



**BRITISH EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

STRATEGIC PLAN

September 2008

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1.0 Foreword

Our Strategic Plan sets out the strategy, priorities, aims and objectives for the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

This strategy has been developed to identify and address the key issues facing the Association and our members. Our work will be focussed on three key themes:

1. policy;
2. quality;
3. capacity.

These are the central issues which are of interest to our members and the areas where we can add most value, working with others in the education sector.

The Association has a key role to play in the operation and conduct of educational research both within higher education institutions and across other stakeholders. Members have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed and educational research is conducted in the most effective way ensuring high standards and quality.

We believe that the work of BERA as an educational research association and that of individual educational researchers should not be seen in isolation. Educational research should be at the heart of policy and practice in the education sector throughout the United Kingdom. As a registered charity BERA's work is also of wider public benefit and this is a theme and aim running through all our work.

Education is widely acknowledged to be the driving force in the 'knowledge economy' and forms an increasingly important part of the landscape of the United Kingdom. Education meshes with business, industry, the wider economy and the social, cultural and intellectual life of the country. UK education also has a broad international reach and importance which must be recognised.

BERA wants to be at the centre of the exciting debates and developments in education and educational research both in the UK and internationally.

2.0 Mission Statement

BERA is committed to advancing, promoting and defending high quality research and its use in understanding and improving education for the public good.

BERA's ambition is to be a leading association working in educational research and to enable our members, stakeholders and the public to sustain, develop and share in high quality educational research, its application and use.

BERA aims to be the first point of reference on all matters concerning educational research.

We will work to achieve our mission by:

1. increasing the understanding and application of educational research;
2. providing member services;
3. developing strategic partnerships;
4. working with stakeholders both within and outside the field of educational research;
5. improving our own operational efficiency and effectiveness.

3.0 Purposes

Our central purpose is the promotion of high quality research and its use in understanding and improving education for public benefit and the benefit of our members.

BERA's exists to:

- a. promote quality in educational research;
- b. raise awareness of ethical issues in educational research;
- c. promote independent debate about the quality, purpose and methodologies of educational research;
- d. provide a forum for dissemination and debate of the findings of educational research;
- e. support the mediation of research findings for policy makers and practitioners;
- f. represent educational research to government, funding bodies and the public;
- g. provide training and development for educational researchers at all levels; and
- h. relate to other associations nationally and internationally, which have interests and concerns in educational research.

We will establish effective ways of working to achieve our goals and remain flexible and adaptable to the challenges that face us as an organisation for the benefit of our members, educational research, and the public good.

A key element of our work will continue to be the needs of our members and the development of services to meet those needs. We will develop these services in light of the changing needs of the membership while maintaining an understanding of national and international perspectives and policies in education.

The Association is a registered charity and membership organisation. Its members are individuals who have an interest in educational research. Members are predominantly academic staff and students based at higher education institutions in the United Kingdom but the Association is an inclusive organisation that welcomes and includes participation from all those with a professional or personal interest in educational research in its many forms. We strive to promote the generation, dissemination and application of educational research for the public good.

4.0 Strategic Plan Implementation

We will implement strategic aims through a series of defined processes supported by a Development Plan which will be monitored and reviewed to ensure success and relevance.

The Association is structured into three key areas:

1. Officers
2. Executive Council / Board of Trustees
3. Special Interest Groups

This structure supports the work of the Association working within three core themes:

1. Policy
2. Quality
3. Capacity

These core themes are supported by management and infrastructure processes in three areas:

1. Infrastructure
2. Member Services
3. Partnerships

Management and Infrastructure processes will continue to be reviewed and improved in response to the needs of members and stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This will enable us to maintain, improve and expand our services.

BERA Officers will work in close cooperation with the Executive Council as the de facto management team of the Association to ensure the aims and objectives of the Association are met. The Executive Council delegates authority to Officers to act on behalf of the Association as required but has ultimate responsibility for and authority over the operations of the Association.

The Strategic Plan will be achieved via the implementation of member services and development of partnerships supported by the infrastructure and management of the Association and informed by the three themes – policy, quality, capacity – that underpin our work.

A central position of the Association is to engage with stakeholders for the benefit of educational research wherever opportunities arise.

The following two sections outline firstly the themes of the Association and secondly the infrastructure, member services and partnerships which will be used to achieve our aims.

