



Local Government Association

using research for school improvement: the LEA's role

by Rebekah Wilson, Jane Hemsley-Brown, Claire Easton and
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Executive summary

There is a substantial body of research that has direct relevance to school improvement. But there are concerns that such research is not always available or acted upon in schools. LEAs have the potential to act as mediators between research, policy and practice and to encourage teachers to become involved in research themselves.

Key findings

This study set out to provide LEAs with information on good practice in the use of research to support school improvement. Research involves original, systematic enquiry undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding, to be shared with an audience and should be open to objective assessment by an informed community. The key activities involved in research use are: accessing research, engaging with research findings, carrying out research and sharing research insights and findings.

What is the LEA's role?

The NFER survey demonstrated that many LEAs are involved in encouraging the use of research for school improvement (70 of the 91 LEAs responding to the survey said they were involved in activities to this end). The research identified four main roles adopted by case-study authorities: identifying effective practice through research; identifying research priorities; facilitating research projects and programmes and providing access to staff development opportunities incorporating research.

How do LEA advisers access and use research?

Advisers in the case-study authorities said that they tried to be alert to new research

and to keep themselves well informed. However, some pointed out that it was impossible to keep up-to-date with all new research findings. Advisers found courses and conferences a particularly useful means of finding out about research. The British Educational Research Association, the *Times Educational Supplement* and the NFER itself were considered good sources of research information. Several advisers reported that their LEA had a system for keeping research material centrally. They also pointed out that LEA Education Development Plans (EDP) are driven by findings from research and monitoring data and that EDP priorities were often the catalyst for school-based research.

What are the main barriers to research use?

Evidence from case-study and focus group interviews, together with questionnaire responses, enabled the project to identify the common barriers to teachers' research use. Comments tended to centre on using research produced by professional researchers, although there were some references to barriers preventing teachers from doing research themselves.

The primary barrier was a lack of time. Teachers also found it difficult to access research publications and to find what they were looking for. Much research was considered to be insufficiently relevant or practical and teachers found the academic presentation of research literature off-putting. Some teachers expressed uncertainty about the validity and reliability of research findings. There were also barriers concerned with the current professional and political climate. These were: a lack of encouragement for teachers to use research, a lack of opportunities for professional

discussion, resistance to change and feeling disempowered to initiate or implement evidence-informed practice.

How can LEAs help to address these barriers?

Involvement in action research was identified as an important means of engaging teachers with research. It was suggested that teachers' research involvement needed to be resourced, relevant and practical, collaborative, teacher owned and recognised/accredited.

Case-study LEAs had encouraged schools to use research by establishing a supportive climate, providing access to research information and helping teachers to access funding. The NFER study also identified the importance of leadership and the formation of strategic partnerships between LEAs and others. Successful strategies included building a critical mass of research-engaged practitioners, encouraging sharing and networking and ensuring that research was localised and teacher owned.

What were the main outcomes of using research for school improvement?

Headteachers, teachers and advisers were enthusiastic about the benefits to be gained from engaging in research, especially through schools carrying out their own research projects. Teachers were primarily motivated by improving learning for their pupils and felt this had been achieved as a result of their involvement in research. Some advisers and teachers pointed to evidence of an improvement in pupil performance associated with implementing research-based changes in teaching and learning.

Teachers felt that involvement in research had contributed to their professional and personal development. They had been able to reflect on existing practice and try out new approaches and to turn spontaneous

judgements into more systematic investigations. They had improved their understanding of effective teaching and learning and felt more confident and motivated as a result. Some interviewees said that their projects had contributed to the development of a learning culture and had improved relationships between schools and LEAs.

How did LEAs help schools to share the results of their research?

LEAs and schools used a variety of methods to encourage the sharing of research. This was facilitated by opportunities for professional debate, observation of teaching and the dissemination of written summaries (e.g. via websites). Several of our interviewees mentioned the importance of teachers hearing about research from other teachers. It was also important for teachers to hear from national speakers and to find out about research and theory that originated outside the LEA.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study has demonstrated the potential for research to contribute to school improvement. The experiences of our interviewees revealed that encouraging research use was worth the time and energy involved.

LEA advisers worked as brokers between schools with similar research interests and helped to identify and promote evidence-informed practice. LEAs supported research use by giving practical advice and through taking a strategic approach to professional development. Along with other educational professionals, LEAs were taking a lead in the use of research for school improvement.

The LEAs included in this study used a variety of methods to facilitate the use of research for school improvement. It is therefore inappropriate to identify one 'best practice'

model. However, we suggest that those wishing to take on this role should consider the principles of effective working apparent in case-study authorities. The key principles are to:

- ◆ ensure that someone takes on a leadership role in encouraging the use of research in school improvement
- ◆ ensure that research use is resourced, relevant and practical, collaborative, teacher owned and recognised
- ◆ work with local or national partners (e.g. universities, national projects, other LEAs)
- ◆ provide opportunities for teachers to access practitioner research as well as national research and keynote speakers (e.g. through conferences and workshops)
- ◆ build a critical mass of teachers who have experience of using research
- ◆ build networks at different levels (e.g. within schools, between schools, between schools and the LEA and between schools, the LEA and others)
- ◆ ensure that individuals carrying out research are linked with a community of teacher researchers within and/or outside their own schools
- ◆ develop systems to help advisers and teachers to access relevant research
- ◆ embed research engagement within school improvement initiatives
- ◆ establish an evidence-informed culture that encourages teachers to question existing practice

- ◆ help schools set up manageable action research projects and ensure that they have access to a 'critical friend'

- ◆ ensure that teachers have opportunities to share their research experiences and outcomes.

About the study

The research used a combination of methods, including literature review, questionnaire surveys, case-study visits and focus group discussions. The project team began by carrying out a systematic review of relevant literature. The team devised a short questionnaire, which was sent to the Head of School Improvement (or equivalent) in all 175 English and Welsh LEAs (52 per cent response). Eight case-study authorities were identified, all of which had strategies in place to encourage the use of research. The case-study authorities were Birmingham, Bristol, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lancashire, Merthyr Tydfil, Oldham, Rochdale and West Sussex.

Case-study visits took place between April and September 2002. The research team visited each area and held interviews with 47 people (LEA advisers, university staff, headteachers and teachers). Focus group discussions, involving 27 headteachers in a further three authorities, focused on barriers and facilitators to research use. The research also included a questionnaire survey to 160 primary and secondary headteachers in eight LEAs (41 per cent response).

1. Introduction

A substantial body of research is being produced that has direct relevance to school improvement. But as school improvement programmes push forward, there are some concerns that such research is not always available or acted upon in schools (Hargreaves, 1996).

In their report *Excellence in Research on Schools*, Hillage *et al.* (1998) draw attention to a lack of mediation as a 'fundamental weakness' in the move towards evidence-informed practice. They highlight the importance of people and processes in helping to distil and/or interpret research findings for a practitioner audience. Clearly, LEAs have the potential to act as mediators between research, policy and practice.

As well as having the potential to make the findings of professional researchers available to teachers, LEAs are increasingly active in carrying out their own data collection, interpreting data and initiating research. In response to this, a survey conducted a few years ago found that most LEAs had established specific research units (Lee and Scanlon, 1999).

LEAs can help to build networks between educational professionals and they can act as change agents in the dissemination and adoption of new ideas. Effective research use at the local level has the potential to provide information to support more effective school leadership and could maximise the appropriate targeting of new initiatives. However, it has not previously been established how far LEAs are emphasising the role of research in contributing to school improvement and which strategies are being adopted to this end.

1.1 About this research

This research formed part of the Local Government Association's Educational Research Programme. This report focuses mainly on eight LEA case studies, which aimed to identify examples of good practice. Our primary audience is representatives from LEAs, but we hope that other educational practitioners and researchers will find the study both interesting and useful.

The main purpose of this research project was to provide LEAs with information on good practice in the use of research to support school improvement.

The research objectives, which provide the focus for this report, are:

- to establish what role the LEA plays in facilitating the use of research for school improvement, in the context of specific projects or programmes initiated and/or supported by LEAs
- to provide examples of good practice in the use of research for school improvement
- to identify the strategies adopted by authorities in collaboration with schools, universities and other organisations that lead to the effective use of research findings for school improvement
- to identify the barriers to the use of research findings
- to examine the ways in which LEAs have addressed the barriers to research use.

1.2 Defining the terms

The purpose of this section is to offer brief definitions of the main terms used in this report.

1.2.1 School improvement

School improvement is a vehicle for planned educational change. The origins of this term can be found in an internationally funded study, in which the authors defined school improvement as:

A systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.

(Van Velzen et al., 1985, p.48)

Since then, other researchers and theorists have sought to exemplify and expand this definition, with a particular interest in the management of change (see Hopkins et al., 1996; James and Connolly, 2000). Some have focused on the role of external change agents, including LEAs, in helping schools to move forward (see Stoll and Fink, 1996).

1.2.2 Research use

The NFER study focused specifically on the LEAs' role in the *use of research* for school improvement, as opposed to their role in the use of performance data¹ or in school improvement more generally. But what does *research* and *research use* mean?

According to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) research can be classified as 'an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding' (HEFCE, 1999, p.261). The idea that research can make a major contribution to improving practice is based on the assumption that research is 'systematic and rigorous and provides explicit evidence, which can be assessed objectively' (Hammersley, 2001, p.2). A widely adopted definition by Stenhouse (1987) contains

another proviso, concerning the sharing of research: 'systematic enquiry made public' (Stenhouse, 1987, p.74).

