



## WELSH EDUCATION RESEARCH NETWORK

**i) Report on Pilot funding (2007-8)**  
(Completed 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

**ii) Proposal for Extension Funding (2008-9)**



## **Report on Pilot Funding (2007- 8)**

### **Background**

The Welsh Education Research Network (WERN) has been funded by the ESRC and HEFCW for a pilot period between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The aim of the Network is to develop educational research capacity, by building a collaborative partnership, which shares expertise, between all the higher education institutions (HEIs) with education and related departments in Wales (for further details see Appendix 6 for original proposal). Its membership comprises Aberystwyth University, Bangor University, Cardiff University, North East Wales Institute (NEWI), The Open University in Wales, Swansea Metropolitan University, Swansea University, Trinity College Carmarthen, University of Glamorgan, University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC) and University of Wales Newport. The leadership of WERN is distributed and democratic involving all partner institutions. All decisions about the nature, purpose and direction of WERN are taken by an Executive comprised of one member from each HEI. The day to day running of the Network is conducted by the Chair of the Executive (0.3) and an Administrator (0.4); the Vice-Chair (0.1) is also able to offer some support. WERN also benefits from the advice and support of an Advisory Group comprised of experienced academics and stakeholders.

### **Introduction**

This report presents an account of WERN's activities, and an evaluation of its development based on data gathered by WERN from October 2007 - May 2008. It also refers, where appropriate, to the findings of the external evaluation (Gardner,2008) which has been carried out by Prof. John Gardner, Queen's University, Belfast in May 2008 .

The report begins by outlining the methods which have been used to gather data which informs this report, the rationale that underpins the WERN initiative is then described before a chronology of WERN activity is presented. This is followed by an evaluation of each of the key elements of WERN and the impact and shortcomings are then summarised. The report concludes with proposals for future plans that will build on the momentum that has been created by the pilot should an extension of the present funding be granted.

### **Evaluation methods**

A record of the attendance at all WERN events was kept in order to monitor the support and its distribution across institutions. All participants, at the conclusion of an event, were asked to complete an evaluation form.

As well as carrying out analysis of the applications for bursary funding (N=24), the activities and effectiveness of the funded groups (N=8) were closely monitored by the completion of interim and final reports in March and May 2008 respectively.

The external evaluator was provided with documentation that enabled him to track the progress of the initiative, for example, the minutes of Executive meetings, the applications and reports from bursary groups (see Appendix 5 for full list of information supplied to external evaluator). He also interviewed a cross section of WERN participants: Executive members, Advisory Group members, bursary group leaders, bursary group members (total N=31), as well as senior members of HEIs (N=5) in Wales who could comment on the impact of the pilot at an institutional, cross-institutional and pan Wales levels.

### **Rationale for WERN Activity**

Educational research is in serious decline in the majority of HEIs in Wales (Rees and Power, 2008). As a result expertise is mostly fragmented and isolated, and researchers lack opportunities to develop expertise by working alongside more knowledgeable peers. Drawing on evidence from an analysis of participation in the research activities undertaken by RCBN, Rees et al.(2007) found that work place based opportunities for acquiring research skills were viewed by participants 'as crucial to their development as accomplished researchers'(p.773). WERN aims to build capacity by facilitating collaborative research activity between educational researchers in different institutions, providing opportunities for joint activity and social learning between partners with varied levels of expertise and experience (for further details see Appendix 6 for original proposal).

### **WERN Development**

The activities of WERN during the pilot period are shown chronologically in Table 1. The principal method of developing capacity has been the provision of bursaries to support groups of colleagues

from different institutions to work together to write a proposal for research funding. An essential criterion for receipt of funding was to demonstrate that the mix of skills and experience within the group had the potential to build the capacity of the group members.

Date	Activity	Number and institutional distribution of participants
1 October 2007	Pilot begins	
1st/2nd October 2007	Executive meeting	11 institutions represented
October 2007	VRE online	
12 <sup>th</sup> November	Advisory Group	
15 <sup>th</sup> November 2007	Executive meeting	8 institutions represented
30 <sup>th</sup> November 2007	23 Bursary applications submitted	97 applicants from 10 institutions
10 <sup>th</sup> December 2007	Advisory group select successful applicants	
January –May 2008	8 Bursary groups engaged in activity	49 members from 9 institutions
10 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	'Writing a research proposal' workshop	55 participants 10 institutions represented
14 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	Advisory Group	
30 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	Executive meeting	8 institutions represented
12 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	Advisory Group	
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	Executive meeting	7 institutions represented
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	Finance workshop	7 participants 4 institutions represented
28 <sup>th</sup> April 2008	Executive meeting	6 institutions represented
7 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	Colloquium	76 participants 10 institutions represented
12 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	External evaluation	11 institutions contributed
20 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	Executive meeting	5 institutions represented
30 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	Group bursary groups submit final reports	Reports submitted by all 8 groups
16 <sup>th</sup> June 2008	Advisory Group	
30 <sup>th</sup> June 2008	Pilot ends	

Table 1 Chronology of WERN activity

## Evaluation

### Group Bursary Scheme

Despite the very short period for the preparation of applications, 24 applications were received. Ten institutions were part of one or more applications (one institution was not able to contribute to an application for logistic reasons), and most (N= 9) were the lead member in at least one application. Information provided by the external evaluation (Gardner,2008,p.10) and shown in Table 2 shows the high degree of inter-institutional collaboration in 23 valid applications (a single institution bid was withdrawn as partners could not be found for that particular research focus).

HEI	Aber	Bangor	Cardiff	Glam	NEWI	Newport	Swan Met	Swan U	Trinity	UWIC
Aber			✓							
Bangor			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Cardiff	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Glam		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
NEWI		✓								
Newport		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Swan Met		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Swan U			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Trinity		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
UWIC		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Totals	1	7	7	6	1	7	5	5	6	7

Table 2: Degree of inter-institutional collaboration in bursary applications

Of the total number of named applicants (N=93), 57 early career researchers (13 male, 44 female) were involved and named in the applications. These ranged from those totally new to research such as ex-head/deputy head teachers, ex-local authority advisors, new initial teacher education (ITE) lecturers to HEI lecturers with one or two internal departmental working papers or a recently acquired doctorate. Many of the ITE applicants had Masters degrees or were still studying for them (other details of the characteristics of applicant groups can be found in Appendix 1). All the applications fulfilled the basic criteria of being cross institutional, having the potential to develop capacity and being relevant to Wales. The Advisory Group, who selected the eight successful applications, did so on the basis of the aforementioned criteria, the quality of the proposal, and the likelihood of the subsequent application to attract funding from a funding body. The funded bursary groups included in total 27 early career researchers (5 male and 22 female) and as shown in Table 3 there was an even spread of experienced and inexperienced researchers.

	Years of research experience			
	0	1-5	6-10	11+
<b>Number of staff</b>	15	12	9	15

Table 3 Research experience of bursary group members

Details of the institutions involved and the project focus for funded applications can be found in Appendix 2. Each funded application received a budget of £13,000 for the bursary period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008. All but two institutions had members of staff participating in bursary groups, with a total of 51 academics in Wales being involved in bursary activity. Each group had a mentor, for three of the groups these came from Welsh HEIs but the remaining five worked in English universities. The range of funded bursaries gave coverage to substantive research issues across all education phases from the Foundation Phase to FE and HE, though the majority (n=7) concentrated on research in primary or secondary sectors.

