

## **Outcomes from the LERN Workshop: Effective Dissemination of Research Findings. June 16<sup>th</sup> 2016.**

This was a lively, wide-ranging and well attended event that explored the various ways in which researchers can aim to get their message across. However, we started the afternoon by asking members to complete a short questionnaire on how they got to know about other people's research and why that research had had impact for them. This was to get us 'into the mood'. It explored how people got to learn of the research and the role of traditional and well as more contemporary media sources. The results are summarised below at \*\*.

The Workshop had presentations on some of the methods used to communicate research findings but also, later in the afternoon, considered the reactions of 'recipients' of research such as policy and decision-makers. Most presenters used powerpoint presentation and they are available at \*

We started with *Graeme Broadbent* considering the merits and good practice as regards conference papers and articles and the need to be aware of their different roles but also that as regards articles, as legal education researchers we should probably look more widely at possible and appropriate journals. He drew our attention, in particular, to education publications. *Chris Ashford*, editor of the Law Teacher explained what editors are looking for. This is not just in terms of clarity, robustness and, importantly, having a good title and clear abstract but also in terms of interesting or less usual topics. This might be an under-researched area or a controversial topic.

*Alison Bone* got us thinking about other ways of presenting data, especially visual ones. She had some interesting suggestions on posters (Too often too cluttered) and cartoons, which she felt are especially effective in covering a lot of ground and getting clear messages across. Unfortunately Paul Knepper was unable to present his work, but *Patricia Leighton* covered two LERN funded projects where students had been used as researchers and the 'community' of the topic was involved in the dissemination process. The two examples were the 'Black Firsts' project of Paul Knepper and Richard Owen's Welsh devolution and welsh legal education project. Patricia emphasised the value of a 'bottom up/grass roots' approach to dissemination and the active participation of those most involved in a topic, and explored the effectiveness of launch/conferences to get to an audience, especially those working within it.

After a break, we heard from *Debra Malpass*, head of SRA's research facility. They undertake much of their own research but also seek collaboration from 'outside' researchers. She was very clear about what policy-makers such as them look for in research-less theory, political ideas,; more practical applications and focus. But the opportunities for collaboration and an external view were much appreciated and hope we can take this idea forward. *Lowrence Nye* from the freelancer support organisation, IPSE, told us about how some specific pieces of

research had been pitched to governments and policy-makers and the importance of strong messages, relevance and an overall package to get those messages across.

We ended with *Tamara Hervey* seeking views on the response of legal educators and education managers to legal education research findings. The general view was that our research is not high on agendas and that the pressures on all in universities are growing. We will have to work much harder to ensure that directly relevant research is effectively promoted and that decision-making in universities is properly informed!

The Workshop was expertly and rigorously Chaired by our Co Director, Tony Bradney'

### **\*\* The Workshop Survey Analysis**

Clearly, this is only a small survey with around 20 responses. The three main Qs on the survey were;

1 Can you remember a piece of research(On any topic) that caught your attention in the last five years? What was it about?

2 How did you hear about the research?

3 Why did it catch your attention?

4 Which of the following have made you want to follow up a piece of research

Press releases

Radio item

TV item

Newspaper article

Professional magazine/journal

Blog post

Small digest listing

Tweet/twitter mention

Other social media post.

### **Findings**

1 There was a mixture of responses here, with around 50% mentioning legal education topics a large number referring to health or more personal issues and the rest about what might be called general interest topics, such as why the pollsters got the 2015 General Election result wrong. One specifically mentioned research into bias in questionnaires.

2 How people got to hear about the research provided a wide range of answers, though what might be called traditional media, especially radio, featured strongly, with many mentioning newspapers, professional press and following up references in bibliographies and footnotes in law texts. Blogs and social media had several mentions but it was interesting that conference papers, and word of mouth/colleagues passing on information still had many mentions. Two mentioned source materials provided by students for dissertations

3 The responses to the question about why it caught the eye ranged from a strictly personal interest, such as health remedies, work-life balance research and professional interests. Several spoke of the fact that if the results were clearly expressed this made a major difference. Again a good title and a sense of controversy, newness or a different approach several saw as helpful. On the last point. Two mentioned taking, say. Research from one discipline and transferring or applying it to another discipline.

4 In terms of the role of different media forms, the responses indicated that while many-around 40% relied heavily on social media, especially blogs, others made mention of the legal press and an interesting point was made by one respondent who said the problem was of information overload. They said that there was a need for increased guidance into how to determine 'good' research from 'bad' or 'mediocre'. There may well be something to follow up here, such as recommendations, 'big names' supporting the research and short snappy comments.

If any LERN member or anyone else has comments on this report and the report of Questionnaire just let us know.