



Aspect
achieving
change
together

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Personalised Learning: From Blueprint to Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Aspect believes that personalised learning is critical to tailoring provision to the needs and aptitudes of every child, young person and adult, and welcomes the prominence given to it in recent public policies.

Aspect recognises that a genuine understanding of personalised learning entails a deep understanding of learning processes and a wide-ranging agenda of approaches to learning that covers, for example, aspects of multiple intelligences, coaching and mentoring skills, creativity and, especially, social learning skills.

Social learning skills are a crucial element of the personalisation of learning, and Aspect appreciates the clear focus that the government has given to this facet of the personalised learning agenda. These skills underpin methods of cognitive problem-solving based on structured, but flexible programmes aimed at counteracting particular weaknesses in an individual's development. Without environmental social skills (eg listening, following instructions, appropriate work habits) to enable tasks to be performed in particular settings and facilitative social interaction skills (such as starting and maintaining a conversation or resolving conflict) the positive effects of other well established features of learning are dramatically undermined.

As part of this broader approach to learning, Aspect warmly approves of the growing interest in social pedagogy and small group work. As an Association committed to maximising learning for all, it is our contention that the value of UK-based social pedagogy and small group work is far from fully appreciated in tackling disengagement and disaffection as well as underachievement. The social pedagogue role found in northern Europe and parts of central Europe emphasises that delivery models of learning, care and upbringing are inseparable, interconnected parts of life. Social pedagogues work closely with individuals and groups to enable them to develop their potential as social beings. Aspect would therefore like to see greater weight given to social pedagogy and small group work along with more detailed research into their value. The need to disseminate and

apply good practice in creating more flexible provision to build the capacity of all learners seems to encapsulate the essence of successful personalised learning.

For children and young people, personalised learning means that individual needs can be addressed in school and beyond the classroom with coordinated support that leads to success for all within a safe and secure environment. Personalised learning therefore means involving children and young people directly in their own learning. Parents and carers will be provided with regular information and this should indicate their child's abilities and progress and the kind of help that can be given at home. In turn, it is hoped that this will involve them further in planning for their child's future education, and thus offer them opportunities to play a much valued, active and more enhanced role in their child's school life.

Personalised learning approaches can encourage teachers to have high expectations, and to promote confidence and the skills to succeed in pupils. Teachers will require access to and the facility to utilise pupil data in order to inform a wide repertoire of teaching and learning strategies including ICT. There will be more time for assessment and lesson planning. A comprehensive continuing professional development programme will also be available. Schools will have a professional ethos relating practice to a child's individual context, knowledge, skills, aptitudes and aspirations.

For the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and local authorities, personalised learning means that they will be responsible for creating suitable conditions for teachers and schools to behave flexibly within a system of intelligent accountability.

Therefore the development of the personalised learning agenda is not about quick fixes but about building the capacity of the educational system, within today's context of children's services, to meet the learning needs of all children and young people. As professor David Hargreaves says it is about moving education from 'the 19th century educational imagery to one for the 21st century'. This will undoubtedly mean that professionals from across different disciplines will have to work together to address barriers to learning.

SOME PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONALISED LEARNING

Personalised learning is about tailoring education to individual need, interest and aptitude so that every child and young person maximises their achievements and reaches the highest standards possible. The idea of tailoring provision to meet the individual needs of children and young people may not be new, but the aim is for practice to be universal across all schools and settings, particularly for professionals working with children facing the most challenging barriers to learning.

David Hargreaves

Professor David Hargreaves, one of the key architects of the personalised learning agenda, has developed the idea of nine interlinked 'gateways' or 'complimentary perspectives on personalisation'. These are: curriculum; learning to learn; workforce; assessment for learning; organisation; new technologies; student voice; advice and guidance; and mentoring.

Each gateway, Hargreaves states, 'is potentially a way of enhancing student motivation and commitment to learning, which is an essential prerequisite to raising achievement'. They are also an entry to the development of personalised learning. Underpinning these approaches to personalised learning is the belief that building the capacity of children and young people to take an active role in their own learning is crucial. These 'gateways' are explored in six papers produced jointly by the Association of School and College Leaders and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust between October 2004 and March 2006. These are listed in the reference section at the back of this booklet.

Paper six, *The Final Gateway: School Design and Organisation*, argues for a new combination of the nine gateways to personalising learning with a deepening of the four key factors: learning, experience, support and leadership.