Taking these definitions together, we find an emphasis on original, systematic enquiry undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding, to be shared with an audience and open to critique (objective assessment) from an informed community. One of the main applications of educational research is 'to further educational improvement' through 'the advancement of trustworthy knowledge about education' (Brown et al., 1999).

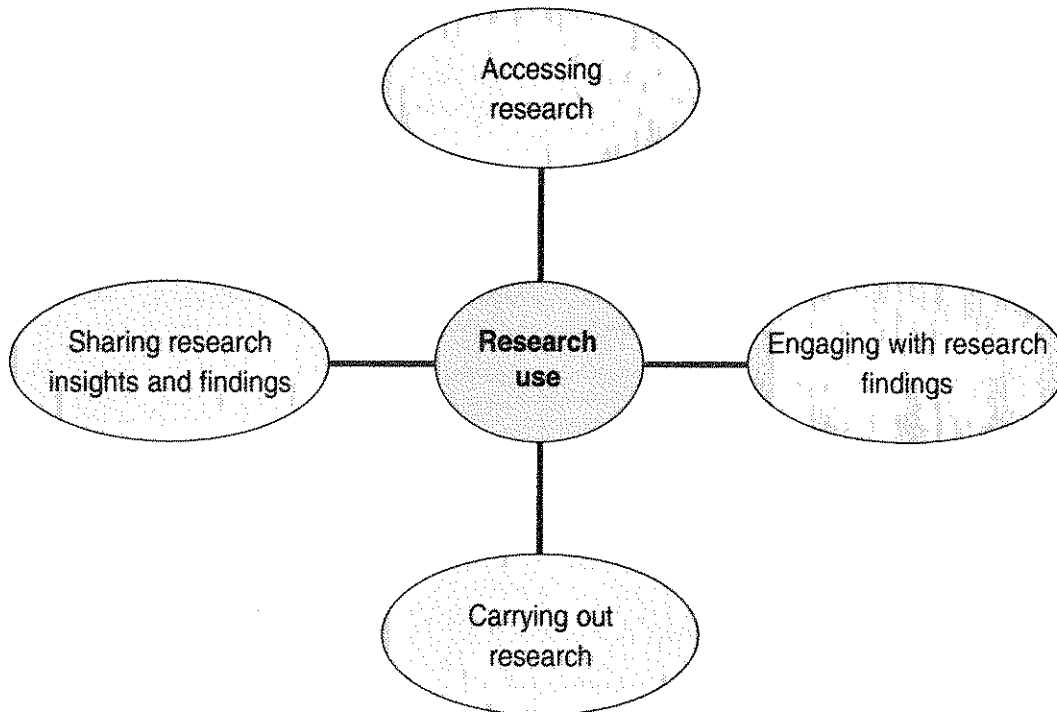
The term *use* is generally taken to mean putting into practice an intervention, a theory or an idea. Therefore, the *use of research* requires systematic enquiry that is shared and put into practice.

Figure 1 illustrates one way of thinking about research use and shows the key activities associated with research use. In the context of this study, we defined these terms as follows:

- accessing research is taken to mean an awareness or knowledge about research that has been carried out by others, especially published research findings and theories that emerge from research
- engaging with research findings refers to cognitive engagement with research: connecting with research on an intellectual level, enquiring about its methods and findings and asking questions about how it relates to one's own context
- carrying out research refers to the undertaking of an original investigation in order to gain knowledge and understanding. This does not mean being a participant of a research project, but refers to the practical application of research, i.e. carrying out research oneself

¹ LEAs' use of performance data is the subject of another NFER research project (see Rudd and Davies, 2002).

Figure 1: What does research use involve?



- sharing of research is taken to mean sharing and disseminating one's own research findings and insights gained through research involvement. This may also extend to the sharing of other people's research, where someone has studied research findings and synthesised their messages in order to communicate them to others.

1.3 Research methods

Five methods of data collection were used in this research:

- a systematic review of relevant literature
- a postal survey to all English and Welsh LEAs
- case-studies of eight LEAs with strategies to encourage the use of research
- focus group discussions with headteachers from three LEAs
- a postal survey of headteachers in eight LEAs.

1.3.1 Literature review

A systematic review of relevant literature was carried out. The purpose was to extract the key messages from previous research on dissemination and knowledge utilisation in the field of educational research. This review, which will be published elsewhere, informed the research questions for the study (Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2004, forthcoming).

1.3.2 Survey of LEAs

In November 2001 a short questionnaire was sent to the Head of School Improvement (or equivalent) in all English and Welsh LEAs. The purpose of the survey was to find out whether and how LEAs used research findings to support school improvement. Ninety-one of the 175 LEAs surveyed responded to the questionnaire – a response rate of 52 per cent. The responses were used to select eight case-study LEAs, three focus group LEAs and eight survey LEAs. (A summary of the findings from the survey is available from the NFER website: Wilson et al., 2002.)

1.3.3 Case-study LEAs

The NFER study selected eight LEAs that had strategies in place to encourage the use of research for school improvement. The purpose of the case-studies was to find out more about the issues involved. From the questionnaire returns, the research team focused on those LEAs which:

- showed a commitment to the use of research to support school improvement
- were able to provide the research team with examples of good practice
- were willing to become a case-study.

The eight case-study LEAs were selected to reflect a range of different approaches. They varied considerably in size and geographical area and represented a range of authority types. The eight selected LEAs were Birmingham, Bristol, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lancashire, Merthyr Tydfil, Oldham, Rochdale and West Sussex. (A brief description of each LEA is provided in the Appendix.)

The research team visited each of the selected LEAs to collect relevant documentation and to conduct a programme of in-depth interviews with LEA advisers,² university staff, headteachers and teachers. A total of 47 in-depth interviews were conducted between April and September 2002. Thirteen of these interviewees were with LEA advisers and 11 were with university staff (lecturers/researchers). A further 12 interviewees were headteachers (one secondary, one middle school, eight primary, one infant and one hospital school) and 11 were teachers (two secondary, five primary, two infant and two from the special sector). The majority of these interviews were carried out face-to-face but a small number were conducted over the telephone.

1.3.4 Focus group discussions

In order to broaden the sample beyond the case-study authorities, the NFER selected three additional LEAs for focus group discussions. One of these LEAs was a unitary authority located in the south of England, one was a shire county in central England and one was a unitary authority in the north of England. Of these three authorities, one had no specific projects for research use, one had reached the planning stage of a specific project and one had launched a project within the last six months. Focus group discussions were held with a total of 27 primary and secondary headteachers. The purpose of the focus groups was to facilitate discussion on the following issues.

- What factors prevent teachers from using research findings?
- What might help teachers to use research findings?
- How can LEAs make better use of research findings?
- How can LEAs help teachers to use research for school improvement?

1.3.5 Barriers survey

The NFER team selected eight LEAs whose answers to the LEA survey revealed that they **did not** have specific strategies in place to encourage the use of research for school improvement. A survey was distributed to a random sample of 160 primary and secondary schools located within the eight LEAs. The purpose of the survey was to provide information on the barriers to using research. The barriers questionnaire was adapted from a well-established instrument that has been used in the field of nursing (Funk *et al.*, 1991). A total of 65 questionnaires were completed and returned – a 41 per cent response rate.

² Throughout this report, the term 'LEA adviser' is used to refer to participants of the research with senior roles within the case-study LEAs. These participants had a variety of job titles, such as School Improvement Manager, Head of School Improvement or Research and Statistics Manager.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report comprises seven chapters. Chapter Two discusses the role of the LEA in facilitating research use. It also examines the main aims of the case-study projects and programmes and highlights who or what initiated and drove them. Chapter Three details the main barriers to using research and examines how research use can be facilitated. Chapter Four looks at operational arrangements that LEAs can put in place to

help practitioners to use research and Chapter Five considers some of the more strategic approaches to facilitating research use. Chapter Six concentrates on the outcomes of projects and programmes, their dissemination strategies and whether or not projects and programmes have the potential to be transferred to other LEAs and schools. Chapter Seven draws together the key themes to emerge from this research and offers suggestions for effective practice.

2. Role, rationale and initiators of research use

The NFER survey revealed that the majority of responding LEAs were involved in activities to encourage the use of research for school improvement.³ A wide variety of strategies were identified, including involvement in research (especially action research) and partnership working. This chapter aims to explore the role of the LEA in encouraging the use of research for school improvement and consider how LEAs themselves use research. The chapter also discusses the LEAs' rationale for research involvement and identifies the 'drivers' of the strategies used by LEAs.

2.1 The role of the LEA in the use of research

The NFER survey has shown that many LEAs are involved in encouraging the use of research for school improvement. This raises questions about the role of the LEA and what distinguishes it from that of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), research organisations and government agencies.

There are a variety of ways in which an LEA could intervene to encourage research use. The research team asked all case-study interviewees to describe the role of their LEA in this regard. The most frequently cited responses were: identifying effective practice; identifying research priorities; facilitating research projects and programmes and providing access to staff development. Each of these roles is outlined below.

2.1.1 Identifying effective practice through research

LEAs were seen to have an important role in investigating effective practice through research. This demonstrated their commitment to best practice. It was also seen as a means of counterbalancing the perception that the only role of LEAs and schools is to deliver government policy. For example, we interviewed an adviser from Bristol who said⁴:

The Ofsted model assumes it is the right model. Headteachers want to have a broader perspective. We have tried to broaden the base and get people to think more widely than that.

Similarly, an adviser from Birmingham argued that LEAs could help schools to challenge the status quo:

There is an assumption that the Government has done the research and it works so schools have to deliver this approach. Schools are not encouraged to challenge the strategy – it is quite the opposite. Schools are told they have to follow the national strategy and, to ensure they do, Ofsted check up on them.

