cross-sectoral overviews





Partnerships for sustainability: learned societies for capacity building

- British Educational Research Association
- Scottish Educational Research Association
- Welsh Education Research Network
- Northern Ireland Education Research Forum







Programme development

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TLRP: a collective adventure in 'constructive engagement'?

Generating and accumulating new knowledge?

Supporting the development of educational research?

Enjoying working together to improve educational outcomes?





Recommendations

- Decide on priorities: e.g. user engagement; knowledge generation; knowledge synthesis; impact; capacity building for professional development; partnerships for sustainability
- Waves of project funding
- Thematic work: modest funding but harnessed researchers' enthusiasms
- Policy task groups
- Simple model: representation
- Modest rather than grand support actions
- Approach of programme team: 'fit' with resources