Discussions in the Executive about inclusiveness following the selection of successful bursary applicants concluded with the decision to support unfunded groups as far as resources would allow. As a result all groups not selected for funding were given written, and if they wished verbal, feedback, about the reasons why they had not been selected and how their applications could be improved. In addition unfunded groups were invited with funded groups to all WERN training activities and events.

All of the funded groups were expected to have completed their formal funding application by the end of the bursary period, however although all groups have proposals underway, only one has been submitted. Table 4 shows the present progress of funding applications and other outputs.

Grant Awarded	Proposals in progress	Proposals almost complete	Conference Abstracts	Journal Article in preparation	Application for Studentship
1	11	1	5	2	1

Table 4 Outputs reported by group bursary leaders as of 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008

One group has been awarded a grant by BECTA, there are five applications in progress (one nearly complete) for the ESRC, there are applications also being prepared for the Joy Welch Educational Foundation, the Leadership Foundation and an institutional internal fund. Abstracts have been submitted to the 2008 annual conferences of the European Conference on Education Research (ECER), the British Education Research Association (BERA), the Scottish Education Research Association (SERA), Inquiring Pedagogies (IPED) and British Psychological Society (BPS).

Analysis of both the interim and final reports from the eight groups, and a bursary evaluation questionnaire distributed to all bursary members (returned by N=13) indicates that the following benefits of bursary activity were identified:

- Working with a mentor and more experienced colleagues was very valuable in order to build research skills.
- The group offered a non-threatening environment for less experienced researchers to gain experience. It was also seen as supportive environment to build capacity for all team members and their institutions.

- It created a space for intellectual challenge e.g. exchange of conceptual ideas, chance to reflect.
- Opportunities to network, collaborate and gain respect of colleagues were important.

The less satisfactory aspects of the experience were identified as:

- Some frustrations due to mix of experience in group;
- Some difficulties in communication across institutions;
- Insufficient meeting time, which could be due to:
  - Geographical distance between team members;
  - Short time frame for turn around of proposals;
  - Activity being additional to normal workloads.

For many bursary group members, particularly group leaders, there was a tension experienced between finding the time to deliver good learning experiences for less experienced group members and having sufficient time to deliver the expected output - a completed research proposal to a funding body. A number of groups prioritised the former, and as a result did not advance as far as they would have liked with their proposal. This suggests that capacity building, even when using a social practices model, will not take place entirely incidentally and requires the dedication of time to specifically facilitate the learning of less experienced colleagues.

Thirty-four of the thirty six interviews conducted by the external evaluator commended the collaborative opportunities for learning offered by the bursary funding. In order to facilitate the learning of new methodologies and techniques, the leaders of some groups also organised specific research training such as a work shop session on the analysis of qualitative data using NVivo software; the development of research questions; the design of a poster for conference presentation; collaborative bid writing using a whiteboard; practice sessions using VSRD; the interpretation of video samples of teacher practice. Some groups have also held events to further develop the working of the group, for example a seminar on partnership working was held by the rural education bursary group.

The value of mentoring was strongly endorsed by the bursary participants, and this was also highlighted by the external evaluator who remarked that:

*'It seems reasonable to conclude that the mentoring feature of WERN was a highly successful aspect of the research capacity building'* (Gardner, 2008, p.5)

### **Virtual Research Environment (VRE)**

A decision was taken when the bid for the WERN pilot was formulated that within the constraints of the time and funding available, the creation and use of a VRE should be limited to providing support for the bursary groups. This would enable the use and effectiveness of the VRE to be evaluated before committing to any further development.

WERN was fortunate in securing the support of the TLRP which enabled a VRE to be situated on the SAKAI platform, managed by CARET (Cambridge University). As a result of assistance from these colleagues, the VRE was available for use by the bursary groups by November 2007. A familiarisation session on the use of the VRE was held for all attendees at the 'Writing a Research proposal' training event in January 2008. Analysis of usage of the site indicates that there have been 287 log-ins made by 59 users. A dedicated part of the site for use of the Executive Group shows it to have been accessed by 10 users over a total of 126 times. Information on how to access the site has only been distributed to educational academics in Wales, however even with this restricted pool of users the number of log-ins indicates a quite low level of usage. The external evaluation asked interviewees about their use of the VRE and findings concluded:

*'Only two projects appeared to be using the VRE to any extent. One group leader reported using it to enable different parts of a literature review to be shared and then combined in a collaborative writing context. The VRE was also used as a vehicle for sharing PowerPoint presentations and anonymized data. A second group leader reported using the VRE more or less as a repository with*

*some 100 resource texts available to the members of the group... the modest use in [these] couple of instances did demonstrate that it could add value.* (Gardner,2008,p.13-14)

It should be borne in mind that at this stage of WERN's development the VRE was only intended as a technological tool to facilitate project work, and that WERN activities have focused on bringing colleagues together by face to face networking. However any future phase of WERN would seek to develop greater awareness amongst potential users about the facilities that the VRE can offer.

### **Training Events**

Two one - day training events were organised during the pilot period. Both events were aimed, although not exclusively, at researchers who were preparing funding proposals. They were advertised via HEI intranets, posters and email lists and open to all educational researchers in Welsh HEIs. Funded and unfunded bursary applicants were specifically invited.

#### Training Event 1: 'Writing a Research Proposal' training day [10/01/08]

Three speakers made contributions:

*Prof. Anne Edwards*, Oxford University, spoke about writing a research proposal from the researchers perspective

*Paul Rouse*, Research Development Leader ESRC, spoke from the funders' perspective.

*David Longman*, University of Wales, Newport, Executive member with responsibility for the VRE, spoke about how to access and use it.

Fifty five participants attended the day which was held at the University of Wales, Newport. However, only 8 persons completed evaluation sheets. The feedback was largely positive and it was reported that formal presentations were good, opportunities for networking with other education colleagues were valued and learning about the VRE was useful. Negative comments included complaints about the physical environment: the room accommodation was considered too small for the large numbers and more organised opportunities for networking would have been valued.

#### Training Event 2: 'How to Manage and Administer Research Grants' training day [28/02/08]

This was delivered by Emyr Reynolds , Head of Research Grants and Contracts, Aberystwyth University who talked participants through the complex process of calculating project funding and the JES system.

Only seven delegates attended. Low attendance can be attributed at least in part to the need to change the date of the event at short notice because of difficulties with arrangements for speakers. All who attended provided evaluative feedback. The presentation was considered to provide a clear and useful overview of the process involved in developing costings including JES. However it was suggested that it would have been improved by a second speaker addressing other personnel issues such as time management, time buyout.

### **WERN Colloquium**

The aim of the event was to showcase recent Welsh developments in capacity building. The programme for the Colloquium can be found in Appendix 4.

A total of 76 participants attended with representation from ten institutions, and with members from all funded bursary groups and some unfunded groups. 31% of those present completed evaluation forms. Levels of satisfaction with the event were high with 84% of respondents rating the event as good or excellent. Delegates commented on the positive atmosphere, and the feeling of a research community that was growing as a result of WERN activity. The opportunities for celebration and networking were most frequently commented upon, although some participants would have liked longer for the bursary groups to make their presentations.

### **WERN leadership and management**

A priority of the Network, even before pilot funding, has been to build collaboration and trust between participating HEI. This is important because the sector has been increasingly divided by a competitive ethos.

