



# Enriching the experience of schooling

A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme



T·L·R·P  
TEACHING  
& LEARNING  
RESEARCH  
PROGRAMME

E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL



The past decade has seen measurable improvements in British education. More children are getting good results, and the number of underachieving schools has fallen.

But problems remain. Too many socially and economically deprived areas of the country have schools where standards are variable or low. This poor educational provision contributes to low attainment and limited expectations. Perhaps most damagingly, a lack of good schools limits children's chances of becoming enthusiasts for learning, and makes them less likely to enter higher education or to seek out opportunities to learn in later life.

This Commentary from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, the UK's biggest-ever educational research initiative, draws on the findings of 24 research projects on improving school education. It provides research evidence for the debate about children's services, which are intended to improve social and educational conditions for children across the UK. The Children's Plan in England, published in 2007, is taken as a particular example.

The TLRP's research on school and pre-school education has shown that learning can be improved by supporting students more effectively, especially at key points such as school transition, and by involving them more deeply in their education. Their capacity as learners can be improved by more effective groupwork and consultation, or by connecting their out-of-school experience more effectively to the classroom. These findings closely reflect those of other TLRP projects relating to further, higher and workplace learning. And they hold out the hope that there are further significant gains to be made in UK schools as these research findings become embedded in educational practice.

These TLRP Commentaries are intended to bring educational research findings to wider audiences with an interest in policy and practice. We hope you find it interesting, and welcome your response via our web site [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)

**Professor Ian Diamond FBA AcSS**  
Chief Executive  
The Economic and Social Research Council



# contents

Introduction	4
TLRP's 10 Principles for effective teaching and learning	5
What is education for?	6
What are politicians saying?	8
Children's policies across the UK	10
Class and inclusion	13
What TLRP findings can tell us	14
Identity and learning	14
Inclusive practices	14
Widening participation in higher education	14
Case study: Eton College on 'promoting well-being'	16
Case study: Mulberry School for Girls on 'you don't have to be posh to be privileged'	18
International comparisons	20
Case study: Mary James on curriculum reform in Hong Kong	20
The Children's Plan in England: how can TLRP evidence inform further thinking?	22
Skills for life	22
Learning careers	22
Thinking skills and subject learning	23
Emotional literacy, learning and relationships	23
Children should be seen and heard	23
Let's hear it for parent-child-teacher power!	24
Assessment	25
Assessment and learning	25
Consulting pupils on assessment	26
Learning how to learn	26
Pedagogy	27
Teacher learning: towards a framework for trusting teachers	28
TLRP schools projects	30
References	32



This Commentary has been written by Diane Hofkins, education journalist, at the invitation of TLRP (November 2008)

For further material on schools, please visit:

Early years projects: <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/earlyyears.html>  
Primary school projects: <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/primary.html>  
Secondary school projects: <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/secondary.html>  
Multi-phase projects: <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/across.html>  
Teachers' guide to TLRP findings: <http://www.tlrp.org/findings.html>



## Introduction

This TLRP Commentary, the eleventh to be published, comes from the pen of Diane Hofkins, an experienced journalist and commentator on policy and practice in school education. She takes TLRP's integrated overview of research findings, expressed as '10 principles for effective teaching and learning', and applies them to contemporary circumstances. In particular, they are used to comment on the development of new policies for children's services in England in the context of widening differences in outcomes based on social class.

Hofkins applies this analysis to the policies of both the Labour administration and Conservative opposition in England, to private and state school case studies and to comparisons within and beyond the UK.

The result affirms the broad trend of policy in thinking holistically about the experiences and circumstances of children and young people. Aspirations for 'joined up policy' are complemented by TLRP's holistic analysis of the wide range of factors which impact on educational outcomes.

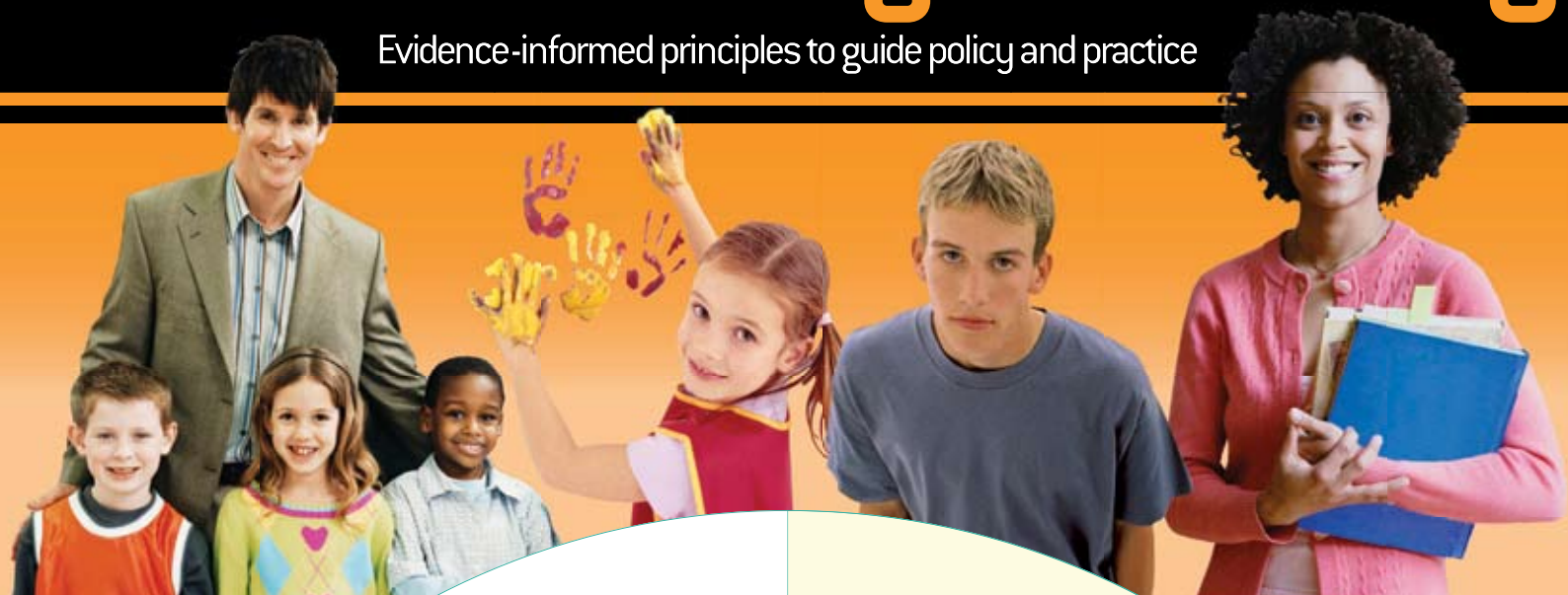
Hofkins starts with a challenge: 'What is education for?'. She shows that concern for standards and knowledge has to be balanced by a commitment to a broad education for personal and social development.

She also points to areas which merit further consideration if enduring improvements are to be made. In particular, she is doubtful that changes in school structures can overcome social inequalities, and instead urges more sustained attention to the quality of teaching, learning and social processes within schools. Ensuring that assessment requirements match educational goals is one key element. Despite recent changes in lower secondary testing in England, this has been only partly achieved. Hofkins also argues that teachers must have sufficient autonomy to exercise professional judgement within an appropriate framework of accountability and a commitment to high quality pedagogy. TLRP's principles may have a role to play in the development of such a framework, and we look forward to future developments of this sort.

**Professor Andrew Pollard**  
Director, TLRP

# Effective teaching and learning

Evidence-informed principles to guide policy and practice



## 10 DEMANDS CONSISTENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS WITH SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING AS THEIR PRIMARY FOCUS

Policies at national, local and institutional levels need to recognise the fundamental importance of teaching and learning. They should be designed to make sure everyone has access to learning environments in which they can thrive.

## 9 DEPENDS ON TEACHER LEARNING

The importance of teachers learning continuously in order to develop their knowledge and skills, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom inquiry, should be recognised and supported.

## 8 RECOGNISES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INFORMAL LEARNING

Informal learning, such as learning out of school, should be recognised as being at least as significant as formal learning and should be valued and used appropriately in formal education.

## 7 FOSTERS BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Learning is a social activity. Learners should be encouraged to work with others, to share ideas and to build knowledge together. Consulting learners and giving them a voice is both an expectation and a right.