5.0 Strategic Plan Themes

The three core themes of the Association are outlined here to provide a basis for the work of the Association and a framework for the development of projects and services.

5.1 Policy development

Issues

The changing policy environment within education presents a constantly evolving arena for educational research.

We believe it is essential that policy and practice are brought together informed by high quality educational research. The Association is in a strong position to represent the views of professional staff engaged in educational research to a variety of audiences. Policy makers, practitioners and educational researchers need to be brought together to develop the best solutions to the issues we are faced with.

The Association must not only be a contributor to policy development but also be an active participant in the generation of policies relevant to education.

Strategic Aims

- To maintain and enhance a reputation as an association that is fully engaged with policy developments in education.
- To ensure policy makers are aware of sound professional evidence and opinion from those working in educational research.
- To help make policies relevant and effective drawing together policies, practices and research in education.
- To ensure that the Association is sensitive to the varied policy landscape across the United Kingdom.

How

- Actively engage with consultations and policy proposals in education to ensure the professional voice of educational research is heard.
- Use the experience and expertise of members to inform policy responses.
- Actively develop policies for the benefit of the educational research community and the wider public good within education.
- Develop policy briefings and other material to support the understanding of policy developments and their impacts.
- Consider how BERA can best place itself to have a voice for educational research with a variety of audiences and stakeholders that are engaged in policy development and application.

- Maintain links and monitor developments to ensure the Association fully reflects and engages with the complex policy landscape across the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom.

5.2 Quality

Issues

Educational research, policies and practices are constantly undergoing change and development. It is important that quality is enhanced and maintained to ensure educational research has a strong basis for its engagement, effectiveness and dissemination.

It is important that the quality of educational research is recognised and enhanced and the Association is at the centre of debates and developments in this area.

Strategic Aims

- To maintain and enhance the provision of high quality educational research.
- To raise the awareness of quality research within education, its uses and applications.
- To support educational researchers in the adoption of good practice and maintenance of quality and standards across education.
- To work with other organisations to share knowledge and tackle issues of quality collaboratively to ensure efficiencies are maximised for stakeholders and for the sector as a whole.

How

- Provide information and materials to support members in the adoption of good practices which contribute to the production of high quality research and evidence.
- Engage with systems and processes for the measurement and assessment of quality in educational research (e.g. the Research Assessment Exercise) and influence improvements.
- Be active in the generation and exchange of knowledge within educational research and the education sector.
- Review practices within educational research to better understand processes adopted and collate good practice from a range of situations.
- Seek to share knowledge and information and work collaboratively with other organisations to enhance and maintain quality.

5.3 Capacity

Issues

Educational research faces issues of capacity for the future. Significant problems are presented by the age profile of academic staff which needs to be addressed to ensure educational research has the capability to continue to find solutions and develop effectively.

Strategic Aims

- To address issues of future capacity in educational research to maintain and enhance its position.
- To ensure individuals working in educational research are supported effectively and have sufficient opportunities for development.
- To work with other institutions and organisations to legitimate and support their research.
- To attract individuals into the field of educational research.

How

- Work with stakeholders to develop effective solutions to building capacity in educational research.
- Explore opportunities for supporting individuals working in educational research to enhance and expand capacity.
- Support the professional development of members through training, mentoring and career development opportunities.
- Ensure that BERA provides an active community of educational researchers to support and encourage its members in their professional and personal development.
- Develop collaborative projects to address specific aspects of capacity building.
- Address the needs of students and early career staff in educational research to maintain an active research community and build future capacity.

6.0 Infrastructure, Member Services and Partnerships

The three operational aspects of the work of the Association are outlined here to provide an explanatory framework for the business of the Association. These elements cut across the themes identified above and act as a guide to projects which will support our strategic aims.

We will develop our operations based on clearly identified needs in response to the evolving profiles of our members and the changing demands faced in educational research. We will expand provision of member services through conferences and events, collaborative projects, strategic partnerships and the development of communications and publications.

We will also continue to assess and improve our management structures and infrastructure to maintain an efficient and effective system for meeting our strategic objectives.

6.1 Infrastructure

Issues

The work of the Association and its membership has expanded considerably in recent years and it is important that we have an effective infrastructure to support our aims and objectives and the needs of our members.

