Personalised Learning – A Practical Guide

Steve Padget
5th November 2010
1944 Education Act, obliges schools to provide
"an education appropriate to the abilities, aptitudes and needs" of every pupil.

David Miliband defined PL as:
"high-quality teaching based on sound knowledge of each child's needs".

The idea of ‘Personalised Learning’ can be seen as an attempt to ameliorate the controlling effects of the centralised National Curriculum and the Strategies of recent years making the policies that drive the delivery of education more broadly in line with those driving other aspects of public service. The words used to describe PL are loose and have political rather than educational overtones.
A DfES approved definition of PL

...personalisation is about putting citizens at the heart of public services.

It is about raising standards by shaping provision around individual citizens and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organisations that serve them.

In education this can be understood as personalised learning – the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person’s potential.
Personalised learning is a highly structured and responsive approach to learning for each individual child and young person. It creates an ethos in which all pupils are able to progress, achieve and participate. It strengthens the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils and their parents as partners.
Personalised Learning

David Miliband
‘Personalised learning demands that every aspect of teaching and support is designed around a pupil’s needs.’

Jackie Beere
I think through personalising the learning we are starting to understand the amazing potential of young people. If we can get students to become emotionally intelligent, self-managing and optimistic, and understand the way they think, there’s endless, limitless potential for learners in our schools today.’

John King
‘In my school, no longer can we simply assume that students are passive participants in the educational process. They are actively engaged in it. They are far more independent. They are far more responsible for their own learning.’
Critique from BECTA

Personalised learning:
• is not tangible, specific and concrete
• risks meaning all things to all people
• will look and feel different in different schools/colleges and for different children

• does not engage children, young people or parents
• focuses on schooling rather than learning
• does not engage effectively with the wider children's agenda.
Three principles that could give us an idea of what personalisation can mean in practice:

'Empowering learners and parents'

'Improving the quality and responsiveness of schools and colleges'

'Asking learners and parents to take more responsibility and control'

(Detailed version of this in today’s pack)
• putting the learner at the centre of the system;
• moulding the system around the child;
• having high expectations of every child;
• shaping teaching around the way young people learn;
• promoting learning beyond the classroom;
• focusing on developing learning skills and strategies (metacognition);
• providing clear pathways through the education system, whilst retaining a core entitlement;
• planning for a combination of independent and collaborative learning;
• using the learning needs and talents of young people to guide decision making;
• allowing for individual interpretations of the goals and value of education.
The introduction of the concept of "personalised learning" … reinforces the need to be clearer in what is meant by learning and how it is best promoted.

David Hargreaves, TES 17th Sept 2004
David Hargreaves’ sequence of nine Gateways

1. Student Voice
2. Assessment for Learning
3. Learning to Learn
4. New Technologies
5. Curriculum
6. Advice and Guidance
7. Mentoring and Coaching
8. Workforce Reform
9. Design and Organisation

The Nine Gateways To Personalised Learning

Student Voice
AfL
Learning to Learn
New Technologies
Curriculum
Advice & Guidance
Mentoring and Coaching
Workforce Reform
Design and Organisation
The Four Deeps

- AfL
- Student Voice
- Learning to Learn
  - Deep Learning
  - Deep Support
    - Mentoring and Coaching
    - Advice & Guidance
  - Deep Experience
    - New Technologies
    - Curriculum
  - Deep Leadership
    - Design and Organisation
    - Workforce Reform
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEEP LEARNING</th>
<th>Deep learning is secured when, though personalisation, the conditions of student learning are transformed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEEP SUPPORT</td>
<td>Deep support demands that schools and teachers should collaborate with other institutions, agencies and people to secure deeper learning for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEEP EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>Deep experience is secured when schooling is restructured to ensure that all students are fully engaged in their learning</td>
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<td>DEEP LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>Deep leadership means redesigning education so that, through a culture of personalisation and co-construction with shared leadership, the school secures deep experience, deep support and deep learning for all students</td>
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The Learning styles debate

Frank Coffield, (London University's institute of education), reviewed 13 models of learning styles, insists that the approach is theoretically incoherent and confused.

"As well as VAK, I came across labelling such as 'activists' versus 'reflectors', 'globalists' versus 'analysts' and 'left brainers' versus 'right brainers'. There is no scientific justification for any of these terms," he said.

"We do students a serious disservice by implying they have only one learning style, rather than a flexible repertoire from which to choose, depending on the context."

"Humans have evolved to build a picture of the world through our senses working in unison, exploiting the immense interconnectivity that exists in the brain. It is when the senses are activated together - the sound of a voice is synchronisation with the movement of a person's lips - that brain cells fire more strongly than when stimuli are received apart.

"The rationale for employing VAK learning styles appears to be weak.

Susan Greenfield
The position in the current National Curriculum