

Welcome

This edition of *Research eLert* explores the concept of *personalising education* as identified in local and international research. The themes common to a personalised approach to education are student-centred learning, ICT as a key enabler, lifelong learning and communities of collaboration.

In Victoria, elements of these themes are outlined in various government reports and school policies and programs. For example, many schools are working on ways to tailor education to the individual and are providing innovative ICT rich learning environments. For some schools this includes introducing student-led interviews as an assessment and reporting initiative. At the system level, the *Next Practice: Design Teams Pilot Project* identifies key elements of personalised learning and teams of teachers, researchers and other specialists are working collaboratively to share emerging research, and the related teaching and learning practice.

I trust that you will find this report a useful resource for generating discussion in your school on personalising education. I am keen to receive your ideas and contributions and encourage you to continue to provide feedback via the research mail box at: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

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Feature article

Personalising Education: from research to policy and practice

This report presents personalising education as an emerging issue in recent years and explores the common themes emerging from the various descriptions and definitions of the concept as identified in local and international research. The operationalisation of personalisation in education is still in its embryonic stages both locally and internationally and there is substantial evidence that many of the components of individualised approaches to learning have been successful in a variety of contexts around the world.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2007

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/personalising-education-report.pdf>

Related research

OECD

Schooling for tomorrow: personalising education

These papers are from an international seminar held in London in 2004 titled 'Personalised learning: the future of public service reform'. With contributions from the UK, Finland, Germany, Canada, France and Denmark, topics included the personalisation agenda; recent research on learning and brain function; sociological dimensions and the role of the 'personal' domain; and speculation about the prospects of personalised learning in the future. Just as some of the contributions highlight the advantages of personalised learning for a wide range of reasons, the text contains useful critiques of the concept, from the political to the pedagogical.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006, *Schooling for tomorrow: personalising education*, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris.

This publication may be ordered or purchased online from the OECD at: www.oecd.org

United Kingdom

Policy briefing: personalised learning just what is it?

This paper traces the origin of the term 'personalised learning' in education reform in the UK, in the context of the wider reform movement of 'personalisation' of public services. The author argues that good teachers have been practising 'personalised learning' for years. However, the practice has become increasingly difficult because of constraints on time, space and resources. As well, a more prescriptive and regulated school system makes it difficult to personalise learning for students. The complexities and challenges of personalisation lie in the extent to which the school system itself needs to change.

Besley, S., 2004, *Policy briefing: personalised learning just what is it?*, London Qualifications Ltd, UK.

Personalised learning: ambiguities in theory and practice

The concept of personalisation had its origins in public sector services in England following the publication of a paper, *Personalisation through Participation*, by Charles Leadbeater in 2003 for Demos, the UK 'think tank'. Leadbeater argued that personalisation could be realised through five increasingly complex levels of service. The authors of this research paper claim that as the concept of personalisation has been disseminated through policy documents, particularly through the DfES 2005 *White Paper*, it has lost its deeper emphasis and has become more shallow in meaning. Moreover, they argue, that a lack of conceptual clarity poses the danger that personalisation will be implemented in its shallower form in schooling. The focus of this paper is on gifted and talented upper secondary students who provide the best case study of how personalisation might work in practice.

Campbell, R, Robinson, W, Neelands, J, *et al* , 2007, *Personalised learning: ambiguities in theory and practice*, British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2007, pp. 135-154

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at [<research@edumail.vic.gov.au>](mailto:research@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Teachers' perceptions of personalised learning

In 2004, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched the *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* in England. This research paper examines the 'new' teaching and learning style in the *Five Year Strategy*, personalised learning. The research involved interviews with 13 teachers at two 11-18 comprehensive schools in North East England and a review of the published documents of those schools and of other schools used as 'exemplars of personalised learning in operation' by the DfES. Some criticism of personalised learning emerged from the research, for example, the idealisation of personalised learning at policy level, and the difficulty for some schools and teachers in understanding and using the 'new' style effectively due to the ambiguity of some definitions of personalised learning. The researchers caution that personalised learning, if imperfectly defined and used, may lead to different and dated practices operating under its name.

Courcier, I, 2007, *Teachers perceptions of personalised learning*, Evaluation and Research in Education, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2007, pp. 59-80

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Personalising the curriculum at 14-19: Research Associate report for the National College for School Leadership

This UK report investigates personalised learning and its role in supporting the transformation of the curriculum in secondary education. The authors present the process of personalisation in four schools and focus particularly on the areas of leadership and partnerships. The study shows the concept of a personalised curriculum in each school and how it is used to enable the development of systems that are tailored to the needs of individual pupils.