Such infrastructure needs to be underpinned by adherence to the principles of providing added value and ensuring value for money.

Significant progress has already been made recently with the restructuring of the Association Office and the appointment of its first Chief Executive Officer. We aim to build on these developments to strengthen the operational capacity and capability of the Association.

Ensuring that our structures and systems are most effective and maintaining clear structures and lines of responsibility within the Association will enable us to respond more effectively to issues and meet our aims and objectives.

Aims

- To maintain an effective infrastructure through a process of ongoing review and adaptation to meet the needs of the Association and its members.
- To ensure that sufficient resource and support is available to the BERA Chief Executive to coordinate the work of the Association and fulfil its operations effectively through the BERA Office.
- To ensure that the Association includes the relevant membership and meets the needs of members.

How

- Develop and maintain effective governance and organisational mechanisms to support the structure and management of the Association.

- Review the organisational structure of the Association to ensure it is most effective in meeting the aims and objectives of the Association and the needs of its members.
- Maintain a Strategic Plan and establish a Development Plan / Operational Plan to ensure the aims, objectives, functions and services of the Association are defined and can be monitored.
- Identify the resource needed to fulfil the aims and objectives of the Association in both its core functions and identified projects.
- Maintain a network of Special Interest Groups to provide a forum for the discussion of particular issues and interests, enable the sharing of ideas, and inform the work of the Association.
- Create Working Groups as needed to address specific issues and coordinate projects.
- Monitor and review membership to ensure the Association is operating effectively.
- Source relevant training and courses for the development of staff.

6.2 Member Services

Issues

As a membership organisation we place services to members at the heart of our work. The expansion of the work of the Association in recent years has provided new challenges and opportunities.

It is important that the Association and its Office have both the resource and infrastructure to further develop the services provided to its members to meet their needs effectively. This is of particular importance as issues of capacity building in the field of educational research are central to the ongoing maintenance and development educational research.

Aims

- To further develop the services provided to members and be responsive to their needs.
- To provide relevant and timely conferences and events to address issues of concern to members, the wider academic community and the public.
- To develop communications and resources which meet the needs of the Association and its members and support its aims at public engagement with and awareness of educational research.
- To further develop the range of BERA publications in both paper and electronic form.

How

- Develop networking, mentoring and career development opportunities for members in collaboration with relevant organisations both within and outside educational research and provide opportunities for training to members.
- Identify opportunities for conferences and events both independently and in collaboration with other organisations and sponsors.
- Maintain a website (www.bera.ac.uk) which forms the public face of the Association and develop this into a resource base for use by members, others with an interest educational research and the wider public.
- Maintain and develop publications to support the work of the Association and provide services to our members (e.g. British Educational Research Journal, Research Intelligence, Research Reviews, Research Guidelines and other publications such as policy briefings and research reports).
- Provide email lists for ongoing communication and support both for the members and for other specific purposes to act as a tool to maintain contact and encourage communication between Association members and others with an interest in educational research matters for the exchange of ideas, discussion of current issues and the dissemination of information.
- Maintain a coordinated network of Special Interest Groups to meet the evolving specialist areas and needs of members.

6.3 Partnerships

Issues

A central element in our work is the strong working relationships we have developed with stakeholders throughout the education sector.

Partnership working is the key to finding effective solutions to the problems facing the sector. This approach will become more important as the sector evolves and becomes ever more complex bringing with it new challenges.

Aims

- To provide a coordinating role within the field of educational research and facilitate networking opportunities between individuals and organisations to help the Association meet its aims and objectives.
- To establish a plan to place the Association in the role of an inclusive umbrella organisation which strengthens the position of educational research, its understanding and application.
- To maintain contact with stakeholders to enable effective engagement with issues of common concern (e.g. government, the devolved administrations throughout the UK, research councils, national education organisations, education organisations internationally).

How

- Develop a database of education organisations and representative bodies to enable the effective identification of knowledge and expertise for relevant networking and partnership working.
- Liaise with other bodies throughout the sector to ensure issues are shared and dealt with in the most effective manner.
- Establish regular liaison meetings with relevant stakeholders in the education sector to address issues of interest and importance.
- Maintain and extend links with international education research associations and other organisations working in education that share common aims and objectives.
- Extend international contacts and exchanges through conferences, meetings, events and communications for the benefit of the Association, its members and wider public understanding of educational research.