



The Education, Culture and Sport Service Learning and Teaching Policy Toolkit

Introduction

The Highland Council Education, Culture and Sport Service is committed to achieving the highest possible quality of provision for the people of the Highlands. Our goals define what we are about and those which relate to learning and teaching demonstrate that we perceive life-long learning to be crucial to the success and happiness of individuals and communities. These goals are:

- To enable the people of the Highlands to achieve their full potential, to enable them to be active citizens and to take advantage of the opportunities life will present
- To promote life-long learning for individuals and as a focus for community development.

I am confident that the Education, Culture and Sport *Learning and Teaching Policy Toolkit* reflects our good practice and high aspirations. It draws on good theory and best practice. Our approach is learner centred. It is rooted in the supportive community learning environment which features strongly in Highland educational tradition and looks forward, exploiting opportunities offered by developing technology. It has been the subject of extensive consultation and revision. But, it is a starting-point, not a finished product: to be effective it must evolve and drive development for 21st century learners.

Background

In 2002, The Scottish Executive published five national priorities: raising standards of achievement and attainment; providing a framework for learning; promoting inclusion and equality; developing values and citizenship; encouraging lifelong learning. The development of effective learning and teaching lies at the heart of each. The priorities reflect two decades of significant developments in our understanding about how learners learn and why they are learning. They also reflect changes in attitudes towards teaching and how it is conducted. These developments have taken place in Scotland and beyond.

From the 1980s onwards, educationalists in the UK and the USA published a rich series of texts which continue to impact progressively on learning and teaching. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligence and Daniel Goleman's on emotional intelligence challenged an educational philosophy which championed IQ and saw sole value in a narrow definition of attainment. Dryden and Voss in *The Learning Revolution* (1994) developed Gardner's and Goleman's works, proposing the theory that we all have preferred learning styles. Robert Fisher in the mid 1990s emphasised the importance of process and that learners need to be taught how to think and to be aware of themselves as learners. In *Excellence in Schools* (1998), Geoff Hannan used an approach based on evolution and the physiology of the brain to consider the different ways in which males and females think and draw significant conclusions for learning and teaching. In the same year, Michael Barber's study of motivation in *The Learning Game* highlighted the need to motivate all young people to ensure their personal development and inclusion as active citizens in a democratic society. A more comprehensive list of important texts is provided as an appendix.

In Scotland, HMI published the criteria for evaluating the performance of Scottish schools. Based on sound educational theory and the experience of years of inspections, *How Good is our School?* provides a framework for continuous improvement. Its sections on learning and teaching offer a comprehensive deconstruction of the teaching process and what comprises very good learning and teaching. The SCCC in 1996 produced its *Teaching for Effective Learning* which stimulated debate at a time when the profession had become bound up in issues centred on curriculum and assessment. This was complemented in 2000 by Learning and Teaching Scotland's www.LTScotland.com *Direct Interactive Teaching*. GTC Scotland www.gtc.org.uk in 2002 identified and published its list of competences which all teachers must achieve to warrant full registration.

Developments in Scotland and beyond, then, have contributed to the identification of the national priorities. In Highland, The Education, Culture and Sport Service's strategy for developing provision related to the national priorities is underway. The extension of pre-school education and the introduction of Early Intervention strategies have already impacted on the early years. The roll out of the New Community School Approach to all schools by 2005 is another important element of this strategy. In recent years, a quality assurance framework has been introduced which gives highest priority to evaluating the impact of planning on learning and teaching. Staff development in Highland has advocated approaches to learning and teaching which place the needs of the learner at the centre. Geoff Hannan, Peter Patillo, David Wray, Jenny Mosely and Brian Boyd have all delivered courses. Such high quality provision with a positive learning and teaching focus will continue.

But we need to ensure that their messages impact on all schools and all classrooms. This may mean fewer ‘one-off, away day’ courses and much more support for informed research in the classroom, conducted by networks of teachers, facilitated by trained professional staff and whenever appropriate delivered by the new technology.