While national strategies may restrict the extent to which teachers are encouraged to develop their own practice, this does not prevent LEAs from encouraging investigation and promoting local interpretation. As an adviser from Lancashire explained, his LEA did not wish simply to implement 'willy-nilly' what they were told.

³ Seventy of the 91 LEAs who responded said they were involved in activities to encourage the use of research findings.

⁴ All quotes are taken from case-study interviews, unless otherwise stated.

Instead, the LEA had set up a small research team to find out what worked, what did not work and to test the effectiveness of national initiatives in their own local context. The adviser stressed that his LEA's work was underpinned by the need to have a strong evidence base for what works in schools.

2.1.2 Identifying research priorities

The NFER study found that LEAs had an important role to play in helping schools to identify their priorities for investigation. For example, in Lancashire, headteachers participating in the Improvement in Action project were encouraged to carry out an audit of learning. This involved the school in identifying 'learning needs', i.e. concepts, knowledge and skills that were problematic for pupils. Learning needs were considered either at an individual level or for particular groups of pupils (for example, by gender, social group or ethnicity).

On the basis of the audit, headteachers were asked to identify issues that are potentially researchable, taking into account the resources of the school. LEA Advisers helped headteachers to focus on issues that relate to children's learning. They worked together to devise an action research project that is manageable and likely to result in findings of direct use to the school. Advisers act as critical friends by giving advice on the appropriateness of different research methods. As an adviser explained:

We have an input, not that we would rubber stamp what schools are doing, but guide them into something that they can manage and measure in some way. We help them to look at the evidence and the data.

In other cases, LEAs acted as a bridge between local and national issues, linking school and LEA priorities to the national agenda when selecting a focus for research activity.

2.1.3 Facilitating research projects and programmes

The LEAs we visited had all played a key role in identifying, promoting and supporting school-based research projects. In this way, they had facilitated school involvement in school improvement initiatives that were informed by evidence from research. This process could involve initiating home-grown projects, working in partnership with a university and/or involvement in a national programme.

2.1.4 Providing access to professional development

Local education authorities can have an important role in providing teachers with access to professional development opportunities that incorporate research. For example, West Sussex has developed an extensive training programme focusing entirely on school improvement issues. This accredited programme aimed to identify best practice and made constant reference to research. Oldham LEA also had a well-coordinated approach to offering development opportunities, which helped teachers to engage in research. One deputy headteacher explained that this had created a way in for teachers to access research and had resulted in an increased awareness of research among teachers.

2.2 The use of research findings by LEAs

Advisers in each case-study authority were asked to comment on their own use of research findings. They said that they tried to be alert to new research and to keep themselves informed about current educational debates. However, some pointed out that it was impossible to keep up-to-date with all new research as they were constantly inundated with material. Some advisers

found that they were able to read research journals 'between meetings' but felt this only helped them to keep 'alongside the game, not ahead of it'.

On the other hand, advisers told us that they found courses and conferences a particularly useful means of finding out about research. They also reported that the British Educational Research Association, the *Times Educational Supplement* and the NFER itself were good sources of research information.

Several advisers told us that their LEA had a system for keeping research material centrally within the LEA and that they contributed material to this as a result of attending conferences and courses. They also pointed out that LEA Education Development Plans⁵ are driven by findings from research and monitoring and that priorities identified in the EDP were often the catalyst for school-based research.

2.3 The aims of projects and programmes

As mentioned earlier, the case-study projects and programmes featured in this NFER study were deliberately chosen to represent a diversity of approaches. Each project and programme included research in a different way – the spectrum of activity included both disseminating research findings and promoting action research. However, projects and programmes did share a common purpose: that of school improvement. As one adviser pointed out: 'Everything that we do has to be linked to school improvement. If it is not improving schools then why are we doing it?'

The 'use of research' was not the main aim of the projects and programmes we studied, rather research was viewed as a means to bring about school improvement. The NFER study identified two broad aims of these

projects within the school improvement agenda: raising pupil achievement and developing a learning culture. The common means of achieving these aims was to encourage teachers to become involved in action research.

The three broad elements of raising achievement, developing learning and action research are discussed in more detail below.

2.3.1 Raising pupil achievement

Raising pupil achievement is central to the school improvement agenda and many teachers said they were motivated to use research findings for this purpose. Raising achievement was a strong element in the LEA approaches we studied. Schools were encouraged to take a systematic approach to examining pupil performance through looking in detail at performance data and examples of pupils' work. Some went on to collect further information about pupil performance through discussion and classroom observation. A common strategy was for teachers to implement an alternative approach to teaching and learning and to evaluate its outcomes for pupils' learning.

2.3.2 Developing a learning culture

Most of the projects we studied had an explicit aim to develop the culture of teaching and learning within schools. For example, one adviser said that his LEA's project concentrated on learning – not just of pupils, but of teachers and schools as a whole. Another adviser said that her LEA was interested in examining what makes teachers teach effectively and what makes pupils learn effectively. Being involved in a research project provided an opportunity to adopt a more systematic approach to teaching and learning. As a teacher from Merthyr Tydfil explained:

⁵ 'Education Strategic Plans' in Wales.

We became involved in the project because of an urge to research different teaching and learning strategies. It is not as if we haven't looked at teaching and learning strategies before, but there was an organised approach.

In order to develop the culture of teaching and learning, it was important for projects and programmes to focus on classroom processes. Using published research, educational theory and their own research findings empowered teachers to diagnose and address teaching and learning challenges for themselves.

2.3.3 Action research

Action research featured in all eight case-studies. For example, Lancashire LEA's Improvement in Action project aims to assist primary schools in the development of action research projects. Headteachers and teachers explore the ways in which action research can enhance their understanding of how children learn.

According to Elliott (1991:69), action research can be defined as: 'The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it.' The approach has two key principles (Elliott 1991; Rickinson et al. 2003, forthcoming).

- **Action:** to improve practice, not simply to generate knowledge.
- **Research:** to reflect on practice deliberately and systematically, rather than doing so in an implicit and routine way.

Action research was seen as a way of engaging teachers with school improvement issues. Teachers commonly identified a teaching and learning issue, planned and carried out an intervention designed to result in an improvement and reviewed the outcome. Projects frequently relied on reflective practice, through the use of

observation, experimentation and the application of theory. A lecturer from the University of Nottingham explained that the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA)⁶ project uses school-based enquiry to focus on pupils' learning and the school conditions that support it.

The basic principles of IQEA include a commitment to school-based enquiry. When teachers do their own enquiries they start to recognise the nature of research and the knowledge that research produces.

2.4 Initiators and drivers

The NFER study found that the impetus for research use had come from a variety of sources, including schools, LEAs, universities or a combination these groups. The following sub-sections show one example of each type of initiator: a consortium of schools, an LEA and a university.

2.4.1 Schools initiating research

Representatives from a secondary school and its feeder primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil attended a presentation by David Hopkins, in which he outlined the work of the IQEA project. The teachers were enthused by the project because they saw it as school-based, rather than a top-down initiative. As one of the teachers explained: 'The project is empowering teachers to carry out action research in their classrooms themselves.'

The IQEA approach was originated by a team of researchers from the University of Cambridge. Its most recent format was developed by the Centre for Research into Teacher and School Development (CRTSD) based at the University of Nottingham. The teachers had a discussion with university researchers about the possibility of creating a school improvement project. Despite the schools being some distance from Nottingham, the enterprise was supported by

⁶ IQEA is a national school improvement programme (see Hopkins, 2001).

the CRTSD. Merthyr Tydfil LEA agreed to fund the project because it fitted in with one of the priorities in their Education Strategic Plan.

2.4.2 LEAs initiating research

The initial decision to set up Oldham's School Improvement Projects (SIPs) came from LEA senior managers. The impetus for the SIPs' approach emerged from those managers having a good knowledge of and an excitement about school effectiveness and improvement work. A great deal of interest came from hearing national speakers who 'fired them up' and got them thinking 'let's try and Oldham-ise that'.

2.4.3 Universities initiating research

The Professional Training Programme in

Educational Psychology MEd was originated by the University of Bristol. The directors of the MEd programme had identified a gap in the provision for Educational Psychologists – they believed traditional programmes did not have a sufficient focus on practice. The directors were keen to create a programme that utilised research and linked research to practice. As explained by one of the directors: 'We believe that high quality research supports high quality teaching.'

The university chose to work in partnership with the local LEA, and the programme was co-run by a full time university professor and the Psychology Service Manager at Bristol LEA. The LEA presence was seen as a key component because it helped to link research to current practice.

3. Barriers and facilitators to teachers using research

The key activities of research use were outlined in Chapter 1: accessing research, engaging with research findings, carrying out and sharing research. For teachers, involvement in these activities can be a highly satisfying and energising professional pursuit. However, there are barriers that prevent teachers from obtaining these rewards. This chapter examines the main barriers to research use and, importantly, looks at how the barriers can be reduced or overcome.

3.1 What are the main barriers to research use?

Previous research examined in the literature review identified some of the barriers to research use by practitioners (see Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2004, forthcoming). Taking this as our starting point, each case-study and focus group interviewee was asked about the barriers to research use.

In addition to the case-study and focus group interviews, the project included a survey of 160 schools located within eight LEAs without specific strategies to encourage the use of research for school improvement. The questionnaire consisted of 35 statements that set out possible barriers to research use. The statements fell into four categories, relating to school setting, the research itself, individual/personal barriers and research presentation. Respondents were asked to rate, on a four-point scale, the extent to which they agreed with each statement. Sixty-five headteachers completed and returned the survey.

