



Provisional Overall Project Title: Education Research in the UK

Tender: A literature review to understand the structures and processes that influence research activities in the UK

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is the UK's leading learned society in the field of educational research representing over 2500 members. BERA is committed to advancing research quality, building research capacity and fostering research engagement. BERA aims to inform the development of policy and practice by promoting the best quality evidence produced by educational research.

Background to the issues

One strand of BERA's work historically has been a role in charting the state of educational research in the UK. For example, the BERA Observatory (Oancea and Mills, 2015) which was an initiative to monitor the general state of education research in the UK. This report provided a snapshot of baseline data and information about educational research, within and beyond the HE sector. Cognisant of recent developments within academia more broadly, BERA would now like to examine the current state of the field of educational research, to inform its work moving forwards.

Results from the UK's 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise stated that "considerable improvement in research quality in education has taken place in UK HEIs compared with 2008, and that a significant proportion of the submitted education is world-leading" (REF, 2015, p103). For REF 2021, one significant change is the requirement for *all* staff with research as part of their contract to be included in all university REF submissions. This change may have resulted in significant changes to the nature of the work of academic staff in education departments. For example, there was evidence from the BERA Close-to-Practice research project that REF requirements were having an effect on perceptions of, and opportunities for, research in education departments (Wyse, et al. 2019).

BERA wishes to build on its previous work around the state of the field by establishing over time a sustainable model for monitoring the state of education research in the UK. The model will include a focus on education researchers and how their work and professional identities are shaped within the field of educational research. To understand this, we will need to understand the structures and processes within and beyond universities that influence research activity.

The first part of this work is a review of literature which will subsequently inform a survey of education researchers in the UK.

Aims of the proposed work

BERA wishes to commission a review of research around existing published evidence on the structures and processes – both formal and informal – that influence research

activities in the UK. The literature review will also inform the design of a survey of education researchers' views of their work and identities in relation to education research in universities. The survey will seek to further examine the structures and processes which influence opportunity for, and engagement in, research activity for staff working in university education departments.

With this aim in mind BERA wishes to commission a review that addresses the following research questions:

- *What are the main themes, qualities and amounts of published research evidence relevant to understanding the structures and processes (both formal and informal) that influence education research activities in UK higher education institutions?*
- *What is the overall quality of that published research evidence that is relevant to understanding the structures and processes that influence research activities in the UK?*
- *What are the highest quality quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies relevant to understanding the structures and processes that influence education research activities in UK higher education institutions?*

The methodology used to carry out the review must be systematic. It should be rigorous in its identification of relevant key words/phrases and its sources used to locate relevant publications and other relevant outputs. It should also evaluate the robustness of the evidence that it provides and take this into consideration in its presentation of findings and recommendations.

Expected Outcomes

The outcome of the review of literature should be a report that explicitly addresses the research questions outlined above.

The full report should be a minimum of 12,000 words and a maximum of 15,000 words (excluding references) and written in a style suitable for its readership of BERA members. The report should include an 'Executive Summary'. Further guidance on format of the report will be supplied nearer the time of its submission.

BERA reserves the right to edit the final report in line with our own style guidelines and decide as to how and in what format the report will be published beyond its circulation to BERA Council. The working-group will finalise the specification with the successful team and the interim and final reports will be peer reviewed.

Working Group

A small working group convened by BERA Council will oversee the review. The group comprises: Mhairi Beaton; Gary Beauchamp; Ruth Boyask; Gerry Czerniawski; Oliver Hooper.

The group will manage the review process and report to BERA Council.

Budget and Outline costing

Those wishing to tender for the research should include a budget indicating how the research will be conducted to meet the timeline for the interim and final reports; undertake the activities as indicated above; and successfully address the research questions. The amount allocated to this review is no more than **£20,000, inclusive of VAT**.

Payment will be 50% at the start of the project, 25% upon receipt of the interim report and 25% upon submission of the final report.

Timeline

Tender advertised on:	w/b 11th February 2020
Proposals specifying the research team and their expertise, to be submitted by:	12 noon on Monday 9 th March 2020
Peer-reviews undertaken by BERA:	9 th -13 rd March 2020
Possible interviews of shortlisted teams:	w/b 23 rd March 2020
Research team appointed:	1 st April 2020
Interim Report submitted by:	Monday 6 th July 2020
Feedback from peer reviews supplied by working group:	Monday 17 th August 2020
Final Report submitted by:	Monday 5 th October 2020
Publication of report by BERA	TBC

Application Process and Selection Criteria

Applicants should submit a proposal to BERA. Proposals should be no more than 2000 words excluding references. Short CVs (2 pages maximum per person) for all members of the proposed team should be included as appendices.

In the proposal please include the following:

- Brief outline of previous published work relevant to the approach that you will take;
- Research questions;
- Research design and research methods;
- Relevant experience of the team. Specifically, your credentials for undertaking the review, your knowledge in the subject matter and expertise in the proposed methodology;
- A detailed budget with justification for all costs.

The deadline for applications is 12pm on Monday 9th March 2020.

Applications should be submitted to: secretariat@bera.ac.uk

Those shortlisted may be required to attend an interview (possibly by Skype).

In line with BERA's procedures, applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Quality of proposed methodology and approach to the work in relation to BERA's aims for the work;
- Expertise of the project team in relation to the methodology,
- Relevance of team's expertise in relation to knowledge about education as an academic discipline
- Track record in undertaking similar reviews.
- Value for money
- Overall quality of the proposal.

Applications will be scored on a scale of 1-4 against these criteria. For further particulars about this role please contact:

Nick Johnson
Executive Director

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Email: director@bera.ac.uk