Rapid technological development has impacted on schools through NOF and NGfL training. Technology has the potential to transform learning and teaching in the near future. It can also transform continuous professional development. Policy, practice and continuous professional development, then, must be flexible and responsive to the challenges and opportunities technology offers.

Since 2002, the national Assessment is for Learning programme has provided a platform for such professional development. Its Formative Assessment Project is predicated on the assumption that good learning is enhanced when pupils play a significant and active role in their learning and its assessment. It supports teachers and encourages them to challenge their pedagogy and the deep-seated assumptions that underlie it. From session 2003-4 onwards, all Highland schools will have the opportunity of participating in this initiative which will utilise developing IT opportunities.

The Highland Learning and Teaching Policy Toolkit will be one of the main engines driving forward the Assessment is for Learning initiative in Highland. It will be enhanced annually by special events in the staff development programme. Linked developments relating to Support for Pupils and Assessment issues will complement and extend this major CPD programme.

1 Rationale

The *Learning and Teaching Policy Toolkit* has been written primarily for school staff. It will help them to:

- review their current practice
- reflect on the purposes and principles that underline that practice
- establish dynamic learning and teaching policies
- develop strategies for continuous professional development.

Effective learning and teaching, however, is dependent on partnerships involving learners, school staff, professionals (employed by such agencies as Social Work and NHS Highland), parents and others in communities throughout the Highlands. Each has a role and all must work together if learners are to achieve their full potential. The document takes account of this reality by providing a framework for discussion amongst the various partners. It will help them to:

- consider the principles which underpin effective learning and teaching
- consider the characteristics of effective learning and teaching
- identify the various roles and responsibilities of those involved.

The document is available in paper and electronic formats and has two main parts.

The Core Policy

The core policy will provide a reference point for schools and their communities to review their own policies and strategies for delivering effective learning and teaching. The core policy:

- defines the key principles which underpin effective learning and teaching
- describes the key characteristics of effective learning and teaching.

The Development Package

The core policy is complemented by a development package. The development package is based on the core policy and is designed for use by all partners – learners, school staff, parents, others in the community. It may be used in individual schools or by collaborative groups. The development package provides over 100 hours of continuous professional development. It:

- provides information in easily accessible form about significant learning and teaching issues
- promotes an ethos of reflection and continuing improvement in schools and their communities
- supports partners in the learning and teaching process towards agreement about their roles and responsibilities
- stimulates innovative learning and teaching projects and developments within schools, homes and the community.

- supports development planning and continuous professional development.

Monitoring and evaluation

The policy and package will evolve and will be complemented by annual high quality in-service. Impact will be monitored and evaluated carefully by schools and by the Education, Culture and Sport Service to ensure continuous improvement. Such an approach will ensure the policy's vitality and equip all its partners to deliver what our learners have a right to expect.

The Core Policy

Key principles

What are the key principles which inform learning and teaching in our schools and learning centres? Research and experience indicate that the following principles are fundamental to effective learning and teaching:

- Learning and teaching should be inclusive and enjoyable. Challenge should be an important element of that enjoyment. We are more likely to learn when we are motivated, feel valued and see the relevance of what is being taught. We learn best in an ethos where achievement is celebrated and honest error is not disparaged but welcomed as a formative stage in the learning process.
- Learning and teaching should be flexible. It takes place in fortuitous as well as planned contexts. It is both an individual and a social activity, rooted in dialogue, debate and discussion, characterised by responsible decision-making, autonomy and choice. We acquire, process and use information in different ways and at different rates. As individuals, we all have preferred learning styles. There are three main types:
Visual, auditory, tactile/kinaesthetic.
- Learning and teaching should take account of multiple intelligence. There is no such thing as a single, fixed, general intelligence. We all have much greater potential for learning than is commonly recognised. We should nurture and celebrate (at least) seven types of intelligence:
 - visual/spatial
 - logical/mathematical
 - musical/rhythmic
 - intrapersonal.
 - verbal/linguistic
 - bodily/kinaesthetic
 - interpersonal
- Learning and teaching should meet the needs of the whole learner. Our emotional wellbeing is closely linked to our ability to learn effectively. Emotional intelligence (which is both intra- and inter-personal) should be acknowledged, nurtured and developed. We should also encourage the ability to read and be sensitive to other people's feelings. We should encourage the development of three emotional competences: emotional awareness; accurate self assessment; self esteem.
- Learning and teaching should create lifelong learners who are active citizens. Such people value learning, see it as an empowering activity and actively collaborate in the learning process. Not only do they possess knowledge, they also know how to think, act and challenge deep-seated assumptions. They take responsibility for their own learning, increasingly exploiting opportunities afforded by emerging technologies. In lifelong learning, school staff should be role models.