The NFER study was interested in finding out whether or not the barriers to using research were different in LEAs with and without specific strategies in place to encourage the

use of research for school improvement. An analysis of the responses to the questionnaires and interviews revealed that there were no major differences between the two categories of LEAs. No barriers were unique or particularly indicated in either case.

The results from survey returns, focus group discussions and individual interviews revealed that the main barriers to research use related to time, problems with accessing research, a perceived lack of relevance and practicality in published research, difficulties in interpreting and using research findings and professional/political issues. Most of the comments focused on accessing and engaging with research produced by academics.

3.1.1 Lack of time to read research and implement new ideas

Lack of time was frequently cited as a major barrier to research use. While teachers said they would like to use research, they felt they were prevented from doing so by the volume of day-to-day work. Teachers commented that there was not enough 'free' time in which to stand back and reflect on their own practice. If teachers used research to investigate an area of interest, they usually did so in their own time.

3.1.2 Problems with accessing research

Lack of access can refer both to physical and intellectual access. In relation to the former, it was noted that teachers do not have access to a large range of literature. Research can be published in numerous forms and teachers are not always able to find what they are looking for. In terms of intellectual access, it was noted that teachers do not always have the confidence and skills to

access research findings. Several teachers said they or their colleagues felt daunted by using research because they had not studied formally for a number of years.

In addition to the time constraints and access problems noted above, our interviewees felt that it was difficult for teachers to access research because of the overwhelming volume of research material available. As one headteacher explained, there is a wealth of information that comes into school but not all staff have the time or skills to narrow their search to find a particular item of interest to them. The volume of research material can seem daunting and constitutes a barrier to teachers wanting to use research findings.

3.1.3 Use of academic language and statistical analyses

Research findings can be particularly complex constructions of knowledge. There is a tendency for academic reports to adopt a particular language and style that is off-putting to a practitioner audience. Long sentences, academic terms and complex statistical analyses were perceived as barriers. Focus group interviewees said that the esoteric style of research writing renders it inaccessible to those outside the research community.

3.1.4 Lack of relevance to practice

Teachers said that much research is simply not relevant to classroom practice. They felt that researchers focused on issues that were not immediately relevant to the classroom, or did not have a sufficient 'real world' perspective. Teachers found it difficult to engage with research that failed to identify relevant and realistic implications for practice. They said they did not feel experienced enough to interpret the findings from research or to apply findings to their own settings.

3.1.5 Uncertainty about the results of research

Interviewees said they needed to be convinced that the conclusions drawn from research were well founded. Research findings can be counter-intuitive, inconclusive or contradictory. Headteachers and teachers said they found it difficult to judge whether research is authoritative and of sound quality. An uncertainty about the validity and reliability of research findings undermines teachers' confidence in engaging with research.

Some teachers viewed their own circumstances as unique and therefore questioned whether research conducted elsewhere (even elsewhere in the same country) had value and application in their own circumstances. Others were suspicious of research that attempted to make general statements on the basis of particular samples. For example, one interviewee expressed the view that research should not be generalised to schools with different sets of circumstances.

3.1.6 Professional and political issues

Interviewees commented that there is constant change within the teaching profession and it is therefore understandable that some teachers resist participating in further new developments. Teachers can view the introduction of new projects and ideas as burdensome. For example one adviser used the expression 'teachers as survivors'. He put forward the view that, once teachers have learned to 'survive', it is difficult to persuade them to consider new techniques.

Some of our interviewees felt that there is little encouragement for practitioners to engage with research because it is not viewed as an important part of professional practice. There was felt to be little official

encouragement or acknowledgement of research in teaching. To illustrate this, one adviser commented that, in his view, National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) framework did not sufficiently promote reflection, analysis or research use.

Interviews revealed that there was a lack of opportunity for teachers to discuss research. Individual teachers undertaking research as part of a further qualification could feel isolated without an opportunity to share their findings with colleagues. Interviewees pointed out that staff meetings tended to concern administrative issues and/or government initiatives, leaving little time for debates about professional practice.

Headteachers in the focus groups identified political reasons that prevented them from using research to support their decision-making. As noted earlier, it was argued that teachers work in a culture where initiatives are forced upon schools by central government, regardless of the initiative being supported by research evidence. It was felt that this left little room for schools to initiate and implement ideas based either on their own research or on the research of others.

3.2 What are the main facilitators of research use?

Case-study and focus group interviewees were asked to comment on ways in which the barriers to research use might be reduced or overcome. What might help teachers to use research findings? It was suggested that research itself needed to have certain characteristics. It should be resourced, relevant and practical, collaborative, teacher owned and recognised.

3.2.1 Resourced

Interviewees suggested that LEAs could provide time, funding and expertise to facilitate the use of research. As noted in 3.1, lack of time was cited as the major barrier to research use. One headteacher stated that the creation of time for research was the 'most valuable commodity' in relation to research use. Both time and priority come into play. As this headteacher explained, the time taken to read research must be weighed against the impact the knowledge would have on pupils. A key step forward would be to prioritise time for research as an important aspect of professional practice. As one adviser said, teachers should have the right to time for study and research. He went on to argue that the teachers should be entitled to sabbatical time in order to 'refresh their professional batteries'.

3.2.2 Relevant and practical

Interviewees were primarily interested in 'what works' in the classroom. It was felt that research findings should relate to real classroom situations and should contain clear suggestions for practice. Some interviewees suggested that the type and locality of the school involved in research should be clearly stated in any report, so they could judge its potential relevance to their own schools. In relation to practicality, one adviser suggested that research findings needed to be translated into 'what this means for teachers' – in his view, simply circulating research reports would not encourage research use. On the other hand, summaries of pertinent research, containing clear implications of practice, were thought to be helpful.

3.2.3 Collaborative

Interviewees viewed themselves as partners in the process of research and argued for a balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches. They frequently used the term

'sharing good practice' and suggested that the input and the outcomes of research should be shared with colleagues, the LEA and universities.

3.2.4 Teacher owned

Teachers need to feel ownership in the process of research. For this reason, interviewees considered action research to be particularly appropriate for schools. One headteacher commented that research was much more useful when it was tailored to her own situation. Although teacher-led research might be time consuming, the fact that teachers themselves generate it meant

that it had the potential to make a direct impact on teaching and learning in their own classrooms.

3.2.5 Recognised

It was suggested that research use would increase if it were formally recognised. Interviewees argued that formal credit and recognition should be given to those who used research as part of school improvement. It was felt that in order for a research culture to be established in schools research should be valued by those who monitor and inspect schools (e.g. advisers and school inspectors).

4. Strategies for encouraging research use

The NFER study aimed to identify the strategies adopted by LEAs that lead to the effective use of research findings for school improvement. To capitalise on this, the NFER study purposefully selected LEAs with different approaches or strategies in place. Each case-study LEA showed a commitment to the use of research and was able to give examples of effective practice. The chosen LEAs were involved in several projects and programmes, so the NFER team decided to focus on a small number of key ventures in each authority. The strategies used have been separated into two categories: operational and strategic. This Chapter will discuss the former under the following headings: a supportive climate, access and links to information and accessing funding streams. Leadership and strategic partnerships and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.1 A supportive climate

Case-study LEAs played an important role in providing a supportive climate to encourage the use of research in schools. Projects and programmes worked best in an environment where teachers felt able to try things out and risk questioning existing practice. Advisers in case-study LEAs provided support by working with schools to devise action plans and targets, helping schools to identify issues to research, drawing attention to relevant research, interpreting data and providing opportunities for action research. Many interviewees commented on the support they had received from link advisers, for example a teacher involved in Oldham's SIPs programme said: 'Having an adviser linked to your school who can actually help you take the research forward is hugely useful.'

Similarly, teachers from Hammersmith and Fulham spoke about the support they

received from the Let's Think project. As part of their continuing professional development, these teachers were given the opportunity to discuss and share their research experiences with other teachers. Through this supportive climate teachers have been able to share their experiences with others and attendance at the feedback sessions has been high.

4.2 Access and links to information

Case-study LEAs were facilitating the use of research by providing access and links to information. In doing so, they were raising awareness of research, encouraging engagement and acting in a mediating role.

LEA strategies for providing practitioners with access to research findings included organising conferences, inviting national speakers, providing INSET, disseminating research documents and providing opportunities for schools to share their own research. For example, each school participating in Oldham's SIPs is invited to attend an annual residential conference. Selected schools give presentations on their own research involvement, which allows good practice to be disseminated across schools. The LEA has arranged keynote addresses from researchers with an international reputation (Michael Fullan, David Hargreaves and David Hopkins were among the names mentioned). It was evident from our interviews that access to authoritative and charismatic speakers greatly enthused and encouraged teachers. The national speakers were felt to have stimulated and complemented the practitioner research by introducing theories and expertise from outside the authority.

4.3 Accessing funding streams

Case-study projects and programmes were driven by a genuine enthusiasm for raising pupil achievement and a philosophical approach to developing the culture of the school. However, projects and programmes were influenced by the availability of funding. Case-study LEAs, in collaboration with schools and universities, had identified the funding streams that were available and had helped schools put together proposals that met their criteria. These funding streams were identified at the following levels: individual, school, LEA, university partnerships and multiple sources. Examples of these funding types are provided below.

4.3.1 Funding for individuals

The capacity of an LEA to fund research degrees and teacher-led research is much reduced from what it used to be. However, funding for personal research was still available from other sources. A number of teachers in case-study authorities had gained Best Practice Research Scholarships (BPRS)⁷ in order to undertake research projects. One teacher from Birmingham had used the BPRS scholarship to pursue a university research methods course through distance learning. This involved a classroom-based research project on teaching and learning in mathematics. Further examples of funding for individual teachers were found in Merthyr Tydfil where a number of teachers had received funding from the General Teaching Council for Wales in order to undertake their own research projects.