DfES

The DfES has promulgated a number of principles to assist in steering practice towards greater personalisation. Section 4 briefly covers the five components of personalised learning that have been proposed by ministers and that the DfES

advocate, all of which can be cross-referenced to and are closely aligned with the ideas developed more fully by David Hargreaves.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 'Futures' curriculum debate

The overall key outcomes are improved quality and equity throughout all education. The aim is clear; the question is how. In responding to the recent Qualifications and Curriculum Authority consultation, *Futures: Meeting the Challenge*, Aspect concentrated on the question: 'what is education for in the 21st century and what changes should be made to the curriculum to better prepare young people for life in the 21st century?'

Aspect argued that the curriculum needs to encourage learning for all by promoting understanding and questioning using the provision of a range of experiences which inspire individual learners. Aspect would like to see greater emphasis on skills and attitudes, especially in an increasing technologically-minded world.

Thus, the main perspective that Aspect maintains for personalised learning and future curriculum is one of engendering individual capacity for learning based on each learners' distinctive skills.

Social pedagogy and group work

Social pedagogical approaches adopted in a number of northern and mid-European countries promote personalised learning. The approaches taken help to show the contribution of small group work and project teams to the development of truly personalised learning. Small group work also develops children and young people in positive learning through broad structured cooperation as well as often suiting the learner temperamentally. A paper published by the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London states: "in Sweden, the employment of pedagogues in schools has been central to recent educational reforms. Policy addresses the whole child, rather than the child conceived in narrow educational terms. Around one third of school heads have a background in pedagogy, rather than teaching." A tutor or social pedagogue is allocated to each pupil and they work together in designing an individual learning pathway that takes account of preferred pace and style of learning.

The general principles of pedagogic work with children, found across detailed national variations, include:

- focusing on the child as a whole person and supporting overall development – body, mind, feelings, relationships, spirit and creativity
- encouragement for professionals to constantly reflect on their practice so that their theoretical understandings and self-knowledge impact on learning and teaching practice
- giving consideration to the learning environment in order to appreciate personal preferences
- involving children and young people in their own learning and showing respect for their views and contribution to planning.

These are vital factors, in Aspect's view, in the promotion of personalised learning.

14–19

Equally, Aspect appreciates the importance of the Tomlinson working group report on curriculum and qualifications for 14–19 year olds. The ideas advocated in this report are crucial to personalised learning as they offer flexible pathways for young people and suggest that curriculum content should be appropriate to individual learners.

A particular argument promulgated by Aspect stresses the significance of new and varied personalised approaches to help disengaged and disaffected young people. In issue 90 of Education Journal professor Kathryn Riley reported on a London research and development project which involved a five-step change framework for making a difference to disengaged young people. This makes serious allowance for personalising both the curriculum and its delivery settings.

PERSONALISED LEARNING AND EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Personalised learning provides a bridge between school standards and the well-being of all children and young people – with safety and health being prerequisites for good school performance. Personalised learning emphasises the identification

of individual barriers to learning and highlights ways in which practitioners can overcome them. *Every Child Matters* offers a framework to improve welfare, bringing into play factors outside the classroom. The agenda also envisages that local communities will be crucial in supporting the learning of children and young people. The implementation of the Children Act 2004 – with educational and curriculum developments set into a multi-agency environment and cross-professional bases to service delivery – will reinforce the realisation of broad personalised learning.

COMPONENTS OF PERSONALISED LEARNING

At a joint DfES Innovation Unit/DEMOS/OECD conference in May 2004, the former Minister of State for School Standards, David Miliband MP, presented a speech entitled 'Choice and Voice in Personalised Learning' in which he suggested five components to personalised learning. These are outlined below.

1 Assessment for learning

Personalising education requires knowledge of individuals' strengths and weaknesses making assessment for learning and the use of data and dialogue critical to the diagnosis of each pupil's learning needs. Involved in the approach is finding the clear evidence about individual attainment using feedback to and from pupils so that improvement ensues from a patent link between lesson planning and learning. The national strategies are supporting teachers in developing such classroom practices with the pupil achievement tracker integral to critical performance review. Aspect strongly supports using assessment procedures to create greater opportunities for pupil reflection.

2 Effective teaching and learning

Teaching and learning strategies are expected to build on individual needs, and actively engage and stretch all pupils. Features associated with such strategies include: the creative use of teachers and support staff and the utilisation of new technologies to extend opportunities – thus taking account of different learning needs of children and young people. Learning styles can sometimes be used as

superficial quick fixes and do not lead to sustainable personalisation of learning.

Teachers require a variety of teaching skills, good subject knowledge and the ability to manage learning experiences. Skills will relate to whole class, group and individual teaching, and the effective use of ICT to transmit knowledge. The intended outcome is that pupils will gain a greater understanding of themselves as learners, which will in turn enable them to exert greater control of and responsibility for their learning.