WERN is lead by an Executive comprised of one representative from each HEI. All institutions have contributed the time, travel and subsistence costs of their representatives to attend these meetings. The representatives vary in the status that they occupy in their institution but all are

active researchers. The latter characteristic has been crucial in enabling knowledgeable and ‘grounded’ research decisions and ensuring WERN is connecting with the research community in each HEI.

The Executive has met six times during the nine month pilot to discuss and plan all the activities that have taken place. There has also been considerable discussion and communication by email and telephone. The members have developed a good collaborative relationship, and have given generously of their time and effort to make WERN a success. As well as representing their institution on the Executive, the members have represented WERN in their institution - encouraging and supporting take-up of various WERN initiatives.

There continues to be a good level of support for WERN in HEIs in Wales, and this owes not least to the distributed style of leadership which has developed trust and genuine collaboration. WERN, and its Advisory Group, have been consulted by the Welsh Assembly Government about the future of applied educational research, and proposals for how Welsh capacity can be built.

The day to day management has been undertaken by the Chair of the Executive (0.3 time commitment), the Vice-Chair (0.1) both assisted by an Administrator (0.4). In order to ensure the smooth running of WERN, the time committed by these individuals has been in excess of that estimated in the original proposal, and this additional cost has been borne by their institutions. The host institution has been Trinity College, Carmarthen. A very positive evaluation of management and administration has been made by the external evaluator, who concluded:

*‘Key to all of these very positive sentiments appears to have been the combination of the supportive and non-directive tenor of the approach taken by the chair, vice-chair and administrator, their widely recognised and motivational enthusiasm and passion, and their much appreciated industry and endeavour in making the initiative work’* (Gardner,2008,p.16)

At the project level leadership was generally considered to be well managed and inclusive and *‘for members new to research, a highly structured and purposeful introduction to a new and important dimension to their professional work’*. (Gardner,2008,p.16)

### **Impact of Pilot**

Impact will be traced at three levels – individual, institutional and pan Wales.

#### **Individual**

A total of 110 academics in the education sector in Wales have engaged directly with WERN activities, mostly as part of the group bursary scheme. The external evaluation has included an interview with a cross section of these participants and *‘all 36 interviewees responded to a specific question seeking their general impression on the worth of the initiative. The breakdown was as follows:*

<i>Excellent</i>	<i>V Good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Ambiguous or Negative</i>
6	16	9	5

*Comments associated with the ‘Excellent’ impression were effusive and included ‘absolutely brilliant’ and ‘profound experience’, while those associated with a ‘Very Good’ impression included ‘extremely valuable’, ‘innovative’, ‘far-sighted’, ‘contemporary’, ‘very impressed’ and ‘timely’. More circumspect ‘Good’ category comments included ‘on the whole positive’ and ‘doing well’... Although a small minority, those who were more negative in their views of the initiative made a number of important points in what might otherwise be perceived as potentially defeatist or cynical comments. The comments included: ‘a noble idea but too little too late’, ‘a curate’s egg-potentially good but too ambitious’, ‘the right idea but too rushed’ and ‘pleasing but may be too late’.* (Gardner,2008,p.16-17)

#### **Institutional**

All eleven HEIs in Wales with education or related departments have actively participated in the leadership of WERN. Only one institution has not been a substantive participant in WERN activities and this has been because the system of staff engagement with research, with many part-time tutors, has not fitted well to date with the structure of WERN activities. Institutional participation and the quality of synergies that are beginning to emerge, has been a focus of the external evaluation and the following interim comments have been made:

*'Institutional support was universally reported as positive and generous for both the objectives of WERN and WERN itself was strongly expressed by HEI representatives who were interviewed... comments made pointed to considerable impact, sometimes described as great interest and sometimes as 'excitement' in institutions and their relevant departments. (Gardner,2008,p19)*

A crucial issue in institutional involvement has been making staff time available for research activity.

*However, strains did exist and were becoming more of a problem as time went on. A small number of interviewees had experienced difficulties in making contributions in the context of full teaching timetables, and arrangements for buying out teaching were not always successful. Several interviewees explained that one reason for this was the difficulty in finding a suitable substitute for the specialisms of some of the lecturers involved.'* (Gardner,2008,p.19)

The bursary funding was an attempt to resolve this issue by 'buying out' staff time. It has apparent that this has only been partially successful, with some institutions still being unable to free staff because of short time frames and lack of appropriate substitute staff. Some institutions have been more successful than others and WERN intends to learn from the methods used by institutions that have found solutions to freeing up staff time.

The impact at an institutional level has, not unexpectedly, varied. Six institutions were the lead for at least one of the bursary groups but even in institutions where there was not this level of involvement, the impact was felt, "WERN has been a catalyst and has made a huge contribution to changing the context of research in my department" (Executive member)

### **Pan-Wales and beyond**

There are many examples in WERN activity of pan Wales collaboration that are being productively sustained and developed, for example:

- The collaborative leadership, despite the differential in funding and research expertise between institutions.
- The networking between members of bursary groups- eight groups each with between two and four institutions in collaboration.
- Joint events such as the Colloquium that provide opportunities to see the beginnings of a cultural change which is building a community of educational researchers in Wales.
- The proceedings of the Colloquium will form the basis of the next Welsh Journal of Education. A number of institutions have shown a renewed commitment to the Journal by joining its editorial committee.
- Plans are being discussed to embed WERN as part of the structure of the British Education Research Association (BERA), and the model of Scottish Education Research Association (SERA ) is being considered.

The development of WERN is becoming increasingly known outside Wales. For example, WERN will feature as part of a keynote symposium on capacity building that will be presented at the 2008 BERA Conference, and there was a WERN input into the TLRP sponsored 'Celtic Connections' research capacity building conference which took place in Belfast.

### **Summary**

Lack of time has been the major challenge to WERN participants - academics, particularly in less research rich institutions have most of their time committed to teaching -and the short time frame of the pilot has exacerbated these tensions. For example nine months to complete the bursary scheme from initial preparation of the bid to WERN to the final product has proved very difficult for bursary holders as well as the WERN administration. However the enthusiasm for the WERN project and the participation in its events is well evidenced in the evaluation that has been presented. There is tangible evidence of outputs that have, and will we hope, deliver funding that will sustain further research activity. The conclusion of the external evaluation is that:

*'WERN was never formulated as a transforming 'silver bullet' initiative [but].. ' in terms of its primary intention 'to trial a funding and support structure for education researchers in Wales that*



*harnesses collaboration between institutions to build research capacity'...the WERN initiative has been highly successful'(Gardner,2008,p.3-4)*

Education research in Wales has suffered a long, and severe period of decline in all institutions except Cardiff University, therefore this initiative can only be a start to the reversal of this trend. There is evidence that a good beginning has been made but this investment must now be sustained and built upon.

## Proposal for Extension Funding (2008-9)

The decline in Welsh educational research capacity has been steep and sustained over many years (Rees and Power, 2007)(for further details, refer to original funding proposal which can be found in Appendix 6) and the WERN initiative has existed for only a short period and with access to limited resources. Despite this, both internal and external evaluation has shown that it has had considerable impact for the modest investment made. Nevertheless there is a need for continued funding to build on the momentum that has been created, and to move the research community in Wales nearer to a position, in the longer term, of self-sustainability.

The following proposals for an extension to WERN funding are informed by :

1. An evaluation of the pilot to date including identification of positive developments, the benefits of which can be maximised by further investment.
2. Consultation with existing stakeholders including WERN bursary participants and funders.
3. The opinions of Executive members who have canvassed the views of their institution and have worked collaboratively to develop these proposals.