4.3.2 Funding for schools

Several LEAs used the Standards Fund⁸ to finance school improvement projects

involving research. The Standards Fund was paid to LEAs, who were required to devolve a large proportion of it to their schools. Oldham LEA had used this funding stream to develop their LEA-wide school improvement project. With the agreement of participating schools, Oldham LEA held some of the Standards Fund monies centrally. This enabled the LEA to fund advisory staff to take a strategic approach to school improvement and to assist schools with target setting and planning. Schools participating in SIPs were also asked to contribute some of their own Standards Fund allocation.

4.3.3 Funding via the LEA

Lancashire LEA paid a small amount to London University's Institute of Education for their participation in the Improvement in Action project. Further costs, such as supply cover, were paid for through a research and development budget. In addition, the involvement of an adviser, who had responsibility for pupils speaking English as an additional language, was part paid by an Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. In Hammersmith and Fulham, the LEA obtained a Single Regeneration Budget from national government and allocated part of this to the Let's Think project.

4.3.4 Funding accessed through university partnership

Funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)⁹ is available to research-active institutions, usually based within universities. The ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme¹⁰ had a particular focus on school-based work and encouraged partnerships between

⁷ BPRS is one of a series of DfES initiatives supporting the continuing professional development of teachers. The purpose of the scholarship is to facilitate the raising of standards in teaching and learning in matters that are school, local and national priorities.

⁸ The Standards Fund was a collection of grants that allowed LEAs and schools to improve education standards set out in agreed targets, particularly in the areas of numeracy, literacy, GCSE and social inclusion.

⁹ The ESRC is a research funding and training agency that seeks to promote and support high-quality basic, strategic and applied research in the social sciences.

¹⁰ The Teaching and Learning Research Programme is a coordinated research initiative seeking to develop and support educational research leading to improvements in outcomes.

universities and schools. The NFER study included two projects that were part of this programme, based at the University of Bristol.

4.3.5 Multiple funding streams

Most projects and programmes were supported via a particular source of funding but, in some cases, additional funding sources were required. For example, Rochdale Education and Learning (REAL) Trust was originally funded via the Standards Fund. However, additional sources of funding were required in order to finance further developments. The Trust sought company status, which enabled Standard Fund contributions, made by schools, to be paid into a trust account. As a charity, the

REAL Trust can make applications to external funding agencies locally, nationally and internationally.

Until recently, teachers participating in West Sussex's MA programme were funded through the school improvement element of the Standards Fund. As part of an agreement between the LEA and schools, the LEA funded course fees and schools paid for items such as supply cover and study days. However, the Standards Fund no longer covers all the costs involved in a teacher completing the MA. At the time of writing, the LEA was actively seeking new ways to fund teachers on the programme, for example, through LEA grants, BPRS and Teacher Training Agency (TTA) grants.

5. Leadership and strategic partnerships

This Chapter discusses the key strategic arrangements that emerged from the case-studies under the following headings: leadership, partnership working, building a critical mass, sharing and networking and localising and ownership.

5.1 Leadership

All the case-study LEAs mentioned the importance of effective leadership, particularly during the early stages of a project. In some cases, the original innovator had continued to lead the project, but in others the project had developed and taken on a life of its own. Projects were led by project directors, led by the LEA or led by a national figure.

5.1.1 Project specific leadership

In some case-study authorities, the name of the project leader was mentioned time and time again. For instance, headteachers and teachers in Rochdale frequently mentioned the name of the REAL Trust Director, who was also the Excellence in Cities coordinator. This individual was described as someone who 'plants seeds that germinate'. Many headteachers stressed the significance of the director's role in inspiring and leading the Trust. As an adviser said: 'Leadership is important and inspirational. It has won the hearts and minds of so many headteachers.'

5.1.2 LEA leadership

An example of LEA leadership was found in Birmingham LEA. Through the appointment of Tim Brighouse as Chief Education Officer,¹¹ Birmingham LEA had been able to raise the profile of research and promote research use

in its schools. Tim Brighouse had a strong school improvement agenda and a firm commitment to evidence-informed practice. Birmingham teachers also pointed out that the Chief Researcher and Statistics Manager had taken a leadership role in developing a culture of data and research use in Birmingham schools.

The initial impetus behind Oldham's SIPs came from a small group of senior advisers. In this case, the advisory team played a central role in organising the project, supporting schools and arranging conferences. They had taken a subtle approach to promoting the project, which had encouraged most of the LEA's schools to participate. However, there was a strong sense that teachers took a lead in their own projects once they gained momentum. Teachers generated their own issues and addressed them with support from the LEA. The SIPs slogan 'your project – our challenge and support', exemplifies this approach.

5.1.3 National leadership

David Hopkins was the inspiration and driving force behind the IQEA project.¹² Materials produced by Hopkins and his team, such as questionnaires and classroom activities, had been used by schools in pursuing their own research projects. The team had provided schools with support and advice in carrying out action research. A headteacher from Merthyr Tydfil commented on her experience:

We have had the privilege of working with David Hopkins for the last three years. For a man of his calibre to specifically focus in on a primary project in Merthyr speaks volumes about his involvement and commitment to

¹¹ Tim Brighouse was Birmingham LEA's Chief Education Officer from 1993 to 2002.

¹² David Hopkins is no longer involved with the IQEA project on a day-to-day basis.

school improvement based on 'teachers-up' and what teachers need rather than talk down and being told.

at understanding the temperature and tone of schools at certain points. They can give you a lot of contextual information about what you could feed into schools and what is already going on.

5.2 Partnership working

An important theme to emerge from this study was that of partnership working between the LEA and other educational professionals/organisations. The NFER survey revealed that many LEA initiatives involved some type of partnerships (including cross-school consortia, HEI partners, LEAs working together and an involvement in national and international projects). The following examples illustrate the types of partnership in place in case-study LEAs.

5.2.1 The LEA and its schools

The NFER study found many examples of good partnership working between case-study LEAs and local schools. For instance, teachers involved in Oldham's SIPs confirmed that there was close collaboration between LEA advisers and schools. One deputy headteacher explained that most teachers know most of the advisers, at least by name and often by personal contact. As reported in Chapter 4, teachers in Oldham found it very useful to have a SIPs adviser linked to their school. The advisers were able to engage in action research with the school and this gave them an overview of the school improvement activities taking place across the authority.

5.2.2 The LEA and universities

Partnerships between LEAs and universities can be very powerful: the two organisations can complement each other well. LEAs have local knowledge and understand their own schools. They can provide universities with access to schools and provide them with important contextual information. As a lecturer from the University of Nottingham explained:

LEAs are very good in terms of local knowledge of schools. They are very good

On the other hand, universities understand the requirements of the research process, so they can help teachers and advisers to develop research skills and can provide access to research literature.

An example of a close working relationship was that of West Sussex LEA and the University of Sussex. The MA programme had been jointly developed and planned by representatives of the university and West Sussex advisers. Advisers contributed to teaching on the programme, alongside university lecturers. This has helped to maintain close links between the two organisations.

The NFER study came across several examples of partnership working between LEAs and non-local universities. For example, the Improvement in Action project in Lancashire involves the authority working with London University's Institute of Education. Lancashire LEA has a long association with this university and has been a member of its International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre (ISEIC) since its inception. The LEA is one of 18 participating in this collaborative project. In Lancashire, the project is run by the Innovation and Intervention Group based at the LEA. However, the Institute has a strong input in guiding and supporting advisers and plays a crucial role in the delivery of the programme.

5.3 Building a critical mass

A principle underpinning the effective use of research for school improvement was *critical mass*. This term refers to the amount necessary to cause a particular result or effect. As described by Rogers (1995:320), critical mass is 'a point in the process when

diffusion [of new ideas] becomes self-sustaining'. A critical mass of teachers – who are actively involved in and committed to using research – can make a significant contribution to the development of an evidence-informed culture within their school and beyond. Building critical mass is therefore an important means of enabling organisational change. The following subsections provide examples from the case-studies.

5.3.1 Using an MA programme

Involvement in further study is often viewed as a matter for individual professional development. However, West Sussex saw the potential of their MA programme to have a wider impact on school improvement. As an adviser who taught on programme explained, building a critical mass of teachers who have engaged with research can help schools to move forward. In her view, the impact of the programme had been 'quite significant' in schools where a number of staff had taken part in the MA programme.

5.3.2 Forming school-based working groups

A critical mass of teachers who are actively involved in, and committed to, using research can be built through a working group. Merthyr Tydfil schools participating in the IQEA project are required to appoint a team of in-school coordinators. This group is responsible for the day-to-day running and development of the project. The group must represent all levels of the school (departments, age ranges and levels of responsibility/experience). To achieve a critical mass, several members of the group rotate when the school takes on a new project theme, with some original members remaining to guide the new group. Under the direction of the University of Nottingham, the in-school group uses research findings to stimulate professional discussion among staff. Both peer support and external support have helped to achieve

a research culture within these Merthyr Tydfil schools. This is seen as crucial in building the capacity of the school.

5.3.3 Throughout the LEA

The NFER study also found that a critical mass of research-engaged teachers can be built throughout the LEA. According to an external evaluation report of SIPs (Weindling, 2001), 99 of Oldham's 124 schools had taken part in the programme (80 primary schools, 13 secondary schools and six special schools). The involvement of a team of advisers had helped to spread the SIPs approach throughout the authority.