## 6 PROMOTES THE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE LEARNER

A chief goal of teaching and learning should be the promotion of learners' independence and autonomy. This involves acquiring a repertoire of learning strategies and practices, developing a positive attitude towards learning, and confidence in oneself as a good learner.

## 1 EQUIPS LEARNERS FOR LIFE IN ITS BROADEST SENSE

Learning should aim to help people to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens and workers and to flourish as individuals in a diverse and changing society. This implies a broad view of learning outcomes and that equity and social justice are taken seriously.

## 2 ENGAGES WITH VALUED FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

Teaching and learning should engage with the big ideas, facts, processes, language and narratives of subjects so that learners understand what constitutes quality and standards in particular disciplines.

## 3 RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

Teaching should take account of what learners know already in order to plan their next steps. This means building on prior learning as well as taking account of the personal and cultural experiences of different groups.

## 4 REQUIRES THE TEACHER TO SCAFFOLD LEARNING

Teachers should provide activities which support learners as they move forward, not just intellectually, but also socially and emotionally, so that once these supports are removed, the learning is secure.

## 5 NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO BE CONGRUENT WITH LEARNING

Assessment should help to advance learning as well as to determine whether learning has taken place. It should be designed and carried out so that it measures learning outcomes in a dependable way and also provides feedback for future learning.



## What is education for?

A typical 14-year-old, slouched in the classroom and gazing out of the window on a wet Thursday afternoon, might ask just why they are in school. Society should be able to answer convincingly.

We should be clear about what education means to society, and also what it means for the individual. This is a question that has been under debate since ancient times.

“Plato’s most revolutionary idea was that education was the business of the state,” writes the contemporary philosopher Julian Baggini. This notion is accepted today by all but the most right-wing thinkers. But in the 19th century, Baggini notes, the women’s rights pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft “recognised that education would reflect the cultural norms of the day. If these norms were defective, the education system itself would help perpetuate injustice”.

Despite the best attempts of educationists and politicians to stop schools from perpetuating society’s injustices, Wollstonecraft’s warning remains apt. One of today’s biggest political battlegrounds is over how the school system can do more to equalise children’s chances in life. The Labour government is adding more targets with the aim of helping children from deprived backgrounds to do better, while the Conservative opposition says that more freedom and choice are needed.

When The Times Educational Supplement asked a range of thinkers ‘What education is for?’, one of New Labour’s education policy architects, Sir Michael Barber, gave a workmanlike definition: “For individuals, the purpose is to achieve personal fulfilment, to open up opportunity and to enable them to take an interest in and contribute to the world around them. For society, education should prepare young people for success in life and for work. For the benefit of civilisation, education should cherish and enhance the best that has been thought and said and done.”

And – paraphrasing Socrates’s two-word adage, “know thyself” - an Ipswich headteacher said, “I believe education is for understanding ‘who I am’ and developing ‘who I want to be’.”

The authoritative findings of the TLRP’s 22 schools projects have much to contribute to this discussion. The TLRP has drawn on their extensive research to develop a set of 10 evidence-informed principles for effective teaching and learning. Some of these engage with the processes of learning: for instance, “assessment needs to be congruent with learning”. Others relate to the question of what education is for. Among these are the principles that effective teaching and learning “equips learners for life in its broadest sense”, “engages with valued forms of knowledge” and “fosters both individual and social processes and outcomes” (see opposite). For example, when children engaged in group work they showed gains in social-emotional relationships, behaviour and participation, as well as higher conceptual learning.

Nor is education all about outcomes. It is important to see it as an experience in itself. In the Children’s Plan, the DCSF says that children should enjoy their time in school as well as coming out prepared for later stages of education and life. It emphasises “well-being” and has drafted detailed guidelines for schools on ways to promote it.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority says the curriculum “should inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for the future”. It wants the secondary curriculum to enable all young people to become

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.





The QCA also sets out the values which should underpin education. These, it says, should relate to the self (the uniqueness of each person), relationships, the diversity of our society, and the environment.

But what about that 14-year-old? Can we go a bit further, and ask what sort of person we hope she or he will be on the way to becoming when they complete their full-time education?

This is the central question being examined by the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education: What counts as an educated 19-year-old? “Even if the question is not systematically asked, answers are implicit in the very content of the curriculum, in the way in which young people are expected to learn, in the relationships between teacher and taught, and in the organisational arrangements for education and training,” says the soon-to-be published report’s chapter on aims and values.

The review goes further than Michael Barber, and wants young people to consider how life should be lived. The draft says: “Part of what is distinctive of being a person is the capacity to shape one’s life according to what one believes to be right... The young learners can, and should be helped to, reflect on how they should live their lives, commit themselves to notions of justice, care about the environment and other social and moral issues.” It takes an idealistic stance that might capture that hypothetical 14-year-old’s imagination. “It is not enough to have knowledge; one needs also the dispositions to apply that knowledge in the creation of a better world.”

TLRP projects show how schools can help children to develop those dispositions. The Consulting Pupils project<sup>13</sup> showed that when children are genuinely involved in making decisions about things that matter to their school experience, they are more likely to commit themselves to learning.

Children, just like teachers, know when a consultation is just for show. As the researchers say, “Policy-makers know something about consultation, about when it is genuine and when simply symbolic.” They add: “being consulted genuinely can help pupils feel that they are respected as individuals and as a body within the school and that they can make a real contribution.” Democratic schools help produce good citizens.

The present government is sincere in its wish to develop a generation of children who are confident, autonomous lifelong learners. Yet how can children learn to take risks and exercise judgment when their teachers feel they need permission to implement ideas which are not officially approved? Genuine consultation with teachers is as important as listening to children.

Teachers told researchers in the TLRP’s Learning How to Learn project<sup>16</sup> that their principles pulled them in one direction and the demands of league tables and performance targets were dragging them in another. Yet, the researchers found that the more reflective teachers became, the easier it was for them to align their teaching with their beliefs. The project found that the most successful teachers were those who took responsibility for what happened in their classrooms. They did not blame their students, or external factors, for what happened in their class.

TLRP research has shown that an ethos of respect, consultation and cooperation helps children learn. They gain confidence, resilience and skills for learning, and begin to grow into the sort of person envisaged in the 14-19 review. It has long been established that engagement leads to success and success leads to engagement in a virtuous circle.

Our idea of what constitutes an educated person is now much broader than the facts they should know. Students will diversify and specialise by the age of 19, and each will develop their own strengths. But knowledge remains at the heart of education. A common bond of shared knowledge, narratives and insights unites societies. Its exact content at any given time is a proper matter for permanent revolution.





## What are the politicians saying?

After more than a decade in power in England, New Labour can claim measurable improvement in children's attainment at school. For example, in 1997, more than half of secondary schools had fewer than 30% of pupils gaining five good GCSEs, including maths and English. Today it is less than a fifth. They have also reduced the number of children living in poverty by 600,000.

Never the less, the Conservatives have been able to attack them for allowing the education gap between rich and poor to widen. Their statistics showed that in the most deprived areas some 55% of secondaries were still below the GCSE threshold of 30% getting five good GCSEs, while in the richest neighbourhoods the figure was only 3%. These were countered by alternative figures from Labour – but the very fact that the argument was inconclusive suggests that the Government has not narrowed the gap decisively enough.

An unacceptably wide spread of achievement persists, and, as international comparisons such as PISA show, it is much wider than in countries such as Finland and Hong Kong. Although a commendable proportion of unsuccessful schools have turned around, it remains the case that neither parental choice, nor a good school in every neighbourhood is a reality for many of Britain's poorest children.

All three main parties believe that allowing parents, charities (including private schools) and businesses to have a greater hand in the running of schools will help both these causes – although commentators have asked whether the departure of academies programme architect Lord Adonis from the DCSF in autumn 2008 could signal a change in Labour thinking. However, Labour remains committed to expanding the academies programme, while the Tories and Liberal Democrats propose new taxpayer-funded 'private' schools. Meanwhile, the recent financial crisis raises questions about the level of confidence by all parties in the ability of business to help pay for education - or even to help run it.

Thus, whilst all parties speak of placing more trust in teachers and the importance of standards above structures, there still remains a seemingly irresistible political urge to try to improve learning by changing the structures.