There is support for a continuing focus on building capacity by facilitating collaborative research activity between institutions. The selection of successful applications for most of the proposed initiatives will be by open competition. This is fair and appropriate and is the manner in which research monies are generally distributed; competition is also likely to increase the quality of applications submitted. However because WERN's aim is to build capacity in all institutions a case can be made for distributing some funds in a non-competitive way so as to take positive action to improve capacity in less research intensive institutions. Therefore one initiative, which will take up a small proportion of the proposed budget, will be provided for each institution.

### A. Group Bursary Scheme

Group bursary activity has been effective in building research activity and has the potential to sustain further research activity if the formal proposals submitted to funding organisations are successful and awarded funding. Consultation with bursary participants and other stakeholders has indicated enthusiastic support for a continuation of the Group Bursary Scheme. Evaluation has indicated that a longer time frame is needed for this activity, therefore if a further period of funding is confirmed, WERN would hope to be able to announce details of the competition during the summer with formal applications submitted by the end of October.

There is also the need to continue to build on the collaborative momentum that some groups have created during the first phase, and provide funded opportunities for follow-up work and development. Additionally some participants have identified the need for funding to undertake small pieces of research work such as piloting instruments, interrogating data sets, conducting a scoping study, co-authoring a publication/conference paper. Therefore it has been decided to propose a two category group bursary scheme:

- Category 1: Writing a funding proposal. The funding available would be up to £12,000 per group, but it is expected that this funding will be matched by institutions. Applications will be invited from groups whose work should focus on strategic themes relevant to the Welsh Assembly Government research agenda. The application process will be the same as the phase I pilot. It is hoped that some of the unfunded applicants from the previous round will re-apply and benefit when revising their application from mentoring support that will be available from the regional mentor surgeries.
- Category 2: Small project funding. Funding available will be up to £5,000 per group but it is expected that this funding will be matched by institutions. The nature of the project will be specified by the applicant group but will be small scale substantive research activity.

The allocation of funding for the bursary scheme will be on the basis of open competition. The criteria that successful applicants will be expected to fulfil for both categories will be that the applications should be collaborative across institutions , that they will be able to demonstrate how

this activity is able to build capacity through the group's mix of expertise and experience, and how it can contribute to sustainable change within and/or across institutions.

## **B. Collaborative fellowship scheme**

The group bursary activity has highlighted that within every institution there are colleagues who have the ability and the ambition to become more active and experienced researchers. These may be early, second career or mid career researchers. It is proposed that a placement scheme be funded and that it will be called the *collaborative fellowship scheme*. Fellows will join a research project of a more experienced colleague (the mentor) for five days (in a block or five separate days) to learn about methodology, analysis, or other research issues. The proposed funding, which will be matched by the fellow's institution, will protect ten days of the fellow's time-five days to be spent on the research project and five days to carry out related development work in the fellow's own institution, or to develop fellow's expertise e.g. background reading, developing a research instrument, preparing ethics or access research documents, report writing etc. The mentor or mentor's institution will receive an honorarium in acknowledgement of the time given to mentorship for the fellow.

It is proposed that eleven collaborative fellowships are created and that each institution be asked to identify one candidate for a fellowship. Candidate fellows will be expected to identify a placement, and to have secured the agreement of the placement and potential mentor. Candidates will be not granted a fellowship unless the placement is considered to be fit for the purpose of building the fellow's research expertise and experience. The placement may be inside or outside Wales and may be a split placement if applicants can make a clear rationale for such an arrangement. Each HEI may wish to publicise and recruit applicants from inside staff ranks via internal competition or alternatively identify an individual for whom the fellowship placement is particularly timely for their staff development, CPD and ongoing and incremental trajectory as a research active colleague.

## **C. Collaborative Research with Local Authorities**

WERN is interested, as capacity grows, in working with and meeting the research needs of policy makers and practitioners in the wider education community in Wales. Education Departments in Local Authorities (LAs) are potential users of educational research, and this is a possible market for educational research work that WERN would be well placed to supply. It is proposed that WERN will allocate £40,000 to commission a medium scale collaborative research project to explore how academic research can respond to the research needs of LAs in Wales as they develop, implement and evaluate policy.

This project will be collaborative at two levels. The project will be conducted by a collaborative team from more than one Welsh HEI. It will also facilitate collaboration between academic researchers and local authority users of research. The funding of this project will build capacity; it will also develop the growth of networks with local authority partners; and act as a scoping study for future WERN development

Selection of the research team will be by open competition, and should satisfy the conditions of being collaborative, and having the potential to build capacity.

## **D. Support Mechanisms**

In order to enable less research experienced colleagues compete more equally in competitions for funding, WERN should become more pro-active in mentoring/supporting the development of applications for any of their initiatives.

It is proposed that a number of support mechanisms be made available to those seeking to apply for WERN funding:

- Regional mentor surgeries- it is proposed that WERN will fund a mentor to be available for a day/half day to advise individuals/groups who are considering making an application for funding. The mentor would offer advice, support, and when appropriate direct mentees to existing opportunities for capacity development such as NCRM programmes in Wales and beyond, and other ESRC funded initiatives such as the new bilingualism centre at Bangor University. Opportunities would also be sought to raise awareness of the VRE/ website and how they could be beneficial to individual/group activity.
- The creation of a WERN website. WERN does not, at present, have a website to inform and involve participants and potential participants. A website would be created that can

host news and information about WERN activity and enable easier access to support mechanisms.

- A databank of research interests and expertise in Wales. This would build upon the exchange of information that occurred in October 2007. This would be updated, augmented and placed on the VRE or WERN website.
- Partnership seeking/finding website. This could be located on the VRE or a WERN website and would be a space where colleagues can post “calls” and expressions of research interest, offers of research partnerships, projects etc. or simply place a ‘wanted ad’ in order to find a field worker, partner or even advice on gaining access to a learning site or group.

In addition it is proposed to hold a seminar for senior colleagues in all education and relevant departments of Welsh HEIs to report back on the progress achieved in the first phase of WERN, disseminate information about WERN phase II initiatives, and also generate a commitment to providing ongoing and substantial support for members of their academic staff to engage with educational research and participate in WERN phase II.

### **Anticipated Outcomes of Extended Pilot**

WERN has substantially realised the outcomes described for pilot’s first phase (see Appendix 3) and there are the beginnings of a collaborative infrastructure for educational research in Wales. It would be anticipated that a second period of funding from September 2008 to July 2009 would build on this work and consolidate the changes that are beginning to take place. Additionally a new education research initiative in the shape of an *Institute for Applied Education Research* is to be funded by the Welsh Assembly Government from 2008, and WERN will be mindful of identifying, developing and brokering joint projects with the new centre. WERN’s continued intention is to strive towards working collaboratively in ways which will develop the research capacity of individuals and institutions across Wales. Large scale projects emanating from the new centre can and should involve some research capacity building elements, not least the facilitation of placements for the collaborative research fellows.