3 Curriculum entitlement and choice

The concept of curriculum entitlement and choice sets out to engage and respect learners by providing a breadth of relevant study with clear pathways through the system. In primary schools, the key is high standards in the basics allied to opportunities for enrichment and creativity. For 11–14 year olds it means an exciting curriculum, problem solving, and class participation. Curriculum entitlement and choice become potently evident at 14–19 and is characterised by:

- a guaranteed core curriculum
- enrichment and enquiry
- an increase in choice over an individual's school career
- support and information to make choices
- flexibility leading to relevant qualifications for all.

Greater flexibility in the breadth of provision of learning opportunities, particularly from age 14 is patently necessary and welcome.

4 Organising the school

Personalised learning demands a radical approach to school organisation, and starts with ensuring that student progress is the first principle. Again a range of teaching and learning styles and settings are necessary and the flexible deployment of support staff becomes highly significant. On-site services, such as catering and social areas, represent another important element of school organisation. Pupil performance and pupil welfare are strongly linked with clarity,

and consistency of behaviour policies are also central to a safe and secure environment for learners to learn.

Pupil involvement is another fundamental feature vital to enhance school organisation. Methods include: pupil interviews, gathering and using pupil feedback, focusing the organisation around pupils' needs, creating a positive school environment and taking into account physical surroundings.

5 Beyond the classroom

Building partnerships beyond the school is a basic prerequisite for supporting learning and enhancing pupil well-being. The community, local institutions and a host of other agencies all have a role in supporting schools to make progress in the classroom. Key aspects include:

- guidance and universal support for every pupil
- effective pastoral care
- tackling additional needs through targeted or specialist support as necessary
- lunchtime and after-school catch-up help
- a range of extended learning provision
- home-school partnerships
- community partnerships
- multi-agency support for the whole child through professional collaboration.

NORTHERN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

Northern Ireland is introducing a less prescriptive curriculum that will enable teachers to modify their teaching to suit the needs of individual pupils. These developments are being supported by personal development plans, which in turn are to be reinforced by accessible ICT and other mechanisms such as individual mentoring. The new Northern Ireland curriculum comes into effect from September 2007 and will be introduced through phased developments by each year group. At the same time, a greater emphasis on skill development

is being promoted with the introduction of a new area of the curriculum called 'learning for life and work'.

In Scotland the Scottish minister for education and young people, Peter Peacock, has taken a direct interest in promoting personal learning plans, which he regards as fundamental to modernising schools and raising attainment. A pilot has been conducted in 32 schools with an evaluation showing substantial benefits in recording and assessment. The Association of Headteachers in Scotland, however, has major concerns about issues of manageability workload and resourcing. Falkirk is one authority leading the way in Scotland, and personal learning plans are now embedded in all of its primary schools. These were carried through into secondary schools in September 2005.

PERSONALISED LEARNING AND THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

In 2006–07, the secondary national strategy includes a focus on low-attaining and underperforming pupils in English and mathematics with a programme designed around intervention teaching and a pedagogy of tailored support. Additional funding is being made available through the Dedicated Support Grant to support the work to be allocated to schools by local authority schools forums. The additional funding amounts to £120 million in 2006–07 with a further £215 million to be given in 2007–08. Further sums of £220 million and £365 million for those respective years are being distributed directly to schools to help in their provision of a greater personalisation of learning.

A further targeted £60 million in each of 2006–07 and 2007–08, shared across primary and secondary sectors, is being made available to provide more effective one-to-one and small group tuition.

Study Plus is part of the Key Stage 4 intervention package which is designed at providing extended learning opportunities for underperforming or low-attaining pupils with weaknesses in literacy, numeracy and learning skills. It is being piloted in approximately 100 schools in 2006, and will be offered to all in 2007. The approach is one of tailored provision that will improve participants' chances at GCSE in English, mathematics and in at least three other GCSEs. Curriculum organisation

at Key Stage 4 allows students to choose options and to follow personalised pathways that will involve small group tuition and personal learning targets aimed at promoting individual confidence and motivation.

CONCLUSION

Personalised learning sees learning as an active, social process based on contextualised explicit learning skills, processes and strategies which build independence through interaction, intervention, stimulation and collaboration. Key features involve: the active involvement of the learner in the learning process; high expectations; appropriate intervention; group learning; social interaction; using language for learning; and developing the language of learning. In schools personalised learning means that whole class and group work is supported by tailored, focused intervention for pupils who are underachieving at any level. This acts as a key to accelerating individual progress.