While some structures do aid the learning work of teachers and students (extended schools should make it easier for agencies to work together for the benefit of children, for example), it is what goes on inside (and outside) those school buildings that really matters. Those relationships within the world of education – between teacher and student, teacher and teacher, head and teacher, government and school, parent and school and student and student – underpin every one of the TLRP's 10 principles for teaching and learning.

These principles are interlinked and complementary. They acknowledge the importance both of knowledge – the big ideas, facts and narratives of individual subjects, and the process of learning – the importance of helping children to become confident, independent learners. They recognise the connection between what happens in school and in children's other lives. They demand consistency. Assessment and learning need to be aligned. Teacher learning enhances children's learning.

TLRP's principles hold central and local governments and school leaders responsible for promoting children's learning. If effective teaching and learning are the core functions of schools (and what else could be?) they should be at the heart of policy at national and school level.







Every Child Matters (DfES 2003), a major policy initiative in England, sought to build public services around children and families. In particular, it established five outcomes that are sought for each child and young person:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution;
- achieve economic well-being.

This child-focused approach is intended to change the way schools think about their pupils – more as people in the round, less as learning machines. This has been supported by the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme, and by draft guidance on promoting well-being.

Every Child Matters showed a determination to bridge the gap between rich and poor in education. Building on this, The Children's Plan (DCSF 2007) attempts to show how this can be done.

The DCSF's six strategic objectives are unarguable:

- secure the health and wellbeing of children and young people;
- safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- achieve world-class standards;
- close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond;
- keep children and young people on the path to success.

So are many of the 2020 goals, for example:

- enhancing children's wellbeing, particularly at key transition points in their lives;
- participating in positive activities to develop personal and social skills;
- satisfying employers that young people are ready for work.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have similar plans, though they require less structural change than England's. All are encouraging more interagency working and emphasising children's well-being.





## Children's policies across the UK

### Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a 10-year strategy for children and young people (2006-2016). It has a very substantial focus on health and well-being, and on overcoming the rifts which remain after recent years of conflict. It seeks to develop evidence bases to chart progress indicating that children and young people are:

- healthy;
- enjoying, learning and achieving;
- living in safety and with stability;
- experiencing economic and environmental well-being;
- contributing positively to community and society;
- living in a society which respects their rights.

The strategy hopes to boost exam results, but does not detail many specific targets. It also outlines entitlements, such as participating in the arts, going to the public library, taking part in sports and attending museums. One of its eight pledges is to develop needs-driven and evidence-based practice. Northern Ireland is developing a common assessment model, which aims to:

- respect the rights of children and young people;
- adopt a child-centred approach;
- build on the strengths of the family;
- involve children, young people and carers in the assessment of their needs;
- apply evidenced and knowledge based approaches;
- emphasise that assessment is a continuing process and not an 'event';
- promote inter-agency involvement;
- base it on shared values.

### Scotland

Scotland has developed a plan entitled 'Getting it Right for Every Child'. The 'Vision of Scotland's Ministers for all Scottish children' describes these broad needs:

- safe: protected from abuse, neglect or harm;
- healthy: having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices;
- achieving: being supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem;
- nurtured: having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting;
- active: having opportunities to take part in play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development;
- respected: having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them;
- responsible: having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities;
- included: having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn;



## Wales

The Learning Country, Wales's education and lifelong learning plan, has created a 3-7 play-based Foundation Phase, piloted the Welsh Baccalaureate and abolished statutory testing at 7, 11 and 14.

Wales's seven core aims for children and young people state that they should all:

- have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development;
- have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including personal and social skills;
- enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- be listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
- be not disadvantaged by any type of poverty.

Wales has created Young People's Partnerships in each local authority area and has established the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales – 'Funky Dragon'.

The emergence of these wide-ranging plans for the holistic support of children and young people is strongly endorsed by TLRP findings. Through almost every project, there emerged an awareness of the significance of informal learning and of the ways in which social circumstances and opportunities affect learning outcomes. These insights are reflected in TLRP principles 7 and 8.

## England

It is interesting however, to note that England's approach is distinctive in UK terms - because of the extent of its numerical targets. For example, England's Children's Plan wants every five-year-old to be ready for success in school, with at least 90% 'developing well' across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Government recognises that, as research has shown, there is already a striking attainment gap between middle-class and socially deprived children of 22 months. This target is a well-meaning attempt to raise expectations for disadvantaged children. It is coupled with increased numbers of early years centres, nursery places for deprived two-year-olds and more support for parents, and reflects the knowledge about the positive impact of good pre-school education that the TLRP associate project EPPE (Effective Pre-School and Primary Education)<sup>2</sup> has demonstrated. However, commentators have noted that such a target could brand children as failures before they even start school and cause teachers to look over their shoulders rather than focusing squarely on the children.





Another target in England is at least 90% achieving level 4 or above in English and maths by 11. The evidence is legion that such goals have led to teaching to the test and a narrow curriculum for children at the height of their inquisitive powers, and hardly needs rehearsing here. The Conservative Public Services Improvement Policy Group said this about the goal of 90% reaching five A\*-C GCSEs by 2020: 'When a measure becomes the target it ceases to be the measure.' This 'mechanistic approach of pulling levers from the centre' was unlikely to tackle the real problems, they said. These needed a more sensitive approach to the general well-being of pupils.

The Children's Plan, which appeared several months after the Conservative Party report, is all about improving children's well-being, yet it insists on attempting to measure what many would see as unmeasurable. For example, indicators of schools' promotion of children's well-being are being developed, and are to be deployed by OFSTED. At the same time, the government aims to enhance gifted and talented provision by developing new indicators to show the performance of pupils achieving level 7 or above in English, maths and science – a measurement that can fairly be described as reductionist.

There are several dangers here. One is that socio-economic circumstances won't be sufficiently taken into account. Another is that schools could follow the letter, rather than the spirit, of the measures, and end up ticking more boxes rather than really nurturing children with exceptional potential.

Children, schools and education are generally more subtle than this. There is much solid research evidence about 'what works' in teaching and learning, but it cannot be applied without awareness of context and priorities. As TLRP director Andrew Pollard says, proposals for the improvement of teaching and learning are always mediated by a teacher's judgment. 'The essence of professionalism is the exercise of skills, knowledge and judgement for the public good.'

Just before this Commentary went to press in Autumn 2008, there were signs of change, as the English Government announced the end of Key Stage 3 SATs. These tests and their marking had been unreliable and seen by many as irrelevant, yet they had led to 'teaching to the test'. The DCSF proposes instead improved classroom assessment, frequent reporting to parents and national-level sampling at Key Stage 3 to monitor the performance of the system as a whole. The end of SATs at 14 will ease the way to a more expansive teaching and learning environment as the new curriculum takes effect. Primary schools in England remain hugely disappointed that Key Stage 2 SATs remain, even though their distorting effects and unintended consequences have been documented since their introduction (which, interestingly, reflected earlier Conservative Party policies).





## Class and inclusion

After years of being little-mentioned, social class is now being discussed forthrightly in political discourse. All parties are developing policies aimed at equalising opportunity, whether through structures such as academies or extended schools, by measures such as providing laptops or theatre tickets, or through healthy eating campaigns.

Class differences in life experiences, opportunities and even basic nutrition are stark. Restoring Pride to our Public Services, the Conservative Public Services Improvement Policy Group comments that “ghettos of disadvantage” are developing, where bad schools serve the most deprived areas. They say:

“The stakes are high – the difference between good and failing schools is stark. At the top 200 state schools, 95 per cent of children get five good GCSEs; at the other end of the scale, just 4 per cent of pupils get five good GCSEs at the worst performing state school. Research has demonstrated that whereas getting five good GCSEs generates a 27.5 per cent financial return for men, and 23.5 per cent for women... strikingly, GCSE qualifications at grade D or below have more or less a zero return. This is where life-chances are won and lost.”

But these are not problems for schools to deal with alone. As the Public Services Improvement Policy Group says: “Housing policy is in urgent need of reform, as the place where you live determines access to good education as much or more than almost any other factor. Housing estates which concentrate problem families together offer the school in that catchment pupils who bring with them the most difficult problems in our society.”





## What TLRP findings can tell us

The TLRP's work on learner identities, on inclusion and on widening participation in higher education can help inform this debate.