As with the Merthyr Tydfil project, SIPs schools are required to establish a team, including the headteacher or a senior manager. Secondary schools identify a team of four, whereas a primary school team consists of two. The team is charged with carrying improvement work forward and has responsibility for disseminating information to all members of staff. Both teachers and LEA advisers endorsed the importance of building a critical mass of teachers who have first-hand experience of what research can do. This, it was argued, can lead to the creation of a 'research culture' within a school (see also Handscomb and MacBeath, 2003).

5.4 Sharing and networking

There was much talk of sharing and networking and several ways of facilitating this were identified by the NFER study. In particular, the projects and programmes had enabled sharing and networking between teachers.

As described by Wenger *et al.* (2002), the building of networks can lead to 'communities of practice', that is:

...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic

and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

(Wenger *et al.*, 2002, p.4)

The NFER study found several examples of sharing and networking both within and across schools. For example, the Rochdale Education and Learning Trust provides systems and forums for education professionals. The Trust has set up a 'creative group' where teachers can discuss ways of improving education in Rochdale. Groups of schools work together on a range of activities such as workshops, seminars and conferences. The Trust has encouraged and developed partnerships between schools with similar needs.

Hearing about research from other teachers was an important means of encouraging others to become involved. Several teachers said they had been inspired to use research after hearing other teachers talk about their own research experiences. An adviser from West Sussex explained the significance of sharing and networking within her LEA:

It is important to disseminate effective practice and put teachers in touch with each other across the LEA. Schools [should be given] the opportunity to show how what they have been doing in their school has led to school improvement – this is the bottom line.

5.4.1 Sharing and networking across LEAs

The NFER study also found examples of sharing and networking between teachers from different LEAs. The IQEA project was a good example of this. The network has now grown to involve well over 100 schools and its methodology is being followed in at least four other countries. The project has developed a number of ways to encourage teachers to share information. An annual conference gives teachers the opportunity to find out about the research involvement of

other network schools. There is a project database that schools may use to access reports and information on research projects in other IQEA schools. Teachers have also developed informal networks, which allow them to contact other schools and find out 'what works for them'. The importance of teacher-to-teacher networks was explained by a deputy headteacher from Merthyr Tydfil:

If Nottingham University contacted schools, the schools may think 'I'm not sure whether I want to take this on, it sounds ambitious, will it work?' Hearing it from an actual secondary school in a deprived area, with standards that have been rising over the last three years, has greater impact.

Some of the projects featured in the NFER study had enabled LEAs themselves to network and share research experiences. For example, the Improvement in Action project provides Lancashire LEA with the opportunity to network with 15 other authorities. They are a diverse group of LEAs in terms of size and geographical area. LEA advisers meet for a day every six weeks. Advisers felt that a key strength of the project was the ability to share different approaches with colleagues in other authorities. There is also a great deal of networking and sharing of expertise between advisers and schools. Representatives from schools meet every six weeks for a half-day to present their work, support each other, exchange practice and learn more about school improvement strategies focused on learning.

5.5 Localising and ownership

As mentioned earlier, one of the barriers to teachers engaging with research was the belief that findings could not be generalised from schools in a research sample to schools in other areas. There was a strong belief among some of the teachers we spoke to that schools and pupils are 'unique' and any new initiative must therefore take account of local circumstances.

However, interviewees also acknowledged the importance of bringing in fresh ideas from outside. This had to be done in a way that helped teachers to retain ownership while, at the same time, acknowledging the relevance of research that has been carried out elsewhere. A headteacher from Merthyr Tydfil commented on this issue:

The LEA would agree that as well as the expertise that we have got within the LEA/consortium there is a lot to be learned from research from other LEAs and from other universities.

According to Harris (2001), it is part of an LEA's role to help staff develop ownership of a particular change or development. Teachers involved in the NFER study felt teachers' ownership of professional practice had been diminished in recent years. Through legislation and national initiatives, teachers felt that they had been 'told what to do and how to do it'. One of the ways of providing a way in for teachers is to capitalise on local needs as a starting point for engaging with a national agenda. A second way in is to capitalise on ownership.

An example of capitalising on local issues was found in Oldham LEA. Through SIPs the LEA aims to find local or home-grown solutions for its schools. The project focuses on the priorities of individual schools. Schools identify their own issues and, with the help of link advisers, find their own solutions. This is a shared process, which the schools own and all staff understand. However, the LEA ensures that schools are informed about national and international theories and research. Both advisers and teachers talked about 'Oldhamising' research findings and making them appropriate for their local context.

The IQEA approach requires schools to manage their own research project. Schools define the nature of their research in relation to local and national priorities for improvement. Teachers working in participating schools explained that this school-based approach had given them a sense of empowerment – they were not being told how to teach by 'experts'. Having ownership of the project enabled teachers to maintain momentum for their research projects because, as explained by one adviser, the project had put teachers 'firmly in the driving seat'.

6. Outcomes, dissemination and transferability

The previous chapters have given some insight into the role of the LEA in relation to encouraging research use for school improvement. This chapter looks at the perceived outcomes of the case-study project and programmes, the dissemination strategies put in place by schools and LEAs and the transferability of projects and programmes to other schools and LEAs.

6.1 Project outcomes

The NFER study asked interviewees to comment on the outcomes of their projects: 'Had it all been worth it?' All our interviewees said they had found research involvement beneficial. The following sub-sections focus on the outcomes they identified. However, we should point out that this relies on the perceptions of the people involved. Although we asked interviewees to provide evidence for their perceptions of impact, the use of more 'objective' impact measures was beyond the scope and the timescale of the NFER study. Nevertheless, programmes such as Let's Think, IQEA and SIPs have been formally evaluated by other researchers and some interviewees used these evaluations to inform their responses.

This research identified six main outcomes of research involvement, which are summarised below.

6.1.1 Seeing the impact on pupils

Teachers said that it was important for their project to have a positive outcome for pupils. Seeing the difference brought about by implementing a research-based idea inspired teachers with enthusiasm. For example, an advisory teacher from Hammersmith and Fulham LEA explained that the Let's Think project had enabled teachers to see how

their actions were helping to raise children's attainment. This had also helped teachers to think differently about spending time on research – as an adviser commented:

The initial challenge for teachers is, 'how do I fit this into an already full timetable?' But, when they see the big difference in their children, you don't hear about this problem because their children have already begun to make so much progress.

6.1.2 Improved pupil performance

It can be difficult to establish whether and to what extent a particular initiative has had an impact on pupil performance. An adviser from Oldham LEA acknowledged the difficulty in demonstrating a causal relationship between the implementation of SIPs and improving standards. Nevertheless, he referred to evaluation evidence that has acknowledged the role of SIPs in helping to raise pupils' reading levels and improving National Curriculum assessments results.

Similarly, interviewees from Hammersmith and Fulham LEA had noted changes in pupil performance. An adviser referred to the LEA's Ofsted inspection, which showed that Year 1 pupils were better at speaking, reasoning and asking questions than they were prior to the Let's Think project. One headteacher explained the impact that Let's Think had had in his school:

Children who have been through the Let's Think process are usually much more able to look at things from a tangent, to look at ideas and to challenge you on what you are doing educationally. There is greater independence, children are much more confident as a result of it.

It was felt that the teachers had benefited from the professional development

programme and had become more adept at asking questions to move pupils forward.

6.1.3 Professional and personal development

Interviewees consistently mentioned the impact that a project or programme had had on the professional development of teachers. Many case-study teachers stated that both their job satisfaction and motivation had increased. A teacher from Merthyr Tydfil had found a great deal of personal and professional satisfaction from conducting her own research: 'I felt as if, for once, I was using my professional skills and education and that I was being educated myself.'

Involvement in research had also given teachers their own voice and a feeling of empowerment. Teachers said they felt more able to justify their own practice, as they had been able to turn spontaneous judgements into more systematic investigations. A Birmingham headteacher said that the use of research had improved the self-confidence of teachers. She thought involvement in research had given teachers 'credibility in themselves'.

Teachers commented that, through their involvement with research, they had developed a greater interest in responding to pupil needs and solving teaching and learning problems. Teachers said they now looked outside of their own classroom for ideas and possible solutions.

One teacher explained that, as a result of the Let's Think project, teachers had developed their questioning skills. Teachers had adopted the strategy of setting a challenge for children, rather than giving a lesson that prescribed what pupils should think. A consultant evaluating the professional development programme for Let's Think included the following example:

I've interviewed somebody who said that Let's Think has changed her way of thinking about a) her own teaching, b) what she does when she sees other people teaching and c) the sort of thing that she reads and how she interprets that.

For participating schools, the IQEA model had become part of a whole-school approach to teaching and learning. The process was used by all members of staff to focus on school improvement issues. Headteachers and teachers believed the impact of the project had been substantial. Teachers said that the project had made them think more about their teaching and they had become much more flexible in using different teaching approaches.

6.1.4 Development of a learning culture

As mentioned earlier, some projects were deliberately aiming to develop a learning culture. A West Sussex headteacher commented on how the MA programme had impacted on his professional role. He felt that the programme had introduced him to a new way of thinking. This headteacher reported that he now discusses ideas such as a 'learning school' and a 'learning community' – concepts that were unfamiliar to him prior to his involvement in the programme. An adviser from Merthyr Tydfil made a similar comment:

You have only got to talk to teachers in the school, to realise how enthusiastic they are about it. That is an informal evaluation, based on my own observations through attending some of the INSET training courses. But the vocabulary of research is there.