Specific outcomes for WERN that are anticipated by the end of academic year 2008-9:

1. Successful funding applications produced by phase I bursary groups will have generated some external research awards which will be supporting collaborative research activity.
2. Bursary groups from phase II will have completed applications to funding organisations and/or other academic outputs.
3. Small project grants and collaborative fellowships will have supported the development of new, mid career and second career researchers and they will be engaged in research activity.
4. The commissioned research project will have made links between WERN and local authority policy makers, and a scoping study will have been conducted which will have identified how WERN can respond to the research needs of local authorities as it continues to develop.
5. HEIs in Wales will have continued to work in beneficial partnership, despite differences in research funding, and in less research intensive institutions there will be evidence of sustained support for increased research activity by staff members.
6. That WERN will be working collaboratively with the *Institute for Applied Education Research* funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, to develop joint work, and in so doing support capacity building across the sector.

### **Evaluation**

WERN will continue to monitor and internally evaluate all its activities. An external ‘critical friend’ will evaluate whether the outcomes that have been anticipated above have been achieved, in particular the evaluator will look to identify evidence of increased research activity such as peer reviewed publications, conference papers and other evidence of research outputs

## Projected budget

	Staff	Travel and Subsistence	Consumables	Exceptional Items	TOTAL
<b>A)Group Bursary Scheme</b> Category 1: Funding up to £12,000 per group	Mentoring £500 per day x 4 meetings = £2000 For 5 funded groups =10000	£160 per group x 8 meetings = £1280 Mentor £40 x4=£160 Total =£1440 For 5 groups=£7200	Paper, photocopying = £ 240 For 5groups= £1200	Cover for staff time £260 per day x4staff x8meetings= £8320 For 5groups = £41600	£60000
<b>A)Group Bursary Scheme</b> Category 2: Funding up to £5,000 per group	To be	specified	on	application	£25000
<b>B)Collaborative Fellowships</b>	Mentor honorarium £1000 X 11Fellowships= £11000	Contribution to travel and subsistence for Fellows £250 per Fellow x 11= £2750		Cover for staff time £1000 per Fellowship x 11 = £11000	£24750
<b>C)Collaborative research with LAs</b>	To be	specified	on	application	£40000
<b>D)Support Mechanisms</b>	Mentoring £500 per day x 3 days = £1500 Consultancy fees for website and VRE development/maintenance £300 per day x 14.5days=£4350	Travel and subsistence for mentors £200 per day x3days =£600			£6450
<b>Evaluation</b>	Critical friend £500 per day for 10days= £5000	£50 per meeting x20 =£1000 Travelling costs from base to Wales =£1000	Paper, writing equipment, recording tapes =£300		£7300
<b>Leadership</b>	Contribution to salary and overhead costs for chair and vice chair Chair £30,000 (towards 0.6 commitment) Vice chair £10,000 (towards 0.2commitment) Administrator(0.5) salary: £10,000	Travel and subsistence costs for Executive members- £500 per meeting x8=£4000  Travel and subsistence costs for Advisory Group=	Paper, photocopying, writing and stationary equipment = £1000	Translation Costs = £500	£56,500

		£1000			
					£220,000

## References

- Gardner, J. (2008) *The Welsh Educational Research Network: An Evaluation*. Belfast, Queens University
- Rees, G & Power, S. (2007) Educational Research and the Re-structuring of the State:the impacts of parliamentary devolution in Wales. *European Educational Research Journal*, 6,1,87-100
- Rees, G., Baron, S., Boyask, R. & Taylor, C.(2007) Research –capacity building , professional learning and the social practices of educational research. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33, 5, 761-779

## Institutions contributing to this proposal

University of Wales, Aberystwyth represented by Dr. Malcolm Thomas

University of Wales, Bangor represented by Dr. Gwyn Lewis

Cardiff University represented by Dr. Jane Salisbury

University of Glamorgan represented by Prof. David Turner

University of Wales, Newport represented by Dr. David Longman

North East Wales Institute represented by Prof. Patrick Costello

Open University in Wales represented by Dr. Rosemary Dale

Swansea Institute represented by Dr. Howard Tanner

Trinity College, Carmarthen represented by Dr. Susan Davies

University of Wales Institute Cardiff represented by Prof. Janet Laugharne

## List of Appendices

**Appendix 1** Characteristics of bursary applicant groups

**Appendix 2** Institutional members and project focus for funded bursary groups

**Appendix 3** Delivery on anticipated outcomes for WERN Pilot

**Appendix 4** Colloquium programme

**Appendix 5** List of documents provided for External Evaluator

**Appendix 6** Proposal for WERN Pilot (2007-8)

**APPENDIX ONE**

LEAD INSTITUTION	No. in Group	OTHER PARTNER INSTITUTIONS	GENDER	BIOGRAPHICAL DATA					
				Age Range			Languages (1 <sup>st</sup> language)		
				25-40	41-50	51-64	English	Welsh	Other
Aberystwyth University (10)* (A5)**	12	Cardiff University (2)*	M=6 F=6	5	2	5	7	4	
Bangor University (4)(A6)	6	University of Wales, Newport (2)	M=3 F=3		2	4	5	1	
Bangor University (3)	4	NEWI (1)	M=2 F=2	1	1	1		3	
Cardiff University (2)	4	Swansea Metropolitan University (1) Bangor University (1)	M=0 F=4						
Cardiff University (1)	1		M=0 F=1			1	1		
Cardiff University (3)	4	University of Wales, Newport (1)	M=1 F=3	2	1	1	4		
University of Glamorgan (3)(A3)	5	Cardiff University (1) University of Wales, Newport (1)	M=1 F=4		1	4	4		
University of Glamorgan (1)	2	Bangor University (1)	M=2			2	1	1	
University of Glamorgan (2) (A4)	5	Swansea University (1) Trinity College, Carmarthen (2)	M=1 F=4	2		1	4	1	
University of Glamorgan (2)	3	UWIC (1)	M=0 F=3	1		2	3		
University of Glamorgan (3)	6	University of Wales, Newport (3)	M=5 F=1	1		5	6		
University of Wales, Newport (2)	4	Cardiff University (1) UWIC (1)	M=3 F=1			4	4		
University of Wales, Newport (2)	4	UWIC (2)	M=1 F=3		2	2	4		
University of Wales, Newport (3)	8	Swansea Metropolitan University (1)	M=0 F=8	3	3	2	6		2
Swansea Metropolitan University (5) (A2)	11	Trinity College, Carmarthen (3) UWIC (3)	M=7 F=4	4	2	5	8	3	
Swansea Metropolitan University (1)	2	University of Wales, Newport (1)	M=2			2	2		
Swansea University (3)	4	Trinity College (1)	M=1 F=3		2	1	3	1	

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\* Number in ( ) shows the numbers represented from each Institution

\*\* See Appendix 3 for funded Bursary Groups – Match code for further information on individual groups.

University (3) A1		Glamorgan (1) Trinity College, Carmarthen (1) University of Wales, Newport (1)	F=5						
Trinity College, Carmarthen (2)(A7)	4	Swansea University (2)	M=0 F=4	1			1	2	
Trinity College, Carmarthen (1)	2	Swansea Metropolitan University (1)	M=0 F=2	2			1	1	
Trinity College, Carmarthen (2) (A8)	5	Bangor University (1) UWIC (1) University of Wales, Newport (1)	M=2 F=3		3	2	1	4	
UWIC (2)	4	University of Wales, Newport (2)	M=2 F=2		1	3	4		
UWIC (2)	3	University of Glamorgan (1)	M=3 F=0		1	2	3		
UWIC (3)	6	Cardiff University (2) Swansea University (1)	M=1 F=5	3	2	1	6		

Please note that not all groups provided full biographical data.