### Identity and learning

The identity and learning project<sup>22</sup> followed small cohorts of working-class and middle-class children through their pupil careers until age 16, to examine what helped and hindered them and the impact of social contexts. It found that children build their own school and learning identities in response to the way they are treated by teachers and other students, and to the experiences they have as they move through education.

Though children are extremely active in the construction and negotiation of their lives, they act within the historical, economic, political and cultural context of their communities and society. This results in discrepancies of resource and opportunity associated with social class, gender and ethnicity.

Middle-class students experienced relative consistency between their families' values and expectations and those of the independent and selective schools they attended. However, comprehensive school pupils often experienced disparities in the discourse, values and expectations in their homes, schools and peer groups. Fitting in within such varied contexts was sometimes difficult for young learners, with the presentational challenges making it more difficult to develop and sustain a coherent identity.

Authentic personalised provision is more important for these learners than for others, but is also harder to establish and sustain. Competition and 'choice' between schools have produced differentiated educational experiences and reproduced inequalities.

### Inclusive practices in schools

If schools are to be inclusive, teachers need to question some of their assumptions about how children learn. Two other projects, Inclusive Practices in schools<sup>14</sup> and Prosiect Dysgu Cydradd (Facilitating Teacher Engagement in Inclusive Practices)<sup>12</sup> concluded that many pupils will not do better simply through harder and longer teaching of the curriculum. Teachers have to strengthen the factors that underpin learning, such as enjoyment and self-esteem. Addressing underachievement and inclusion means that the national focus on measurable outcomes needs to be broadened to include these factors.

These projects have helped teachers to see that pupils' achievement is mediated by factors other than direct teaching, such as the way individuals learn, their engagement with learning and their view of themselves as learners. They came to believe that as teachers they could directly influence these underlying factors. Some schools in the projects' networks began to question whether their emphasis on the direct teaching of writing suited some of their disadvantaged pupils. They spent less time on writing and embarked on a programme of experiential learning, oral work and thinking skills.

### Widening participation in higher education

More than three-quarters of pupils from professional families go on to study for a degree, but only 14 per cent of those from unskilled backgrounds do so. But if achievement at school is taken into account, the socio-economic gap virtually disappears. Irrespective of background, pupils with similar results between the ages of 11 and 18 are equally likely to attend university.



TLRP's large scale, quantitative project on widening participation<sup>23</sup> found that policy-makers need to address the gap in achievement that exists at the start of secondary schooling and widens over the subsequent years. Analysis of the transitions made by pupils between key stage 2 and key stage 4 found that deprived children who do catch up and perform well in their GCSEs are as likely to go to university as those from wealthier families. So it is vital to concentrate on improving performance at Key Stage 4, and on encouraging deprived children to stay on beyond GCSE.

Poor expectations are sometimes cited as the reason that deprived children do less well at school. However, the project found no evidence of systematic bias on the part of teachers. But the majority of these children go to lower-achieving secondary schools as measured by value-added scores. This is likely to be a fundamental reason why they do not go on to university.

If policy makers concentrate on enabling deprived children to go to high-achieving schools, such children are more likely to become high achievers themselves, concluded the project's researchers.





## Case study: Eton college on 'promoting well-being'

Why should we be interested in Eton College? With its £28,000 annual fees and boys in morning coats, what can it possibly tell the rest of us?

Eton's approach to educating the leaders of tomorrow is shaped by its ability to be literally the best that money can buy. With little governmental or financial constraint, Eton is in a position to do exactly what its own leaders believe is best for the students.

"The defining quality of Eton is the relationship between teacher and pupil," says Tony Little, the headmaster. "Even at 13, the boys are treated seriously."

Each has his own room, so that when the housemaster comes round, he talks to that boy as an individual, rather than to a crowd of teenagers. The house system is personalised, and each boarding house is known by the housemaster's name, rather than the building's. Housemasters forge personal relationships with parents as well as with their sons.

Little says that though Eton is a large school, with 1300 boys aged 13-18, all boarders, it is very hard for anyone to slip through the net. There are 50 boys in each house, but the individual 13-year-old arrives as part of a unit of 10. Houses have a housemaster and his family, and a "dame" ("a matron-plus") to look after the boys' well-being. Every student shares an academic tutor with five others and attends a tutorial every evening in the teacher's home. Every teacher lives on campus, so Eton is fully a learning community.

When Little talks about high expectations, he is speaking of achievement at a stratospheric level. "Our starting point is assuming everyone will go to Oxford or Cambridge, and that they're all going to be in the First XV," he says. "Learning to adjust your expectations is part of growing up."

Eighteen prime ministers were educated there, and the 19th could be on the way if Tory Leader David Cameron meets his own high expectations. This history, though not trumpeted in lessons, reminds the boys of what they can achieve, says Little.

In national myth, public schools are thought to build character through cold showers, early morning runs, bullying and enforced study of Greek. Little says that both academic standards and attitudes have improved dramatically in the past 30-40 years.

In public discourse, there is a growing view that we want children to gain personal and emotional literacy. This is not so different from the old concept of "character" which is fundamental at Eton. Boys are expected to aim for the best, do things for themselves (they are given a great deal of responsibility), and not to whinge, snipe or hang on to someone else's coat-tails, says Little. "Young men go out into the world with a general belief that they can make a difference," though he admits that this attitude can "tip into arrogance sometimes".

The expectation that boys will develop emotional maturity is central. "I expect them to stand up for themselves and to stand up for a purpose greater than themselves," says the headmaster.

There is no denying that it is a privilege to attend a school like Eton, Little admits. But he points out that its intake is more diverse than in the past. A fifth receive financial help, and students range from the son of a Somali refugee to "the inhabitant of the castle down the road".

The education at Eton easily fulfils most of the TLRP's 10 principles of effective teaching and learning. "There are many ways to teach and many ways to learn," says the college's website. "Unsurprisingly, then, there is no single teaching-style at Eton. Masters are encouraged to develop their delivery in ways with which they are comfortable, and to adapt their methods to the varying needs of boys of different kinds and levels of ability." Teachers are trained in the latest technology, but "in some cases nothing suits the delivery of a topic better than a Master standing in front of a class and encouraging boys to discuss something with him."





When it comes to Principle 2, Engaging with Valued Forms of Knowledge, Little is worried about a national “massive knowledge deficit” caused by the current stress on skills. Eton switched to the International GCSE syllabuses in science because they are more knowledge-based. The motivation was to help more boys get places at Oxbridge, but the surprising side effect was that results and take-up both went up.

Eton selects its pupils not just on academic ability, but on their wider interests and character. All have motivated parents. They have high expectations, but the very circumstance of studying at Eton means they are likely to be met.

### What can we learn from Eton?

It illustrates the value of professional autonomy, of respecting each student as an individual, and of helping each to develop his strengths. It demonstrates the importance of relationships, and of dialogic teaching. It is also a reminder that the gap between the privileged and underprivileged in society remains huge and is extremely difficult to overcome. Eton’s tutor system can be seen as a model for the Government’s plan to assign a tutor to each secondary pupil to support them and their parents.

For Old Etonians, the world truly is their oyster. While state schools cannot give students on a council estate the contacts that Eton does, they can instil the self-belief which is crucial to success, and encourage more real-life responsibility.

Eton also reminds us that personal skills cannot replace knowledge. A sense of mastery, and the satisfaction of knowing things, matters to children. But personal skills are crucial. For example, the English Speaking Board works with many independent schools – but few state schools – to teach public speaking. If every state school child was able to go out into the world with the social ease and articulacy of their privately-educated peers, they would make a more confident entry into adulthood.





## Case study: Mulberry School for Girls on 'you don't have to be posh to be privileged'

Mulberry School for Girls sends young women out into the world, ready to take it on. Before leaving school, they will have gained the confidence which comes from being able to perform and speak in public, from artistic endeavour, from travel and from the responsibilities of leadership. The girls are committed to their studies, to each other, to the school, and to making the world a better place.

"Strong business links complement the already sharp focus on academic standards so that students are very well prepared for their future economic well-being," said OFSTED of the school in 2007.

As a designated international school, Mulberry's students run an annual youth conference attended by young people from 17 London schools and delegates from abroad, addressed by national speakers such as Liberty's director Shami Chakrabarti and musical rebel Billy Bragg, who left them an autographed guitar. Students do everything: inviting the speakers, organising the arrangements, preparing the food.