6.1.5 Improved relationships between LEAs and schools

Several of our interviewees made the point that LEA involvement had led to an improvement in relationships between LEAs and schools. There was a sense that LEAs were working alongside schools and were

supporting schools in their own development, rather than being primarily concerned with imposing external targets.

It was too early to measure the impact of the REAL Trust in Rochdale, but there was evidence to suggest that the project had already influenced the way teachers viewed their LEA. By establishing the REAL Trust, the LEA had sent out a clear message that they wanted to involve headteachers and teachers in the sharing of good practice. This was seen to have a positive effect on the morale of staff in Rochdale's schools. The relationship between the LEA and schools had also been strengthened in Hammersmith and Fulham LEA. Here, teachers talked about feeling more involved with the activities of the authority. One teacher explained:

Let's Think has made me much more a part of what is going on in the LEA because of the regular meetings and regular contact with the Inspectorate – instead of occasionally going to the Education Offices for an INSET every six months.

In Oldham, the SIPs project has been in place for several years. Headteachers and teachers paid tribute to the helpful nature of the LEA involvement and a recent Ofsted inspection of the LEA highlighted the good relationships that existed between the LEA and schools.

6.2 Sharing and dissemination

Sharing information about school-based research was viewed as important by all interviewees. Funding bodies often required that the findings from projects should be shared with others and some schools built dissemination strategies into their action plans. While all interviewees recognised the importance of sharing information, not all projects and programmes were at the dissemination stage. Below are two examples from those case-studies who had

distributed information about their projects and programmes.

6.2.1 Sharing with LEAs

LEA-sponsored projects usually required schools to disseminate the findings of their research. Examples from the case studies included presenting material to LEA staff or circulating final reports. Some LEAs published project information on their websites or in their newsletters. They provided details of the project rationale, data collection methods, results and conclusions. Some LEAs organised conference days in which schools shared good practice with other schools in the authority.

6.2.2 Sharing with schools

Teachers highlighted the importance of teacher-teacher dissemination, both within their own school and with other schools. A teacher from Merthyr Tydfil explained how hearing other teachers speak about their research had encouraged her to become involved in the IQEA programme:

The key reason we became involved in the project was because the research was undertaken by practising teachers. Teachers from a school in Derbyshire came down and talked to us. They said 'we have tried this in our lessons and it works'. This carried more weight with our staff, rather than listening to speakers who have left teaching.

Some of our interviewees were so enthusiastic about the benefits of research involvement that they viewed themselves as 'ambassadors' for classroom-based research. It was clear that, by sharing their research knowledge, teachers felt they were supporting the continuing professional development of themselves and their colleagues. Table 6.1 provides some specific examples of the types of dissemination used by schools in case-study LEAs.

Table 6.1 Examples of dissemination strategies used by schools

Dissemination strategy	Example
Closure day	Once a year, all the secondary schools in one LEA closed to allow teachers from the same departments to get together.
Internet	The Internet was a useful way for schools to disseminate information.
Observation	Several teachers found it useful to observe the teaching methods of colleagues who had participated in school improvement projects. Some schools had invited teachers from other schools to observe their initiatives.
Video observation	One school had created a video showing a variety of teaching strategies adopted by teachers within the school.
In-school folder	Many schools kept a bank of relevant research articles. Such folders contained information on teaching and learning techniques and project evaluations.
Staff development room	One school had set up a specific room that provided research-related books, articles and videos.
Discussion in staff meetings	Sharing and discussing research issues often took place in staff meetings.
Word of mouth	MA students from West Sussex had benefited from talking to previous MA students about their experiences of the programme.

6.3 Transferability

The NFER study wanted to establish whether projects were unique to their respective LEAs or whether they had the potential to work in other schools and LEAs. Most interviewees felt their projects were transferable, but were aware that LEA circumstances vary considerably. Interviewees made the point that the success of the project is dependent on establishing the conditions for the project to thrive. The key issues relating to transferability were context, relationships and communication. An example of each is provided below.

6.3.1 Context

Many interviewees acknowledged that their specific context was important in setting up a research project or programme. The size of an authority and access to the resources of a university were seen as particularly

important. In Birmingham, an adviser pointed out that an LEA's Educational Development Plan determines the focus of research. This means that the specific focus of projects might not be appropriate in other authorities. The adviser also felt that the success of Birmingham's projects relied on the fact that there had been a 'culture of research and data' for many years. He suggested that it might be more difficult to generate the breadth of work that exists in Birmingham in a smaller authority.

6.3.2 Relationships

In projects that relied on a partnership between the LEA and schools, the relationship between the two was seen to be very important. Although projects could act as a vehicle for building partnership working, a history of good relationships between an LEA and its schools was considered to be a good starting point.

LEA advisers played a crucial role in involving schools in research for school improvement. Advisers in Lancashire commented that a successful project relied on a good management structure within the LEA and the strong commitment of its advisers. Lancashire advisory service had identified a specific team to focus on research and development. These advisers had strong links with schools and made regular school visits.

6.3.3 Communication

Good communication between the LEA and schools was a key factor in the success of a

project or programme. For example, in Merthyr Tydfil each school had a consortium representative, whose role was to liaise with local schools and the University of Nottingham. As project work takes place in schools, it was felt that the headteacher was in the best position to take on this role and not, for example, an LEA representative. Interviewees commented that because the IQEA project is a robust process, with an organised core team, it could work in almost any LEA but it worked best where there is LEA coordination, real involvement and good communication.

7. Conclusions and suggestions for practice

The overall aim of this study was to provide LEAs with information on good practice in the use of evidence-informed research to support school improvement. By providing illustrative examples of projects supported and/or initiated by LEAs, the study has shown that much is being done to promote and facilitate research use. This chapter provides a conclusion to this study and offers some suggestions for practice.

7.1 Conclusions

The study set out to establish what role the LEA plays in facilitating the use of research for school improvement, to identify the strategies adopted by authorities that lead to the effective use of research findings for school improvement, to identify the barriers to the use of research and to examine the ways in which LEAs have addressed these barriers.

This study considered the role that LEAs played in facilitating the use of research for school improvement. The role of the LEAs was seen to be fourfold: identifying effective practice through research, identifying research priorities, facilitating research projects and programmes and providing access to staff development. LEAs acted as brokers between schools with similar research interests and helped to identify and promote evidence-informed practice. They provided access to professional support and advice. LEAs also promoted research use through use of a strategic approach to professional development.

The main barriers to research use related to time, problems with accessing research, a perceived lack of relevance and practicality in published research, difficulties in interpreting and using research findings and professional/political barriers. Case-study LEAs had adopted several strategies for reducing or overcoming the barriers to research use. On the operational side, LEAs were able to encourage a supportive climate and to provide access to information and funding streams. On the strategic side, LEAs had engaged in partnership working and had helped to build a critical mass of teachers who were actively involved in using research. LEAs also had strategies in place to encourage sharing and networking within and between schools. Along with teachers and other educational professionals, LEAs were taking a lead in the use of research for school improvement.

This study identified many examples of good practice in the use of research for school improvement, ranging from action research projects to MA programmes. For those involved, projects and programmes were seen to have had a positive impact on pupil performance and on the professional development of teachers. As a result, teachers said they felt more confident and motivated and their teaching and learning practice had been improved. School improvement projects including a research element had contributed to the development of learning cultures and had strengthened the relationship between schools and their LEA.

7.2 Suggestions for practice

The LEAs included in this study used a variety of methods to facilitate the use of research for school improvement. It is therefore inappropriate to identify one 'best practice' model. However, from the interview comments, it is possible to suggest a range of approaches that LEAs could consider adopting.

7.2.1 Key strategic arrangements

The study identified four key strategic areas that LEAs need to address in order to facilitate the use of research for school improvement: leadership, partnership working, building a critical mass and sharing and networking. Some suggestions for each area are given below.

Leadership

- Take a positive attitude to research use and promote its potential benefits to schools.
- Acknowledge the contribution of research engagement to the professional role of teachers.
- Decide what role your LEA could play in encouraging schools to use research.
- Consider how research can best contribute to school improvement in your authority.
- Refer to research in key documents, such as the Educational Development Plan.
- Consider how best to ensure that research use is resourced, relevant and practical, collaborative, teacher owned and recognised.
- Identify an individual or small group to take things forward.

Partnership working

- Identify potential local or national partners (e.g. universities, national and international projects, other LEAs).
- Consider what each partner can contribute and how the LEA wishes to be involved.
- Seek opportunities for professional researchers to work in partnership with teachers.

Building a critical mass

- Provide opportunities for teachers to enthuse others about the benefits of using research.
- Consider how to recognise and build on the experience of teachers who have already undertaken research (e.g. as part of a higher degree).
- Plan to build a critical mass of teachers who have experience of using research.
- Provide opportunities for advisory staff to develop their own understanding of research.

Sharing and networking

- Ensure that teachers have opportunities to share their research experiences and results.
- Make sharing project outcomes a requirement of LEA projects.
- Consider building networks at different levels (e.g. within schools, between schools, between schools and the LEA, between schools, the LEA and others).

7.2.2 Key research activities

Four key activities associated with research use were identified by the study: accessing research, engaging with research, carrying out research and sharing research. The following suggestions are designed to help LEAs and schools wishing to put each of these research activities into practice.

Accessing research

- Develop systems to help advisers and teachers to access relevant research.
- Draw attention to key pieces of research through newsletters, websites and website links.
- Encourage those responsible for delivering staff training to refer to key pieces of research.
- Provide schools with access to summaries of research findings.
- Help draw out the relevance of research and theory for practice.
- Encourage schools to develop staff libraries and/or staff development areas including folders of relevant research.