The Core Policy

Key characteristics

Given our key principles, what should we expect to see and hear in our schools and learning centres ?

People

Where learning and teaching is very good, all partners work together to apply key principles. But teachers have a pivotal role. Over the last fifty years, young people's ideas about what makes a good teacher have been surprisingly consistent. Unsurprisingly, these ideas tend to focus on personal qualities and how the teacher treats learners. Some of the good teacher's qualities identified in Learning and Teaching Scotland's *Direct Interactive Teaching* are:

- Aspirational - genuinely believes that the learner can succeed
- Assertive - is decisive and confident but firm and fair
- Encouraging - is positive and supportive, welcomes genuine error as an opportunity to learn
- Enthusiastic - believes in the value of learning, in what they are teaching and enjoys the job
- Humorous - shows humour naturally and puts the learner at ease
- Open - is prepared to challenge their own thinking and admit they may be wrong
- Respectful - genuinely likes young people, cares about them, listens to them, enjoys their company and does not use sarcasm or humiliation.

Learning Environments

The very good teacher will possess these qualities and will apply them to create learning environments characterised by the following:

- Planning of differentiated programmes and day to day activities which:
 - is concise
 - takes account of prior learning
 - affords challenge and opportunities for all to learn at an appropriate pace
 - specifies what learners are expected to learn and how/when learning is to be undertaken
 - makes best use of available resources
 - builds in flexibility to take account of the reality of the learning environment and the needs of individual learners
 - links class-work and homework

- Teaching approaches which:
 - engage and stimulate the learner
 - allow for regular review of progress towards learning outcomes
 - are varied to match learning needs and preferred styles of learning
 - maximise opportunities to work directly with learners in whole class, group and individual situations
 - embed ICT in the learning process
 - promote positive social interactions

- Teacher-learner interactions which are marked by:
 - sharing the purpose of lessons and reviewing prior learning
 - clear and appropriately pitched explanations, expositions and instructions
 - discussions which promote learning and build confidence, giving learners opportunities to express their thinking and use their initiative
 - the effective use of praise and the encouragement and valuing of all contributions

- Questioning which:
 - is skilful and excites the curiosity of the learner
 - allows time for thought
 - involves all learners
 - ascertains where learning went wrong if there weaknesses are apparent
 - values all genuine responses and exploits them to promote further understanding.

- Learners who:
 - do not fear failure
 - become increasingly aware of how they learn
 - take responsibility for and are active in managing their own learning
 - often set their own targets
 - adopt a collaborative approach
 - are confident about expressing their thinking and listen to and respect others' ideas
 - review their own and their peers' progress and have a very good idea about improvement
 - exploit skilfully the opportunities afforded by ICT to extend their knowledge and skills

- Assessment which:
 - is well matched to clearly identified purposes and encourages learners
 - emphasises the formative – celebrating what has been achieved and identifying what has still to be achieved to progress
 - is an appropriate blend of self, peer and teacher review
 - provides useful information which is regularly shared with learners, and where appropriate parents/ carers and partner professionals
 - is formal (tests/exams . . .) and informal ('taking another look'/peer review . . .)
 - is recorded only where practicable and where there is a clear educational need.