Students and their parents believe in hard work and in the power of education to open up their futures. But this is by no means a posh school. Mulberry is reached by walking through jangling street markets, past old tenements and newer social housing, by City offices and noisy traffic. Look up and there is the Gherkin. This is one of England's most deprived boroughs, Tower Hamlets, with a spending allocation of £6000 per secondary pupil.

Ninety-six per cent of Mulberry's students come from Bangladeshi families, and many are recent immigrants. Nearly all speak English as an additional language and the proportion taking up free school meals is five times the national average. Yet, between 80 and 90 per cent of Mulberry's Year 13 students go to university every year, mostly to top London institutions such as the LSE, SOAS, Imperial College and Goldsmiths. Its A level results are rated "outstanding".

Mulberry does not face the challenges of a highly diverse co-ed intake. Its challenge is to provide its students with every opportunity for personal development, confidence-building and cultural experiences that middle class children would expect, despite the extreme poverty in which many of them live.

For headteacher Vanessa Ogden, this means making available real experiences in every sphere – drama, music, sport, leadership, art (it became a specialist arts college in 2006), public speaking, business, dance and more – so that every one of the 1,400 girls finds her talents. Last year, ten Year 10 girls, working with writer in residence Fin Kennedy and theatre director Julia Voce, brought their production, Mehndi Nights, to the Edinburgh Fringe, "working in the same space as professionals," says Ogden. They earned a four-star rating from The Scotsman.

Mulberry girls host London's model UN on behalf of Merrill Lynch, and two groups of six girls have attended the UN schools conference in New York and had the chance to live with families there. "It's a great opportunity to speak in the hall and represent the country," says Ogden. In addition to Mulberry Theatre Company, there are Mulberry Films and Mulberry Radio. Students go to sports academies, do journalism with help from Reuters, and forge links with countries on different continents.

No-one is left behind. Through the Magic Me organisation, girls work with older women of all backgrounds on art projects. The participants this year were "a small group of girls who need that extra involvement to develop their confidence further," says the head. She is also determined that every child should have equal opportunities to succeed, whatever their abilities. "We believe that any girl who comes to school has a right to continue her education in the same way," she says. It means some girls, usually with special needs, spend three or four years in the sixth form. One such student gained four As at A-level and was university-bound.



Meanwhile, two girls are applying to Cambridge and Harvard this year, 24 are taking up an Oxbridge mentoring programme and a few attended a summer school at Eton.

“We take the view that there are two pillars to educational provision,” says Ogden. “One is about pedagogy and what happens in the classroom. That’s where the teaching happens that enables students to become qualified. The second pillar is around pastoral care and well-being – creating a sense of personal achievement which builds confidence and which enables young women to take risks in terms of being enterprising and creative, and being able to develop leadership skills as well. We want them to become confident in their capacity to create some kind of positive social change. It’s important to get the balance right.”

The motto in the entrance hallway is Confidence, Creativity, Leadership and Learning for Young Women. This ethos helps to break down social barriers, Ogden says. “These girls deserve it. They work, they’re ambitious, their parents are ambitious for them, they want to do well.”

### What can we learn from Mulberry?

As a well-known TV advert says, you don’t have to be posh to be privileged. Like Eton, Mulberry fulfils the TLRP’s principles of effective teaching and learning, and offers the cultural opportunities the government encourages. For example, principle 4, “requires the teacher to scaffold learning,” is met not just in lessons, but through the school’s ethos of giving the girls support in a huge range of activities so they can build their own inner strength.

Principle 9, “depends on teacher learning”, is taken seriously. Mulberry is a designated Training School and a Leading Edge school with an arts specialism. There are a number of professional development projects which include the development of pupil voice, practitioner research, middle and senior leadership training and development work in teaching and learning.

Principle 10, “demands consistent policy frameworks with support for teaching and learning as their primary focus”, underpins everything the school does. The school leadership promotes the expansive learning ethos that permeates Mulberry, and they in turn are supported by the local authority in its determination to bring opportunity to the children of Tower Hamlets.





## International comparisons

PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment, is the triennial survey of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds carried out through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its 2006 survey ranked Britain 17th among 57 countries in literacy, 24th in mathematics and 14th in science. Britain now spends just above the rich-country average on education.

The OECD analysis draws some general conclusions about the qualities of effective educational systems:

- “Students in countries where professional autonomy is more common tend to do better in the science assessment, regardless of whether or not they themselves are enrolled in relatively autonomous schools... These results suggest that greater autonomy has a general impact at the system level, perhaps deriving from the greater independence of school managers in systems that authorise choice of responses to local conditions.”
- The earlier students are stratified into separate institutions or programmes, the stronger the impact of a school's average socio-economic background on performance.
- Schools that divided students by ability for all subjects tended to have lower student performance, on average.
- Competition with other schools is associated with better results, over and above the relationship with student background.
- There is a significant positive association between schools making their achievement data public and having stronger results.

### Case study: Mary James on curriculum reform in Hong Kong

In international surveys of student achievement, Hong Kong comes near the top. In 2006 it was ranked second in the PIRLS survey of reading comprehension of 10-year-olds. And in the same year it was placed second in science, third in reading and third in mathematics by the PISA survey of 15-year-olds. Both studies showed significant progress in scores since the equivalent surveys five years earlier. So Hong Kong must be doing something right.

Yet this decade has been a time of rapid, radical and risky change in Hong Kong. Soon after it was returned to China in 1997, the whole education system was reviewed, followed by a ten-year plan for root and branch reform. Entitled ‘Learning for Life, Learning through Life’ these plans sought to enable each individual be prepared for life long learning to meet the challenges of the new century. They also called for an education system ‘rich in tradition but cosmopolitan and culturally diverse’ to acknowledge the continuing importance of Hong Kong as a bridge between the East and the West.

Working out the detail has not been easy, and implementation has been equally challenging. But the PIRLS and PISA results suggest that efforts have not been wasted.

One fascinating feature of the reform efforts is the extent to which Hong Kong, after its return to China, has continued to seek the best ideas from across the world, and a number of TLRP researchers have been actively involved as advisers. For example, the overseas member of Hong Kong's Curriculum Development Council, I have made four visits since 2000, most recently, in April 2008 to see how the reforms were embedding.



The curricular reforms for five to 14-year-olds involve five essential learning experiences, eight key learning areas, eight generic skills and five 'values and attitudes'. There are no detailed lesson schemes and schools are expected to work out their own programmes according to their judgement of students' needs. Textbooks still have a powerful influence but these have to be approved by the Education Bureau, so that in principle they can be brought into alignment with new curriculum aims.

Tin Shui Wai Methodist Primary School serves an estate of high-rise apartments with some social problems, so it stays open until 9 pm. to provide care for the many children who would find no adult at home until late in the evening. The school's principal, So Ping Fai, chose his young and enthusiastic staff carefully and concentrated, in the first years, on detailed curriculum planning.

Every morning the staff are in school at 8.45 and the first hour is spent in collaborative planning. As in many other schools in the Asia Pacific region, the staff rooms are primarily workplaces where teachers, equipped with desks, computers and bookcases, can work both individually and in teams.

The school joined a pilot on small class teaching, to which Maurice Galton, of the TLRP Group Work project<sup>7,15</sup>, was a consultant. Hong Kong teachers have little experience with small-class teaching and the changes in their roles and practices that this requires are considerable, so the principal instituted a professional development programme.

Every Wednesday, teachers are expected either to teach and be observed by their colleagues, or to visit another classroom and observe another teacher. At the end of each lesson both the teacher and observer write a short comment on the lesson. The formal timetable ends an hour earlier on Wednesdays to enable teachers to meet and discuss these lessons and their observations.

When I visited, I observed a young teacher teaching Chinese to 20 first-graders. The lesson flowed from individual, to paired, to whole class activity and from speaking, to writing and to reading. The children were so deeply engrossed that they hardly noticed the ten adult observers in the room.

Fanny Law, the Permanent Secretary for Education during the first five years of the reforms, has said, "The quality of education cannot exceed the quality of teachers. ... Education reform needs not only resources, but also professional thinking and ability." This resonates strongly with a key finding of TLRP schools projects working during this very same period in educational history.