Engaging with research

- Encourage LEA advisory staff to refer to research in their own practice.
- Provide teachers with time to attend courses, workshops and seminars with research content.
- Integrate research-based information from outside the LEA with local knowledge.
- Embed research engagement within school improvement initiatives.

Engaging with research (contd)

- Encourage teachers engaged in their own research to refer to the research literature.
- Help teachers to develop the skills to assess the quality of research reports.
- Help teachers to understand the relevance of research findings in a local context.
- Secure national speakers for workshops and conferences.

Carrying out research

- Establish a culture that encourages teachers to question existing practice.
- Identify funding sources and help schools to secure funds for action research.
- Invite schools to become involved in research projects.
- Encourage schools to generate their own research ideas.
- Help schools set up manageable action research projects.
- Ensure that schools have access to a 'critical friend'.
- Help teachers to understand and apply research principles.
- Encourage schools to include a statement about their research focus within the school development plan.
- Promote the creation of a school research team.
- Provide teachers with 'research development time' (e.g. through supply cover or joint closure days).

Sharing research

- Promote a sharing culture. Ensure that individuals carrying out research are linked with a community of others within and/or outside their own schools.
- Initiate and respond to ideas for sharing research-informed practice within schools.
- Encourage schools to devote time to sharing research experiences and outcomes (e.g. through observation, during staff meetings).
- Identify teachers who have research experience and findings to share with others.
- Facilitate sharing between schools through conference days and workshops.
- Encourage teachers to write summaries of their research and make these available to others (e.g. through an intranet).
- Promote and provide access to information about good practice identified by practitioners in other authorities (e.g. through a 'treasury' of examples).

7.3 Final thoughts

This study has demonstrated that there is a potential enthusiasm for using research among schools and teachers. Schools are using research findings to help them to develop school improvement strategies and teachers are using research to question their assumptions and reflect on their own practice. The use of research is providing schools and teachers with new challenges, insights and levels of understanding – while also enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

The LEAs we visited were under no obligation to encourage schools to become involved in research activity. They were doing so as a natural extension of their school improvement role. Such involvement clearly requires a commitment of funding, time and energy on behalf of LEA staff. The experience of those who have adopted this role testifies to the positive benefits for pupils, schools, teachers and the LEAs themselves.

Internet resources

For further information about the use of research for school improvement the following websites will be useful.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Best Practice Research Scholarships (BPRS)
http://teachernet.gov.uk | National Educational Research Forum (NERF)
http://www.nerf-uk.org |
| British Educational Research Association (BERA)
http://www.bera.ac.uk/ | National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/ |
| Centre for Research into Teacher and School Development (CRTSD)
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/crtsd/ | National College for School Leadership (National Professional Qualification for Headship)
http://ncsl.org.uk |
| Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ | Professional Training Programme in Educational Psychology
http://www.bristol.ac.uk |
| ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme
http://www.tlrp.org | Rochdale Education and Learning Trust
http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/publicServices |
| General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)
http://www.gtce.org.uk | Teaching Training Agency (TTA)
http://www.canteach.gov.uk/ |
| General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW)
http://www.gtcw.org.uk | The Research Informed Practice Site
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ |
| General Teaching Council for England – Research of the Month
http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/romhome.asp | The Standards Fund
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sisfcc/sig/ |
| InterActive Education: Teaching and learning in the Information Age
http://www.interactiveeducation.ac.uk | Times Educational Supplement (TES)
http://www.tes.co.uk/ |
| Home-School Knowledge Exchange
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2e.html | TOPIC online
http://www.topiconline.co.uk/index.asp |

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Appendix: Details of case studies

LEA name	LEA type	No of schools (nursery to year13)	Project names	Project aims	Staffing	Funding
Birmingham City Council	Metropolitan Borough	494	[1] MAMMED programmes [2] The Birmingham Education Research Forum	[1] To support teacher-led research [2] To share information on current research initiatives between local HEIs and the LEA	[1] LEA advisers and local HEI staff [2] LEA advisers and local HEI staff	[1] Mostly funded through staff development budgets within schools [2] No formal funding
Bristol City Council	Unitary	186	[1] Home-School Knowledge Exchange [2] InterActive Education Project: Teaching and Learning in the Information Age [3] Professional Training Programme in Educational Psychology MEd	[1] To develop and test ways of improving pupil attainment by enhancing collaboration between parents and teachers [2] To examine the ways in which new technologies can be used in educational settings to enhance learning [3] To prepare Educational Psychologists to work within LEAs	[1] Teacher-researchers and University of Bristol and University of Cardiff research staff [2] Teacher-researchers and University of Bristol research staff [3] Staff within the Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol	[1] ESRC [2] ESRC [3] DfES funded places, University of Bristol bursaries, self-funded, career development loans
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	Inner London	76	Let's Think (originally at KS1)	To raise pupil achievement by developing the general thinking of year 1 pupils and developing teachers' understanding of how children learn	One advisory teacher and ten classroom teachers	Individual schools pay Hammersmith and Fulham LEA (previously funded through the Single Regeneration Budget)
Lancashire County Council	County	708	Improvement in Action in Lancashire: Learning about Learning	To support primary schools in developing an action research approach to improving the quality of learning	Researchers from the ISEIC based at the Institute of Education, two LEA advisers and staff from nine participating primary schools	LEA Research and Development budget and an EMA grant

Details of case studies (continued)

LEA name	LEA type	No of schools (nursery to year 13)	Project names	Project aims	Staffing	Funding
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Welsh Unitary	40	Improving the Quality of Education for All	To strengthen a school's ability to provide quality education for all pupils by building upon existing good practice	Researchers from the CRTSD based at the University of Nottingham, a team of in-school coordinators and all teachers within participating schools	Standards Fund (previously funded through GEST)
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	Metropolitan Borough	129	Oldham School Improvement Project	To challenge and support schools in their school improvement work/projects	Link Advisers, in-school coordinators and teachers within participating schools	Standards Fund
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Metropolitan Borough	106	Rochdale Education and Learning Trust (REAL Trust)	To enable schools to work together on a range of activities, promote and support school-based action research, encourage and develop networks and partnerships between schools and facilitate conferences	Board of Trustees, Director of Excellence in Cities, a Senior Education Officer and a 'creative group'	Standards Fund and external funding agencies
West Sussex County Council	County	368	MA (School Effectiveness and School Improvement) Programme	To promote the role of research in supporting school improvement and achieve a critical mass of research-informed/engaged headteachers and teachers	LEA advisers and tutors from the University of Sussex	At time of writing, the LEA was looking for further ways to fund the MA e.g. LEA grants, BPRS and TTA research grants (previously fully funded by the Standards Fund)

The LGA Educational Research Programme is carried out by the NFER. The research projects cover topics and perspectives that are of special interest to LEAs. All the reports are published and disseminated by NFER, with separate executive summaries.

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Jane Hemsley-Brown, Mark Cunningham, Rosalind Morton and Caroline Sharp

In light of the 2000 Local Government Act, this study determines the ways in which local authorities have modernised their education decision-making processes and explored the experiences of those directly involved in the changes. The key objectives were to explore some of the key features of the modernisation agenda, with a particular focus upon the role of scrutiny, and to track the process of key decisions with the intention of describing the impact of modernisation upon education decision-making.

Published in 2003

ISBN 1 903880 39 4

Price: £10.50

School Partnerships in Action: A Case Study of West Sussex Specialist Schools (LGA Research Report 36)

Sarah Aiston, Peter Rudd and Lisa O'Donnell

Schools working in partnership will be an important part of the educational landscape over the next few years according to this case study, which involved 11 Specialist Schools in West Sussex. The research showed that the network provided a source of support and a mechanism for schools to share ideas and disseminate good practice, with the LEA taking a supportive, co-ordinating role and working in partnership with the network. The report identifies a number of issues relevant to schools, LEAs and national organisations, which need to be considered in respect of the implementation and further development of partnership approaches.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 37 8

Price: £8.00

Teaching Assistants in Schools: The Current State of Play (LGA Research Report 34)

Barbara Lee

This report provides an overview of existing research on the roles of teaching assistants in schools, looks at the issues arising from the ways they are employed and deployed and identifies areas for further study.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 33 5

Price: £10.00

The Impact of School Size and Single-sex Education on Performance (LGA Research Report 33)

Thomas Spielhofer, Lisa O'Donnell, Thomas Benton, Sandie Schagen and Ian Schagen

The publication of school 'league tables' has stimulated many debates about the best environment for fostering pupils' learning and development. Two of the issues contested as part of this debate are the ideal size of schools and whether single-sex education improves student performance. This report examines the impact of school size and single-sex education on pupil performance and opportunities, using national value-added datasets, which contain individual pupil data across 979 primary and 2,954 secondary schools.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 29 7

Price: £12.00

Local Authority Reactions to the Ofsted Inspection Process (LGA Research Report 32)

Monika Wray

Since the Ofsted inspection programme began, a number of authorities have received adverse reports and were required to take radical action to change some or all of their approaches, practices and/or key functions. This research investigates the actions taken by local authorities to improve, following critical Ofsted inspection reports, and the eventual outcomes of such actions.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 26 2

Price: £4.95

A Revolution in the Use of Data?

The LEA Role in Data Collection, Analysis and Use and Its Impact on Pupil Performance (LGA Research Report 29)

Peter Rudd and Deborah Davies

In recent years, the use of pupil performance data for target setting and raising standards of attainment in schools has become increasingly important. The report examines how schools and LEAs can work together to make best use of pupil performance data, and gives examples of good practice. It makes a number of recommendations for both LEAs and school staff.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 20 3

Price: £12.00

For further information on any of the above projects or the publications, please contact:

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