Personalised learning depends on knowing children and young people better as individuals and as learners, and actively involving them in the learning process. It is not a 'done to' approach but one that puts the child or young person at the centre of change and sees, as Charles Leadbeater states, 'learners as co-investors in education'. It must not be seen as a new look at individualised learning – ministers and the DFES have been totally clear in arguing the substantial and fundamental differences.

The outcome is a pedagogy of tailored support with an appropriate offer of individual programmes provided both within and outside the school. The move to personalised approaches centred on children, young people and their families reflects the general modern trend towards user-based delivery models that involve a wide range of professionals.

The key issues will be: the identification of the progressive skills and attitudes that children and young people require instead of bodies of knowledge; and finding systems and styles that take account of individual need. It is to be hoped that the professional development needs of those who are required to provide the requisite support are encompassed in all developments.

REFERENCES

The following list of websites and publications represents only a fraction of the available source material and is not intended to reflect relative worth.

Downloads

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/about/

- North of England Education Conference speech by the former Minister of State for School Standards, David Miliband MP, Jan 2004
- 'Personalising Education: The Future of Public Sector Reform (Choice and Voice in Personalised Learning)' speech by the former Minister of State for School Standards, David Miliband MP, May 2004
- *A National Conversation About Personalised Learning* publication (DfES/09192004)

Other DfES publications

- Leadbeater, Charles (2004) *Learning About Personalisation: How Can We Put the Learner at the Heart?* Download from: www.demos.co.uk or www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit
- Leadbeater, Charles (2004) *The Shape of Things to Come: Personalised Learning Through Collaboration*. Download from: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit or from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

All of the above also available by contacting the DfES publications centre.
Tel: 0845 602 2260. Fax: 0845 603 3360. Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com.

Assessment for learning

Primary reference

- *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years*, DfES reference 0518-2004G

Secondary references

- *Assessment for Learning – Whole-School and Subject Specific Training Materials*, DfES reference 0043-2004G
- *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools*, DfES reference 0423-2004G
- *Assessment for Learning: Beyond the Black Box* (1999), Assessment Reform Group, University of Cambridge School of Education
- *Assessment for Learning: Putting it Into Practice* (2003) by Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall and Dylan William, Open University Press

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Primary references:

- *Excellence and Enjoyment, Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years*, DfES reference 0518-2004G
- *Learning and Teaching Using ICT*, DfES reference 0315-2004G
- *Secondary Reference: ICT Across the Curriculum*, DfES reference 0171-2004

A selection of recent research on personalised learning topics

These summaries have been specifically written for practitioner audiences, and highlight possible implications for practice. The following are available for downloading from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/

- Dylan William, Clare Lee, Christine Harrison and Paul Black (2004) *Teachers' and Students' Roles in Formative Assessment*
- Torrance, H, and Pryor, J (2001) *Developing Formative Assessment in the Classroom; Using Action Research to Explore and Modify Theory*
- Medcalf, Glynn and Moore (2004) *Peer Tutoring in Writing: A School Systems Approach*
- Adey, Robertson and Venville (2002) *Effects of a Cognitive Acceleration Programme on Year 1 Pupils*
- Peter Kutnick et al (2005) *How Do Secondary School Teachers Choose Within-Class Student Grouping Strategies?*

David Hargreaves papers

- *Personalising Learning: Next Steps in Working Laterally* (Oct 2004)
- *Personalising Learning 2: Student Voice and Assessment for Learning* (Nov 2004)
- *Personalising Learning 3: Learning to Learn and the New Technologies* (June 2005)
- *Personalising Learning 4: Curriculum and Advice and Guidance* (Sept 2005)
- *Personalising Learning 5: Mentoring and Coaching and Workforce Development* (Nov 2005)
- *Personalising Learning 6: The Final Gateway: School Design and Organisation* (March 2006)

Social pedagogy

- Meijvogel, R and Petrie, P (1996) *School Age Childcare in the European Union: A Survey*, commissioned and published by the European Commission's Network on Childcare and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities
- Mortimore, P (1999) *Understanding Pedagogy and Its Impact on Learning*, Paul Chapman Educational Publishing

Other publications

- John West-Burnham & Max Coates (2005) *Personalizing Learning Transforming Education for Every Child*, Network Educational Press
- Rudduck, Flutter and Peddar et al (2005) *Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning*, available at www.gtce.org.uk/PolicyAndResearch/research/ROMtopics/pupilvoice/
- *Personalised Learning: A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme*, available at www.tlrp.org/documents/ESRCPerson.pdf
- *Review of Citizenship Research*, available at www.citized.info/citizenshipteachereducation.php?l_menu=eppi

Useful websites

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/about/ (DfES)
www.sst-inet.net (International Networking for Educational Transformation)
www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk (Specialist Schools Academies Trust)

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