Mary James was TLRP Deputy Director from 2002 to 2007. The other TLRP researchers advising Hong Kong included Professors John Elliott, Maurice Galton, John MacBeath and Robin Millar. TLRP researchers travelled to East Asia for an International Symposium on Teaching, Learning and Assessment hosted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education from 22-24th April, 2008. The three day symposium gave them the opportunity to visit schools, hear about research on related areas in the Asian Pacific region (including Singapore and Australia) and discuss further collaborations.



## The Children's Plan in England: how can TLRP evidence inform further thinking?

### Skills for life

The Children's Plan reminds us that "when this generation of children and young people leave education, they will need higher skills to succeed in employment". It expresses determination to help primary children who are lagging behind in basic skills with one-to-one coaching in maths, reading and writing, and to raise GCSE results for the vast majority of teenagers.

Alongside the high academic targets, the government emphasises personal development, especially through the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme, and the development of skills for life and work through the national curriculum. The Children's Plan states that one of the messages ministers received through their consultations was that "children need to be treated more as individuals and not simply looked at in terms of attainment levels. Personal, social and emotional capabilities are closely related to educational attainment, success in the labour market, and to children's well-being." It also speaks of the need "to develop the ability to think and act creatively and be innovative".

Teacher unions and many other educationists remain concerned. Is well-being an add-on, or an integral part of education? The DCSF's draft guidance on schools' role in promoting well-being does not seem to integrate well-being and the curriculum in an authentic way.

The guidance says that "excellent teaching and learning to unlock the potential of every child must continue to be the core business of schools, on which they have the lead role. But schools can and do also make a significant contribution to other aspects of well-being, both because these are important in their own right for a good childhood and because they impact on children's ability to learn and develop."

The TLRP's 10 principles make it clear that it is important to harmonise different aspects of learning. Principle 1 – "equips learners for life in its broadest sense" – shows the link between learning skills and life skills. Principle 7 – "fosters both individual and social processes and outcomes" – highlights the whole school as a learning community. Principle 8 – "recognises the significance of informal learning" – accepts that learning goes on all the time, and should not be compartmentalised. Not only do children learn about areas like literacy and maths outside school, but they learn about themselves, and bring these concepts, positive or negative, into the classroom.

### Learning careers

Children's attitudes, and the way they view themselves as learners, make a big difference to their success in school, and later. The work of Pollard and Filer<sup>22</sup> shows that every child builds an identity as a learner through a spiral of experiences and specific social contexts.

Their longitudinal study of small cohorts of children detailed these young people's learning journeys through their school careers. In *The Social World of Children's Learning* they conclude that:

- Pupils are more likely to become effective learners if they can develop coping strategies and ways to present themselves which work with different teachers, classroom contexts, and in relation to their peers.
- Pupils are more likely to become effective learners when they have sufficient self-confidence, capacity for self-reflection and trust from their teacher to manage higher levels of risk.





## Thinking skills and subject learning

The TLRP's Sustainable Thinking Classrooms (ACTS II)<sup>6</sup> project in Northern Ireland identified different types of classroom thinking and showed how they can relate to different subjects and topics.

ACTS developed an "infusion" approach which aims to develop children's ability to recognise and use common patterns of thinking, deepen their understanding of curriculum topics and make connections between them. Infusion can be subject-specific, or may be developed across the curriculum.

At Cranmore Integrated Primary School in Belfast, lessons which infuse thinking and social skills into lessons have become part of the "overt" curriculum. Children there work in groups to consider ideas and dilemmas. The school's involvement with the ACTS project is highlighted in a video which can be seen on the TLRP's website (<http://www.tlrp.org/pub/video.html>). It shows how children discussing citizenship take on the roles of scribe, manager, reporter and encourager as they put their heads together in groups to imagine they are the family of a boy caught shoplifting. How would they feel?

Children in the class explain the value of group work. "If I'm doing a sentence, and I get stuck, someone else's idea should help me", says a girl. You get to "look into other people's minds," says another.

"The children are having to take more responsibility for their learning," says teacher Laura Courtney. "It challenges them, but also they really enjoy it. All children of every ability can work together." She says they are more engaged, use better vocabulary and work more productively. "You have to let the children take control of what they're doing," she says. "You have to relax a wee bit and go with the children."

## Emotional literacy, learning and relationships

At Birdwell Primary in North Somerset, lessons in any subject area have both academic and social objectives. For a session on Vikings, Year 4s had been told they would have the chance to build a class set of longboats and the academic objective was to write instructions. Groups of children chose their own social objectives; "We would like you to watch out for the way we resolve conflict," a pair of boys told the teacher.

The groups wrote out their instructions for longboat construction and set to work. But 20 minutes later, the teacher asked for a "quality audience" – a request which can be made by anyone in the school, child or adult, when they think something needs to be discussed. Reminding them of the learning outcome (instruction writing), she asked each group to move clockwise to the next table, and resume building the next boat.

Unsurprisingly, the craft were not seaworthy, and the children had several things to reflect on. One was how they would write more accurate instructions next time round, and another was how it felt not to be allowed to finish their own boat.

Birdwell's headteacher, Nick Shopland, says for such a lesson to work, a school's ethos needs to be built on respect and equality, and relationships between children and teachers must be right.

## Children should be seen and heard

In preparing the Children's Plan, the Government consulted children, parents and expert panels. The plan states that parents' views will be put at the heart of government and that "services need to be shaped by and be responsive to children, young people and families".

Children's right to be consulted is enshrined in the Children Act 2004 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, which has been ratified by all four UK countries. Schools are expected to consult children through student councils and local authorities are taking steps to consult them as well.





Consulting pupils about their learning benefits not only children but teachers, schools and, in the long run, society. The TLRP's Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning project<sup>13</sup> found that the best way to raise standards for children is by working in partnership with them. Pupils who feel they matter in school are more likely to commit themselves to learning. The Children's Plan wants young people to contribute to society. When they are given responsibility in school, and feel capable and confident, their ability to look outward will be enhanced.

Children's ideas, insights and priorities have an important place in policy development. The project found that school policy is strengthened when pupils are included in substantive ways, and its researchers argue that national policy can be enhanced similarly.

True inclusion takes effort. It is important to encourage the quiet voices and not to allow a "pupil voice elite" to develop. And it is essential that children's ideas are welcomed and not simply "accommodated".

In the TLRP's Principles into Practice DVD, Bolton headteacher Tony Purcell says that without pupil consultation, the school would miss out on 2,000 people's ideas. And a student adds, "Pupil voice is important. Otherwise it's the teachers' school, not the children's school."

### Let's hear it for parent-child-teacher power!

Parent power has been the rallying cry of a string of governments. This has translated into such policies as guaranteed seats on school governing bodies, the right to turn a comprehensive into a grammar school, parental choice of school (if there is room), the right to set up new trust schools, and an entitlement to after-school care provided through the local primary.

With the Children's Plan comes an enhanced relationship between schools and parents. In particular, the government wants to boost parents' involvement with secondary schools and vice versa. Among the plan's ideas are:

- A staff member to contact parents of students about to start secondary school and information sessions for parents at the new school
- A personal tutor for every child, who knows them in the round, and is a main contact for parents
- Up-to-date information on their child's behaviour, attendance and progress.

TLRP evidence suggests additional ways to promote a three-way relationship between schools, parents and children as they make the stressful move from primary to secondary school.

The Home-School Knowledge Exchange project<sup>3</sup> is a model for more equal relationships. Researchers found that when children, parents, primary and secondary teachers share their "funds of knowledge", transition goes more smoothly and children do better in their first year after transfer. Students who attended a primary or secondary school where knowledge exchange activities had taken place made significantly greater progress in literacy from Year 6 to 7 than those who had not. They also appeared to adjust better to secondary school life.

Action researchers worked with schools in Bristol and Cardiff, and sought to help make sure that the flow of information went both ways, not just from school to home. In some cases, schools need to develop strategies for involving groups or families who are considered "at risk" or "hard to reach". In a follow-up project funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, specific strategies were developed for engaging with ten such families. These included personalised invitations, home visits,







regular phone calls and efforts to build an individual relationship with each family.

The families became more engaged with the project than had been predicted, and the children settled better than expected at secondary school.

Drama activities were also used to support transfer. In "Ridiculous rumours", children invented far-fetched tales about secondary school and then talked about their nature. Others involved role play, acting out body language and listening to parents talk about their own hopes and fears.