<b>Lead Institution / Project Title</b>	<b>Other Institutions Involved</b>
Lead: Swansea University (A1)* How do 'effective' Foundation Phase teachers interact with children in outdoor environments?	University of Glamorgan; University of Wales, Newport (NSE); Trinity College, Carmarthen
Swansea Metropolitan University (A2) An investigation of the affordances of ICT for the development of effective pedagogy in mathematics and science classrooms	Trinity College; University of Wales Institute Cardiff; Durham University
Lead: University of Glamorgan (A3) Working Lives: Narratives of occupational change in FE and HE in post-devolution Wales	Cardiff University; University of Wales, Newport (NBS)
University of Glamorgan (A4) Perceptions of Play and Playfulness: Implications for the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales	Swansea University; Trinity College, Carmarthen
Lead: Aberystwyth University (A5) Partnerships within Rural Education	Cardiff University
Lead: Bangor University (A6) Polish Migrants' Children and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship	University of Wales, Newport (NSE)
Trinity College (A7) Dwyieithrwydd yn y Cyfnod Sylfaen/Bilingualism in the Foundation Phase	Swansea University
Trinity College (A8) Dysgu Ail Iaith yng Nghyfnodau Allweddol 3 a 4: achos dysgu Cymraeg mewn ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg yng Nghymru/Second Language Learning at Key Stages 3 and 4: the case of learning Welsh in English medium schools in Wales	Bangor University; University of Wales Institute, Cardiff University; University of Wales, Newport (NSE)

Anticipated Outcome	Outcome
<p>1. Collaborative activity between and within institutions will have generated high quality research proposals to funding organisations and/ or other academic outcomes.</p>	<p>One group has been awarded a grant by BECTA, there are five applications in progress (one nearly complete) for the ESRC, there are applications also being prepared for the Joy Welch Educational Foundation, the Leadership Foundation and an institutional internal fund. Abstracts have been submitted to the 2008 annual conferences of the European Conference on Education Research(ECER), the British Education Research Association (BERA), the Scottish Education Research Association (SERA) ,British Psychological Society(BPS)and Inquiring Pedagogies (IPED).</p>
<p>2. Evidence of sharing and cooperating in developing research seminars and training events and attendance across institutions, thus contributing to a more positive research culture across HEIs.</p>	<p>Colloquium and two training events held. Development and planning of these events was carried out collaboratively, and there was good attendance and cross institutional participation in two of these events</p>
<p>3. Evidence of the potential effectiveness of a VRE to enhance collaboration to develop research proposals.</p>	<p>Although only modest use by bursary group members, it did indicate that the VRE could add value to the collaborative working.</p>
<p>4. A test of the proposed management and governance structure</p>	<p>The distributed and collaborative leadership structures have worked well and have been effective in developing and sustaining partnership working.</p>
<p>5. A substantive commitment from constituent institutions to the development of the network.</p>	<p>There has been a high level of institutional participation in the leadership, and this has been enabled and substantively supported by all institutions. There have been high levels of participation in all WERN activities, particularly the bursary process.</p>

<b>9.15 am</b>	<b>Registration &amp; Coffee</b>
<b>10.00 – 10.15</b>	<b>Opening Session:</b> Welcome and Opening Address: Dr Sue Davies, Chair WERN
<b>10.15 - 11.15</b>	<b>TLRP Welsh Extension Presentations</b> Conference Room 1 : Bilingual Literacies for Learning in Further Education (2005 – 2007) Prof. M Martin-Jones Conference Room 2 : Interactive Teaching and ICT (2005 – 2007) Dr S Kennewell and the project team
<b>11.15 – 11.30</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>11.30 – 11.45</b>	Conference Room 1: How do 'effective' Foundation Phase teachers interact with children in outdoor environments? Presenters: Prof. T Maynard, Dr G Roberts-Holmes, Dr J Howard, J Waters, E Merriman and C McLachlan Conference Room 2: Working Lives: Narratives of occupational change in FE and HE in post-devolution Wales Presenters: Dr L Gornall , Dr J Salisbury, L Daunton and C Cook
<b>11.45 - 12.00</b>	Conference Room 1: Dwyieithrwydd yn y Cyfnod Sylfaen/Bilingualism in the Foundation Phase Presenters: S W Siencyn, Dr G Tinney and Alison Murphy Conference Room 2: Mapping Music Education in Wales Presenters: Dr R Wright, V John, J Lawton and S Davies Barnes
<b>12.00 – 12.15</b>	Conference Room 1: Perceptions of Play and Playfulness: Implications for the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales Presenters: Dr J L Howard, G Miles, A Gealy and Prof T Maynard Conference Room 2: An investigation of the affordances of ICT for the development of effective pedagogy in mathematics and science classrooms Presenters: Dr H Tanner, Prof. J Parkinson, Dr G Beauchamp, Dr S Kennewell, Dr D V Jones, S Jones, H Denny, C Anthony, B Vaughan Jones, A Loughran and H Lewis

12.15 – 1.00	Lunch
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**APPENDIX FOUR**

<b>4.00</b>	<b>Finish</b>
<b>1.00 – 2.00</b>	<p><b>TLRP Welsh Extension Presentations</b></p> <p>Conference Room 1 : Facilitating teacher engagement in more inclusive practice (2005 – 2007) Dr S M B Davies and Dr A Howes</p> <p>Conference Room 2 : Learning and working in Further Education in Wales (2005 – 2007) Dr M Jephcote and Dr J Salisbury</p>
<b>2.00 – 2.30</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea/Networking Opportunity/Posters on Display</b>
<b>2.30 – 3.00</b>	Conference Room 1: Prof. S Baron – University of Strathclyde – Reflections from a Scottish Perspective - Coordinator of the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS)
<b>3.00 – 3.15</b>	<p>Conference Room 1: The role of community schooling in disadvantaged areas of Wales Presenter: Prof. D Egan</p> <p>Conference Room 2: Partnerships within Rural Education Presenters: Dr M Thomas, Prof. P Neil, P Brake, G Hagan, D Morgan, R Cann, A Evans, D Croft and S Pester</p>
<b>3.15 – 3.30</b>	<p>Conference Room 1: Dysgu Ail Iaith yng Nghyfnodau Allweddol 3 a 4: achos dysgu Cymraeg mewn ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg yn Nhymru/Second Language Learning at Key Stages 3 and 4: the case of learning Welsh in English medium schools in Wales Presenters: Dr D Vaughan Jones, Prof. J Laugharne, Dr G Lewis, M Thomas and S George</p> <p>Conference Room 2: Polish Migrants' Children and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Presenters: Dr D Sullivan, Dr D Norcliffe, S Bennell, C Hughes and J Clapham</p>
<b>3.30 – 4.00</b>	<p><b>Closing Session</b></p> <p>Conference Room 1: Prof. A Pollard, Teaching &amp; Learning Research Programme</p>

## APPENDIX FIVE

### List of documents and information supplied / made available to external evaluator

\* documents in English and Welsh

Original proposal and costings for a Welsh Educational Research Network pilot;

WERN Terms of reference;

Letter to VCs in Welsh HEIs from Phil Gummett, Chief Executive HEFCW

Executive Group Membership list;

Advisory Board Membership list;

Agenda & Minutes of Executive meetings;

Agenda & minutes of Advisory Board meetings;

Applicant Guidance notes and criteria for the Group Bursary Scheme;\*

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) document about Bursary Applications;\*

Sample Group Bursary Application documents;\*

Group Bursary Assessment mark sheet;

Sample letters to successful and unsuccessful group bursary applications;

Summary table of Funded Bursary Projects and HEIs involved;

Posters advertising training events & colloquium;\*

8 Interim reports from PIs of each Group Bursary;

Colloquium conference programme;\*

Colloquium evaluation questionnaire document;\*

Examples of Group Bursary posters from Colloquium;

Examples of Power-point slide handouts from Group Bursary presentations at Colloquium

## DEVELOPING AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING NETWORK

### A PROPOSAL FOR A PILOT IN WALES

#### **Rationale**

This paper relates directly to proposals which are being developed by the UK educational research community for the ESRC Training and Development Board. In particular, it seeks to provide a pilot for the strategy of inter-institutional collaboration within a UK network of hub-spoke relationships.

