

Personalising learning: Putting 'pupil voice' into practice

This note was originally circulated at the GTC's seminars for teachers and school leaders in November 2007.

Personalised learning has become one of the most debated concepts in education in recent years and the GTC believes is increasingly important to ensure that the concept is coherent, universally understood and has a positive impact for all children and young people.

At two GTC seminars earlier this year, teachers and school leaders showed an interest in exploring ways in which they can increase the influence and participation of children and young people in their learning. Many teachers are, of course, already developing these practices, which are also informed by emerging research.

The Council believes that involving children and young people in teaching and learning approaches and encouraging them as active participants, rather than consumers, of learning, can lead to higher engagement and has the potential to increase motivation and achievement. However, we know from our conversations with teachers and researchers that these approaches bring significant challenges. In particular, we are interested in how teachers and schools can encourage all children and young people to participate and have an influence in their learning.

This seminar will therefore help inform the GTC's future advice to Government, schools, teachers and other partners. It is also an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and hear from leading speakers.

The GTC's policy advice on personalising learning

The GTC has a statutory remit to advise the Government on a wide range of issues which have a direct impact on standards of teaching and the quality of learning.

The GTC's first advice to government on personalising learning – published in April 2007 - responds to recommendations made in the *2020 Vision* report in January. This independent report was commissioned by the Government to create a vision for personalised learning, and was led by Christine Gilbert, who is now Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

The Council's advice was informed by its analysis of research evidence and its work with teachers, researchers and national policy organisations. The following sections summarise the GTC's main areas of recommendation to Government.

1. Following the needs and interests of children and young people

Personalising learning will involve changes to the roles of teachers and learners, to enable greater participation and to reflect the needs and interests of children and young people. Schools are showing that this can best be achieved through a

combination of assessment for learning, dialogue with children and young people (often called 'pupil voice') and the effective use of technology.

The Council recommends better support for teachers in understanding and using these approaches. This support should be available through improved resources and enhanced teacher learning.

2. Overcoming obstacles that prevent the personalisation of learning

The education system needs to separate assessment for national monitoring purposes from assessment that supports learning. The current attempt to combine both assessment purposes through end of Key Stage testing is both detrimental to learning and unsophisticated and inefficient in monitoring achievement nationally.

The GTC recommends a system that supports learning and helps parents and teachers. The Government should shift the balance of schools' accountability towards parents and children and young people, enabling improved dialogue with parents and less undue focus on national performance measures.

Teachers should have more flexibility in applying the curriculum, and schools should receive incentives to use existing flexibilities in the curriculum.

3. Addressing inequalities and meeting the needs of all children and young people

Greater consideration should be given to each of the outcomes of Every Child Matters – a child's enjoyment, health, safety, positive contribution and economic well-being – alongside the academic achievements of children and schools.

Personalised learning should benefit all children and young people and not just the 'gifted and talented' and those falling behind. Equally, the Government and schools need to target teaching and resources towards early intervention for those at risk of underachievement. The Government should support schools to implement their duties under equalities legislation, and teachers should have more opportunities to build their expertise in working with children with special educational needs.

4. Personalising teacher learning and professional development

All teachers and staff should receive an entitlement to resourced access and participation in personalised – i.e. effective, relevant and sustained – continuing professional development.

Teachers need opportunities to enquire into effective and creative teaching approaches, and to develop their teaching practice accordingly.

How to find out more:

The GTC's full advice to Government on personalising learning is available at www.gtce.org.uk/policy/policypapers If you would like to find out more about the GTC's policy work in this area, please contact: andrew.hudson@gtce.org.uk