Secondary children made videos about life in secondary school featuring Year 7 students and their teachers and parents. These were watched by Year 6 pupils, their parents and teachers, and then the children produced "top tips" booklets, to which parents added. Children made passports of the skills they would need at secondary and took photographs of their out of school lives to bring to their new school.

It is fair to say that HSKE fulfilled the Children's Plan goal "to enhance children and young people's wellbeing, particularly at key transition points in their lives".

The project also ran primary literacy and numeracy exchanges for younger age groups, which gave parents insights into how the subjects are taught and how to read with their children. A particularly popular activity was the shoebox collection, in which children filled shoe boxes with artefacts from home, in discussion with their parents. This simple idea captured everyone's enthusiasm, valued children's home lives and taught teachers a great deal.

## Assessment

### Assessment and learning

England is the only one of the four UK countries which has high stakes testing at the end of primary school. Single-level 'stage not age' tests for children to take when their teachers feel they are ready are a potential alternative, but pilots are still inconclusive. However, concerns remain that targets and league tables will continue to narrow the curriculum.

Pilot single-level tests for key stage 3 were found to be ineffective, and SATs for 14-year-olds have now been abandoned. The government's decision, announced in October 2008, appears to recognise for the first time since the introduction of performance tables that monitoring of individual children's progress, that of schools and that of the system as a whole cannot be achieved through the same instruments. Ministers now propose improved teacher assessment and support for children, school 'report cards' and national-level sampling to report on the performance of the whole education system year on year.

Assessment for learning (AfL) is now an element in both the Primary and Secondary national strategies, but some of the guidance is contradictory, and educational researchers have complained that the term, defined by the Assessment Reform Group as deciding 'where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there' has been adapted to support pupil tracking through the DCSF's Assessing Pupils' Progress scheme.

As James writes in *Assessment Policy and Educational Change* (forthcoming), the ARG's definition 'has come to mean 'assessing pupils frequently according to national curriculum levels to track progress, setting new levels as targets and then working (somehow) to attain them'.





Scotland, meanwhile, has attempted to develop a coherent system that brings together assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning.

In Wales, where have been abolished, schools are piloting optional skills assessment materials in thinking, communication and number which will lead to a skills profile for Year 5 pupils.

In Northern Ireland, alongside teacher summative assessment, schools will use computer-based diagnostic assessment every key stage and develop pupil profiles. The TLRP's CPAL project investigated how children might be consulted on how such profiles should work.

### Consulting pupils on assessment

CPAL<sup>20</sup> examined pupils' participation in their own assessment from a children's rights perspective. It demonstrated that when genuine opportunities for participating in and understanding assessment are presented, pupils engage in their learning and focus on their own progress. It showed that children can be consulted directly by policy makers on educational issues and that pupils benefit when teachers' beliefs and AfL practices come together. But it also showed that teachers need support to create participative classroom cultures based on genuine AfL.

### Learning how to learn

Other TLRP findings also have much to contribute to discussion about what sort of assessment processes can help children become better and more enthusiastic learners – a key Government goal. The importance of ensuring that assessment is congruent with learning (Principle 5) is highlighted in the findings of a number of projects.

For example, the Learning How to Learn project<sup>16</sup> found that:

Assessment for Learning is about developing long-term, autonomous learning practices, and these are closely linked with the content of what is being learned.

The spirit of AfL and learning how to learn is more important than the letter. Teachers appreciate practical strategies, but they can become mechanistic and ritualized unless practices and beliefs are developed together.

Classroom-based collaborative inquiry for teacher learning is a key influence on teachers' capacity to promote learning autonomy with their pupils. Indeed, pupil learning, teacher learning and organisational learning are mirror reflections of each other.





## Pedagogy

In its document entitled *Releasing Talent for Teaching and Learning*, the DCSF says:

“The Children’s Plan sets out a vision for the 21st Century School which is a place of excellent teaching and learning and contributes to all aspects of a child’s life – health and wellbeing, safety and developing the wider experiences and skills that characterise a good childhood and set a young person up for success in adulthood.”

With the aim of reinforcing the principle that teaching is a profession, and not just a craft, the TLRP and the General Teaching Council for England have begun a discussion about the core principles of pedagogy. Adapting a definition from Alexander (2004), their working paper proposes this definition:

“Pedagogy is not just the ‘surface practice’ of teaching. It is ‘the act of teaching together with its attendant theory and discourse, which are collective, generalisable and open to public scrutiny. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decision of which teaching is constituted.’”

The two organisations are working together to create resources for pedagogy, and to support teachers as the pedagogical professionals. This involves teachers in a range of actions, such as using their professional judgment, reflecting on their practice, maintaining up-to-date engagement with scholarly research, and developing content and assessment approaches which advance the learning of the children they are teaching.

The Welsh Assembly Government is implementing a “Pedagogy Strategy for Wales”. Its aim is to improve teaching standards across all phases, celebrate the work of practitioners and settings and raise their professional profile, establish networks for sharing ideas, and “transform the focus of education in Wales from one based on individual professionalism to collective professionalism”.

All the TLRP’s research projects contribute to the pedagogy debate. Here are just a few of the relevant findings:

- Teachers need to develop their knowledge and beliefs about learning, as well as their practices.
- This is best achieved through teachers’ critical inquiry, with colleagues, into practice in classrooms
- Visits from teachers in other schools, departments and classrooms are valued for questioning assumptions
- Most TLRP school projects emphasise the importance of developing learning awareness, explicit learning practices, positive learning dispositions, and learning autonomy





## Teacher learning: towards a framework for trusting teachers

The government in England expects to boost the status and quality of teachers by turning teaching into a Master's level profession. This approach is welcome. In top-performing systems such as Finland's all teachers are expected to have Master's degrees.

In March 2008, ministers announced that the first candidates for a new Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) would begin on-the-job study in 2009. The intention was that the MTL would initially be undertaken by teachers in their first five years, and eventually by all teachers. One of its purposes is to fill a recognised gap in the professional development of early-career teachers, as identified in the TLRP's VITAE project<sup>21</sup> and other research.

The programme is to be mainly school-based, validated by Higher Education Institutions and provided by them jointly with schools, by trained coaches and tutors, and through self-study (TDA 2008). As this Commentary went to press the MTL's specifications were still under development.

There are several concerns that the MTL's developers should take into account. One is that new teachers are under sufficient pressure just doing their jobs. The TLRP's Early Professional Learning project<sup>24</sup>, based in Scotland, found that new teachers are struggling with the process of making sense of their job. Their learning is social and emotional, rather than cognitive.

A second concern is whether the MTL, a practice-based programme, will be academically rigorous. MTL must not stand for "Masters in Teaching Lite", as the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers warned after it was announced. Is there a danger that two desirable goals – better induction and a master's degree for all teachers – are being conflated?

The Government's decision that the first teachers to be offered the MTL should include those in "National Challenge" schools – the 638 secondaries with the lowest GCSE results – risks making it seem more like a punishment than an entitlement. It also sends an unfortunate message. Continuous learning is every teacher's right. The message should be that the MTL will make them better at their jobs, not that it is compensating for deficiencies.

Teacher learning is vital to pupil learning, as TLRP Principle 9 states. This has been one of the strongest and most consistent findings across TLRP research projects. If we believe that children should become autonomous learners, who work together to construct their own knowledge and understanding, then teachers must be autonomous professionals, equipped with the tools to build their own pedagogy. They need to understand not only what they are doing but why. It is crucial that the MTL develop their creativity and judgment, rather than just their ability to deliver results.

The government has taken note of the VITAE project's findings about teachers' learning needs at different points in their careers. When considering which teachers would most benefit from the MTL, the DCSF and the TDA could think about VITAE's finding that those in their middle years of their teaching careers (from 8 to 15 years since starting as teachers) are in danger of losing motivation. This phase is a watershed in teachers' professional development, with 80 per cent having already achieved posts of responsibility. The right sort of postgraduate study could maintain their enthusiasm and direction.

The London University Institute of Education's Primary PGCE course includes a module on teaching and learning in the core subjects based on the TLRP's 10 principles. The aim is to help new teachers understand and think about how children learn.



For example, this is how the first three principles relate to maths:

- 1) Equips learners for life: To develop mathematical thinking and reasoning and create connections between topics in mathematics.
- 2) Engages with valued forms of learning: Students will examine difficult concepts for children to learn and for teachers to teach. There will be discussion of the difficulties that arise in teaching and learning – multiplication, division, ratio, fractions and decimals.
- 3) Recognises the importance of prior experience and learning: Students will focus on children's common misconceptions with a focus on number, time and shape and space.