These proposals have been designed around a number of constraints, not least the need to provide evaluative feedback to ESRC by June 2008 and the budget which is understood to be available. The work will benefit considerably from the co-funding of HEFCW. The Welsh Assembly Government has indicated its support in principle for this pilot and its objectives. It anticipates offering future support, perhaps by funding a further period of activity. The commitment of Welsh HEIs is reflected in the willing allocation of staff time and in meeting the indirect costs for engaged staff.

The primary intention of the pilot is to trial a funding and support structure for educational researchers in Wales that harnesses collaboration between institutions to build research capacity in an All Wales Educational Research Network.

As a result of devolution, there are differences between the context and needs of different parts of the UK, nevertheless there is sufficient in common for this project to be of relevance and interest across the UK. Generic issues of UK relevance that could be illuminated by the pilot include the relationship between research intensive and less research intensive institutions, the impact of geographical location and distribution, ways of networking and communication and whether collaborative activity can increase sustainability through grant capture joint research activity.

The context in Wales can be characterised by:

- A marked differentiation between the research intensive Cardiff University that is 5\* rated and the remaining other less research intensive institutions that receive no QR funding.
- The other institutions would regard themselves as having strengths in their connectedness with educational practice e.g. pedagogic research. There is a danger that, because this type of research can struggle to attract funding, educational research into pedagogy may wither and education training become divorced from its research base.
- A rapidly dwindling pool of active researchers with few new entrants to become the researchers of the future.
- University education departments that have a relatively small number of research active staff. Therefore these staff may lack opportunities for sharing of expertise, mentoring and co-development.

As a consequence of the above, the educational research infrastructure in Wales is deteriorating. The fragility of the system was identified in a review of educational research capacity in Wales carried out in 2001 (Furlong and White, 2001) and the negative trend has not subsequently improved. In order to reverse this decline a systematic programme of research capacity building is required.

Cardiff School of Social Sciences is one of the leading universities for social science research in the UK and has an established reputation and experience with research capacity building through the RCBN and as a Quality node for the ESRC NCRM. High levels of social scientific research exist in other Welsh HEIs, for example the TLRP extension projects in Wales - but it is on relatively small scale. Additionally however, there is sound empirical work in many less research intensive

institutions focused on enhancing educational outcomes through professional enquiry into practice. Both of these elements are complimentary and essential to the future development of knowledge, understanding, policy and practice.

There is a necessary and valuable synergy between practice and research and this is recognised in both the priorities for the National Assembly as laid out in Learning Country 2 Vision into Action (NAFW, 2006) and the work of the TLRP. This provides a strong thematic focus for network activities with high relevance to policy and practice.

What is now needed in Wales, and what is proposed, is a collaborative relationship between all Welsh HEIs which brings together complimentary forms of expertise and experience to enhance the research effectiveness of all the institutions. Although the funding for the pilot is a short lived investment, it has the potential to lay the foundations for more sustained development in the medium term.

### **An All Wales Educational Research Network**

A supportive association of HEIs is proposed which will not only build capacity but enable foci of particular research interest to develop around areas of relevance to Wales.

#### Core components of a proposed network

- *Preliminary audit of research interest and activity.*  
A survey of the research active, and those seeking to become research active, would provide valuable information on which to plan and develop network activities. However it is recognised that within the short time frame of the pilot that a comprehensive survey would be too time-consuming and so not a priority for expenditure. Therefore it is proposed to have a preliminary data gathering exercise tapping into knowledge that already exists within each institution. By sharing this information collectively this would enable:
  - i) Identification of shared training needs to facilitate training development
  - ii) Identification of opportunities for collaborative research activity, with a focus on participation in the group bursaries scheme.
  - iii) Collation of a directory of research expertise and experience that can be shared throughout the network and stimulate collaboration between HEIs.
  
- *Group research bursaries.* There is a low level of funded education research outside Cardiff. After undertaking teaching and other commitments, many staff in HEIs have little remaining time to dedicate to developing and formulating proposals for funding or gain expertise from doing so. It is therefore proposed that financial support will be offered to groups of individuals who will come together to carry out this activity. The membership of a group will normally be cross institutional to facilitate collaboration, however exceptionally applications for funding from groups from within one institution will be considered. It is likely that the level of expertise of group members will be varied, so providing opportunities for less experienced members to learn from more experienced. However, groups will also be encouraged to seek external mentorship from individuals with high levels of expertise. This mentorship could be sourced from Cardiff, other institutions in Wales, or from other parts of the UK. A further aspect of mentorship that would be encouraged would be peer review of the group's draft proposal; the network would facilitate a peer forum to constructively comment on the draft work of groups. Applications for bursaries will be open to academics in all disciplines but the focus of group activity would be required to be educational. It would be expected that the group will develop and complete an application to a funding body in the designated time. It is proposed to call for applications in October/November 2007, bursaries would be awarded by the end of December 2007 and it would be expected

that funding applications would be completed by the end of May 2008. Applications could be prepared for relevant funders for different aspects of research.

Group bursaries to develop research proposals would collaboratively develop research knowledge and experience, driven by a common purpose and shared research interests. If applications were successful in attracting funding this would contribute to sustaining research and network activity in the longer term.

- *Training events to develop institutional research infrastructure.* It is also proposed to offer a one day training event for staff at all institutions, including bursary holders, which would familiarise them with how to access support and resources and a guide to processes and procedures for grant application. There will also be a one day workshop for finance staff in institutions outlining how to manage financial processes and procedures that are part of drafting research proposals.
- *Collaborative training activities.* To develop research infrastructure in Wales, existing and new expertise must expand. A network can contribute to this - and three strands of activity are proposed. First, cooperation between the HEIs which currently operate their own research seminar programmes and which are made available to colleagues from other institutions. Information sharing between the seminar providers resulting in a shared calendar of events would increase participant numbers and promote collaboration. Second, the network would, via the preliminary audit, seek to identify the training needs of more experienced researchers in Wales and facilitate a link between them and existing training expertise that is available via ESRC and other training event networks such as those accessible through NCRM and the TLRP Alert Service. Additionally, a small number of tailored training events would be hosted through the ESRC regional training centre in Cardiff University. Third, it is proposed to develop regional training workshops for new/early career researchers at a post Masters level. At present their may be insufficient staff/students in some individual institutions to justify this activity; but if pooled together they are expected to form viable groupings; training events conducted across institutions will also provide opportunities for beginning collaborative relationships. At present Cardiff institutions cooperate on providing this type of training, but the network will look to extending this model in the west and north. The new ESRC funded centre for bilingualism in Bangor may also have training events that may feed into this process. This will also provide opportunities to collaborate more effectively on the programme for research student supervisors and formalise joint supervisions.
- *Piloting of a Virtual Research Environment (VRE) with bursary holders.* Establishing and maintaining a VRE for a wide range of possible users is not considered a priority within the limited time and resources of the pilot. However it is recognised that a VRE has considerable potential to aid communication, participation and collaboration, particularly where there are large physical distances between institutions, as is often the case in Wales. Therefore it is proposed to establish a VRE but to do so within the auspices of the existing TLRP VRE so reducing the time, expertise and financial resources generally needed for start-up. With the agreement of the TLRP it could use the Programme's established SAKAI platform at no cost to the network. TLRP would also advise and assist in its further maintenance and development. It is proposed to restrict the development of the site, at this time, to those features that will facilitate the activity of the bursary holders, e.g. to enable collaborative document writing, and similarly to only offer user training to bursary holders. The usage by the bursary holders will be evaluated, and will provide evidence for further development of the VRE if funding for the network continues post pilot.
- *An All Wales Colloquium.* It is proposed that a colloquium during the period of the pilot would serve to:



- i) Celebrate and disseminate existing high quality research activity that is occurring in Wales, such as the TLRP extension projects, and the research underpinning the new ESRC funded centre for bilingualism. Publishing contributions, for example collectively as a special issue in an appropriate journal could be considered.
- ii) Provide opportunities for growing social capital between institutions, which will underpin a successful network.

As well as these specific initiatives, the Network would also seek to support and facilitate other ways in which research infrastructure in Wales could be developed e.g. The Welsh Journal of Education, a BERA Wales Group.

#### Proposed management and governance structure.

It is proposed that it will be a collaborative and distributive body, with an Executive comprising representatives from all Welsh HEIs and the Vice Chancellor of the fund holding institution, which would offer leadership and accountability. It is expected that HEIs, as part of a commitment to the network, will support these staff to attend and fully participate in the leadership and development of the network. To increase ownership by all of the institutions, it is proposed that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive be from different institutions, and if the network is funded post project a distributed form of leadership would be continued. It is proposed that the inaugural meeting of the Executive be held over two days, to give a sustained time period for joint planning and facilitate engagement between colleagues in collaborative relationships.

The institutions of Chair and Vice Chair would receive financial support which would contribute to buying time out from other commitments for these individuals to run the network, and provide them with administrative support.

It is proposed that the Executive would be supported by an Advisory Group representing key stakeholders and including respected academics.

The pilot will evaluate whether this management and leadership structure can be established and be effective and efficient during the start up phase.

#### **Anticipated outcomes of the pilot**

1. Collaborative activity between and within institutions will have generated high research proposals to funding organisations or other academic outcomes.
2. Evidence of sharing and cooperating in developing research seminars and training events and attendance across institutions, thus contributing to a more positive research culture across HEIs.
3. Evidence of the potential effectiveness of a VRE to enhance collaboration to develop research proposals.
4. A test of the proposed management and governance structure.
5. A substantive commitment from constituent institutions to the development of the network.

#### **Evaluation**

Bearing in mind the short duration of the pilot, evidence would be gathered to evaluate the outcomes described above.

More specifically:

- 1) The outcomes of the group bursaries will be evaluated, and if groups have not produced a grant application, the reasons for this will be gathered and analysed.

- 2) Attendance at seminar and training events will be monitored to see changes, if any, in patterns of attendance and participation can be attributed to network activity.
- 3) An exit interview with bursary recipients will gather information on how the process has worked including the use and value of the VRE.
- 4) At the end of the pilot interviews will be conducted with Executive members to explore the efficacy of leadership and management arrangements.
- 6) This interview will also be used to gather data about institutional participation and commitment and concerning the quality and extent of the synergies beginning to develop between institutions with different levels of research funding.

It is proposed that the evaluation, be conducted by a critical friend from outside Wales. The evaluation would result in a report and recommendations to the funding providers, drawing out the lessons learned from the start up of the All Wales research network. This would inform a meeting of the ESRC Development and Training Board in July 2008 as they consider the implications of the pilot for future strategy development.

### **Future Development**

If the network were to be continued into the medium term then, supported by the components that have been introduced during the pilot period, there would be the beginnings of a research infrastructure which would have enhanced levels of research knowledge and activity within and between HEIs. Additionally if funding proposals, developed during the pilot phase are successful, then the research activity that they will generate will contribute to the start of a reversal of the pattern of deterioration described at the start of this paper.

### **Funding**

It is understood that up to £75,000 may be available from ESRC for this pilot. If this is agreed, there is a commitment in principle from HEFCW to match this funding.

This would give a total of £150,000 for the proposed pilot.

The exact shape of the Welsh Assembly Government is not yet fully settled following the recent election. However, senior officials have indicated a willingness in principle to recommend consideration of some continuation or further development co-funding should the pilot prove to be successful.

## Projected budget

	Staff	Travel and Subsistence	Consumables	Exceptional Items	TOTAL
Group Bursaries	Mentoring £300 per day x 4days=£1200	Group member meetings £160 per meeting x 8 meetings = £1280 Mentor £40 x 4 =£160 Total=£1440	Paper, photocopying =£200	Cover for staff time £380 per individual x4 individuals x 8 meetings= £12160	Total cap per bursary £15,000 x 7 = £105,000
Training events for grant application infrastructure	Training providers £300 per day x 2 days = £600		Paper, photocopying = £ 100		£700
Collaborative training activities 1) Existing seminars 2) New training events	Training providers£300per day x7days= £2100		Photocopying of materials, paper=£500	Translation costs- £1000	£3600
Piloting of VRE	Training provider for users at £300 per day for 1day=£300	£40 per individual x28 = £ 1120	Photocopying, paper= £200	Translation costs-£200	£1820
Colloquium		Subsistence £12 per delegate x 100 =£1200	Paper, photocopying, mailing=£500	Venue Translation costs-£1000	£2700
Evaluation	Critical friend £500 per day for 10days= £5000	£50 per meeting x20 =£1000 Travelling costs from base to Wales =£1000	Paper, writing equipment, recording tapes =£300		£7300
Leadership	Institutional contributions for time of chair and vice chair to = Chair £10,000 (towards 0.3 commitment) Vice chair £5,000 (towards 0.1commitment) Administrator £10,000 (towards 0.4 commitment)	£50 per meeting x20=£1000  Residential and subsistence costs for inaugural meeting of Executive = £1070	Paper, photocopying, writing and stationary equipment = £1000	Translation Costs = £500	£28,570
					£149,690

## **References**

Furlong, J. and White, P. (2001). *Research Capacity in Wales*, Cardiff, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences.

National Assembly for Wales (2006). *The Learning Country 2: Vision into Action*, Cardiff, National Assembly for Wales.

### **Institutions contributing to this proposal:**

University of Wales, Aberystwyth represented by Dr. Malcolm Thomas

University of Wales, Bangor represented by Dr. Gwyn Lewis

Cardiff University represented by Prof. Sally Power, Dr. Chris Taylor

University of Glamorgan represented by Prof. David Turner

University of Wales, Newport represented by Dr. David Longman

North East Wales Institute represented by Prof. Patrick Costello

Swansea Institute represented by Dr. Howard Tanner

Trinity College, Carmarthen represented by Dr. Susan Davies

University of Wales Institute Cardiff represented by Dr. Janet Laugharne, Prof. David Egan

Open University in Wales also supports the proposal