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What makes a good teacher?

Ten Principles from the UK's Teaching and Learning
Research Programme

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TLRP's overarching aim:

‘to lead to significant improvements in **outcomes for learners** at all ages and stages in all sectors and contexts of education and training, including informal learning settings, throughout the United Kingdom’.

Teaching and Effective teaching and learning

Evidence-informed principles to guide policy and practice



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TLRP PRINCIPLES:

Why use the concept of '*evidence-informed principles*'?

- engages diverse forms of evidence whilst calling for the necessary application of contextualised judgement by teachers, practitioners, policy-makers, etc.
- enables the accumulation and organisation of knowledge in resilient, realistic and practically useful ways.
- has the potential to progressively generate understanding and language for use within public debates.

TLRP PRINCIPLES: educational values and purposes

Effective teachers:

1. Equip learners for life in its broadest sense

SOME TLRP EVIDENCE

- Concept of outcomes broadened to include, for instance, engagement with learning (Ainscow), learning how to learn (James).
- Thinking skills (McGuinness) were promoted and shown to have a positive relationship with attainment and effort, although the effect needed time to build and was not uniform across all learner groups.
- Group work showed gains in social-emotional relationships, behaviour and participation, as well as higher conceptual learning (Blatchford, Christie & Bevan)

TLRP PRINCIPLES: curriculum, pedagogy & assessment

Effective teachers:

2. Engage with valued forms of knowledge

3. Recognise the importance of prior experience and learning

SOME TLRP EVIDENCE

- In numeracy, understanding of rational numbers (proportion and ratio) is important but difficult for primary pupils to master. Relatively small teaching sequences can boost achievement (Nunes & Howe).
- In literacy, spelling improved through explicit teaching about rules of morphology (units of meaning) (Nunes).
- Misconceptions were identified and tackled by developing diagnostic questions in science (Millar).
- A number of projects encouraged teachers to challenge their assumptions about the prior knowledge and experience of certain groups of children (Ainscow - inclusive practice; Hughes - home-school knowledge exchange; Plowman - ICT in early years; EPPE - pre-school settings).

TLRP PRINCIPLES: curriculum, pedagogy & assessment

Effective teachers:

4. Scaffold learning

5. Need assessment to be congruent with learning

SOME TLRP EVIDENCE

- Projects showed the importance of the way teachers plan and structure activities during lessons, how they promote classroom dialogue, and how they use resources.
- The teachers' role in scaffolding learning was found to be crucial in using ICT across the age range and in the whole range of school subjects (Plowman; Sutherland). Effective use of ICT showed gains in achievement (Bevan) but ICTs without effective mediation did not necessarily have positive effects (whiteboards – Kennewell).
- Testing that focuses on factual recall often overestimates students' understanding of key concepts e.g. understanding in science cannot be measured by a single question (Millar).
- Complex learning outcomes (e.g. learning how to learn – James) require observation over time and across different contexts. This is an argument for considering ways of enhancing the role of teachers in assessment.

TLRP PRINCIPLES: personal & social processes

Effective teachers:

6. Promote the active engagement of the learner
7. Foster both individual and social processes and outcomes
8. Recognise the significance of informal learning

SOME TLRP EVIDENCE

- Most projects show the importance of developing learning awareness, explicit learning practices, positive learning dispositions, and learning autonomy (Nunes, McGuinness, James, Blatchford, Hughes).
- Group work projects (Blatchford & Christie) show the benefits of efforts to improve the quality of group work and children's mastery of cooperation and collaboration. Pupils made significant academic gains (effect sizes up to 0.6) which were seen across schools in different social contexts.
- Consulting pupils enhances self esteem and agency and improves learning opportunities (Rudduck, Leitch). However some pupils have more communications competence and are 'heard' more than others.
- Young people draw on school experience, and develop it at home, and bring home experience into school e.g. computer expertise (Sutherland).
- Home/school knowledge exchange activities impact positively on outcomes (Hughes). But this impact is mediated by social class, gender and attainment factors so there is need for sensitivity.

TLRP PRINCIPLES: teachers and policies

Effective teachers:

9. Place great emphasis on their own learning
10. Demand consistent policy frameworks with support for teaching and learning as their primary focus

SOME TLRP EVIDENCE

- 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 (James, Dudley).
- Visits from teachers in other schools, or from other departments/classrooms are valued for questioning assumptions (Ainscow).
- Targeted professional development materials and courses are valued (Nunes, Blatchford, James).
- When senior management support innovation it becomes sustainable (Hughes).
- Embedding and spreading innovation requires the development of both structures and cultures that support professional development through networking, sharing expertise, critical inquiry and reasonable risk-taking (James, Millar, Hughes).
- Levels of commitment and resilience (VITAE) are important.

Towards implementation

1. The most amenable point of entry probably lies in enhancing the expertise of teachers, other staff and schools as learning environments. The emphasis here would need to be on their understanding and on the quality of their contextualised professional judgement
2. There is a compelling argument for progressive, cumulative and sequenced policies based on coherent knowledge of learning and pedagogy. TLRP's evidence-informed principles are intended as an initial contribution to a new scientific foundation for policy and practice.

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