The English Government's attitude to teacher development space suggests that it wants teachers to become reflective, skilled practitioners, but can't quite bring itself to trust them. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, and particularly the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, much initial and continuing teacher development in England has been aimed at delivering approved content and approaches. Their success is judged by test results and Ofsted inspections.

This over-emphasis on accountability has led to the dependency of many professionals upon government scripts and teaching units which they believe will satisfy the watchful eye of Ofsted. It is to be hoped that the replacement of the Key Stage 3 SATs with better teacher assessment and other measures signals that trust in teachers is coming back.

What we need is a proper balance between accountability and autonomy. We need a framework for trusting teachers. This would not be simple to construct. However, the TLRP Principles could form a starting point.





## TLRP schools projects

### Early Years

1. *INTERPLAY: Play, Learning and ICT in Pre-School Education* (2003–2006; led by Lydia Plowman; [http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot\\_extc.html](http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot_extc.html))

2. *EPPE: Effectiveness of Pre-School Primary Education* (2003–2008; led by Iram Siraj-Blatchford; [http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot\\_extc.html](http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot_extc.html))

### Primary Education

3. *Home–School Knowledge Exchange in Primary Education* (2001–2004; led by Martin Hughes; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2e.html>)

4. *Learning Scientific Concepts in Classrooms Groups at Key Stage 1* (2001–2005; led by Stephen Hodgkinson; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/rtf1.html>)

5. *The Role of Awareness in the Teaching and Learning of Literacy and Numeracy in Key Stage 2* (2001–2004; led by Terezinha Nunes; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2h.html>)

6. *ACTS II: Sustainable Thinking Classrooms* (2001–2004; led by Carol McGuinness; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2g.html>)

7. *Supporting Group Work in Scottish Schools: Age and the Urban/Rural Divide* (2003–2004; led by Donald Christie; [http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot\\_extb.html](http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot_extb.html))

8. *Provision for Gifted and Talented Pupils at Secondary Transfer* (2002–2007; led by Jenny Brookes; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/rtfbrookes.html>)

### Secondary Education

9. *Towards Evidence-Based Practice in Science Education* (2000–2003; led by Robin Millar; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1bsept.html>)

10. *InterActive Education: Teaching and Learning in the Information Age* (2000–2004; led by Ros Sutherland; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2i.html>)

11. *From Black Boxes to Glass Boxes: Computerised Concept Mapping in Schools* (2002–2006; led by Robin Bevan; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/rtfbevan.html>)

12. *Facilitating Teacher Engagement in More Inclusive Practice* (2005–2007; led by Sue Davies; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/smbdavies>)

### Across School Phases

13. *Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning* (2000–2003; contact Dave Peddar; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1dsept.html>)

14. *Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools* (2000–2003; led by Mel Ainscow; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1asept.html>)

15. *Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Groups in Classrooms* (2001–2004; led by Peter Blatchford; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2a.html>)



16. *Learning How to Learn: In Classrooms, Schools and Networks* (2001–2005; led by Mary James; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2f.html>)

17. *Lessons for Learning: Using Research Study Lessons to Innovate and Transfer Metapedagogy* (2003–2007; led by Pete Dudley; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/rfdudley.htm>)

18. *5–14 Mathematics in Scotland: The Relevance of Intensive Quantities* (2003–2005; led by Christine Howe; [http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot\\_extd.html](http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot_extd.html))

19. *The use of ICT to Improve Learning and Attainment through Interactive Teaching* (2005–2007; led by Steve Kennewell; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/kennewell.html>)

20. *Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL)* (2005–2006; led by Ruth Leitch; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/leitch.html>)

21. *Variations in Teachers' Work and Lives and their Effects on Pupils (VITAE)* (2001–2006; led by Christopher Day; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/cday.html>)

22. *Identity and Learning* (2004–2007; led by Andrew Pollard; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/ILP.html>)

23. *Widening Participation in Higher Education: A Quantitative Analysis* (2007–2007; led by Anna Vignoles; [http://www.tlrp.org/proj/wphe/wp\\_vignoles.html](http://www.tlrp.org/proj/wphe/wp_vignoles.html))

24. *Enhanced Competence-Based Learning in Early Professional Development* (2003 – 2007; led by Jim McNally; <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/mcnally.htm>)





## References

Alexander, R.J. (2004) 'Still no pedagogy? Principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(1), p 11. It is updated in Alexander, R.J. (2008) *Essays on Pedagogy*, London: Routledge.

Baggini, J. (2005) Plato v Aristotle – 2,300 years and we're still arguing about it, What is Education For? *The Times Educational Supplement* 21 January

Curtis, P., (2008) Rich-poor education gap wider under Labour, claim Tories *The Guardian* 8 August

DCSF (2008) *Being the best for our children: Releasing talent for teaching and learning* DCSF publications [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan, Building Brighter Futures* The Stationery Office

DCSF (2008) *School Improvement Strategy: Raising standards, supporting schools* DCSF publications [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

DCSF (2008) *Schools' Role in Promoting Pupil Well-being* (draft guidance) DCSF publications [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

DFES (2003) *Excellence and Enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools* [www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk)

(2008) Earlier, not better *The Economist* 11 September

(2003) *Every Child Matters* The Stationery Office

Gove, M. (2008) Why Conservative social policy delivers progressive ends [www.conservatives.com/](http://www.conservatives.com/)

James, M. (forthcoming) Assessment for Learning: Research and policy in the (dis)United Kingdom, in Berry, R. and Adamson, B. (eds) *Assessment Policy and Educational Change* Springer

James, M. et al (2007) *Improving Learning how to Learn* Routledge

McNamara, O., Brundrett, M. and Webb, R. (2008) Primary Teachers: initial teacher education, continuing professional development and school leadership development *Primary Review Research Survey* 6/3

*Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training* England and Wales [www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk](http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk)

OECD (2007) Executive Summary PISA 2006: *Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*

Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (2006) *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge. A ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006 - 2016*

Pollard, A. (2008) State-of-Science Review: SR-A5 Evidence-informed Principles from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, commissioned as *part of the UK Government's Foresight Project, Mental Capital and Wellbeing*. [www.foresight.gov.uk](http://www.foresight.gov.uk)





Pollard, A. et al (2008) *Reflective Teaching, 3rd edition* Continuum

Primary Review (2007) *Community Soundings, regional witness sessions*, Cambridge University [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk)

Conservative Party Public Services Improvement Policy Group (2007) *Restoring Pride in our Public Services, Submission to the Shadow Cabinet*

Scottish Executive (2006) *Getting it Right for Every Child* [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/131460/0031397.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/131460/0031397.pdf)

(2005) What is Education For? (series) *The Times Educational Supplement* 21 January, 28 January, 4 February, 11 February

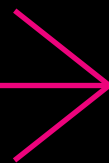
TLRP (2008) *Widening Participation in Higher Education, a Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme*

Welsh Assembly Government (2006), *The Learning Country2: Delivering the Promise* [www.learning.wales.gov.uk](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk)





Enriching the experience of schooling



## About this publication

This is the eleventh in a series of TLRP Commentaries designed to make research-informed contributions to contemporary discussion of issues, initiatives or events in UK education. They are under the research programme's editorial control, but their production and distribution may be supported by sponsors. Commentaries are available from the TLRP office or at our website.

## About the Teaching and Learning Research Programme

The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) is the UK's largest investment in education research. It aims to enhance outcomes for learners in all educational sectors across the UK. Managed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) it runs, in its generic phase, to 2009, with an extension on Technology Enhanced Learning to 2012. Some 700 researchers are involved in 90 specific projects, and further work is being undertaken on the identification and analysis of common, empirically grounded themes.

## About the Economic and Social Research Council

The Economic and Social Research Council is the UK's leading research and training agency addressing economic and social concerns. It aims to provide high-quality research on issues of importance to business, the public sector and government. The issues considered include economic competitiveness, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and our quality of life. The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government.

TLRP  
Institute of Education  
University of London  
20 Bedford Way  
London  
WC1H 0AL

Tel: 020 7911 5577  
Email: [tlrp@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:tlrp@ioe.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)

ISBN: 978-0-85473-830-4

[www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)