Cresswell, L, Morrissey, P & Soles, G 2006, *Personalising the curriculum at 14-19*, Research Associate Report for the National College for School Leadership, Nottingham, UK.

www.ncsl.org.uk

A national conversation about personalised learning

This DfES resource describes the concepts of personalisation and personalised learning and the principles to guide action. The personalised learning components covered include assessment, effective teaching and learning strategies, curriculum entitlement and choice, school organisation, and partnerships beyond the school.

Department for Education and Skills 2004, *A national conversation about personalised learning*, DfES, UK.
www.innovation-unit.co.uk/media/publications/a-national-conversation.html

Personalisation and digital technologies

This UK article discusses connecting digital technologies to the goals of personalisation and argues that learners are already creating personalised learning environments for themselves outside school by using digital resources. The authors note that personalisation is much more than investing in ICT and sets out a 'Learner's Charter' to act as a basis for consultation with students. The 'Charter' is intended to be used in school planning, collaboration with learners and the wider community, in order to create an education system shaped around the needs of the learner.

Green, H, Facer, K & Rudd, T 2006, *Personalisation and digital technologies*, Futurelab, UK.
www.futurelab.org.uk/download/pdfs/research/Personalisation_Report.pdf

The shape of things to come: personalised learning through collaboration

This report links the two policy agendas of personalised learning and school collaboration. It contends that for students to be more engaged with their learning, schools need to use their resources in partnerships that offer more flexibility and creativity. One way to approach this increased complexity is through school networks and other stakeholder collaborations that can supply these extra resources. In this vision, learners become investors in their own education, and schools become more flexible in terms of personnel, place, time, and technology.

Leadbeater, C 2005, *The shape of things to come: personalised learning through collaboration*, DfES, UK
www.innovation-unit.co.uk/media/publications/the-shape-of-things-to-come.html

Lessons in partnership: Research Associate report for the National College for School Leadership

The paper explores the development of partnership-based approaches to the delivery of personalised learning. It details the partnerships formed between three schools and a college of further education in order to provide a range of programs for students.

Peaple, D 2006, *Lessons in partnership*, Research Associate report for the National College for School Leadership, Nottingham, UK.
www.ncsl.org.uk

Personalised learning: a commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme

This report reviews five projects: Learning How to Learn, which focuses on ‘assessment for learning’; Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Group work, where students support each other’s learning; Consulting Students about Teaching and Learning, reflecting a growing interest in ‘pupil voice’ within curriculum entitlement and choice; Home School Knowledge Exchange, looking at extension beyond the classroom; and InterActive Education: Teaching and Learning in the Information Age, researching the use of advanced technology to promote learning in the classroom.

Pollard, A & James, M 2004, *Personalised learning: a commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme*, TLRP, UK.

www.tlrp.org

Building the capacity of teachers for improved student learning: the missing basket – personal learning

Unless there are changes in the beliefs and the social constructions of knowledge that individuals have about teaching and themselves, then teachers will not change what they do. All aspects of ‘school’ need to be aligned towards the goal of developing the whole person. These aspects include the policy context, the school’s culture, the school’s leadership, and the school’s processes and programs. Teacher development processes would focus on increasing teacher capacity rather than improving teacher performance and encompass the multiple dimensions of a teacher’s development – social, personal, emotional, moral/spiritual, conceptual – as well as professional expertise.

Robertson, J & Murrphy, L 2005, *Building the capacity of teachers for improved personalised learning: the missing basket – personal learning*, National College for School Leadership, Nottingham, UK.

www.ncsl.org.uk/

An investigation of personalised learning: approaches used by schools

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned a study of personalised learning approaches used by schools in England. The study comprises a literature review, a survey of schools, of which 347 responded, and case studies from 13 schools. It examines the implementation of personalised learning in the respondent schools considering the following: how well approaches used reflect the five key components of personalised learning; resourcing needs; best practice that could be shared; and the tailoring of teaching and learning to the needs of specific groups of students. Issues for further consideration by DfES have emerged from the study. They are the need for greater clarity and policy guidance in the implementation of personalised learning in schools; inclusivity issues relating to the targeting of those students in greatest need and those identified as gifted and talented students; and the role of individualised provision within personalised learning. The survey report also notes that there is a little research to date evaluating the implementation of the whole of personalised learning as defined by the DfES.

Sebba, J, Brown, N, Steward, S, *et al* 2007, *An investigation of personalised learning: approaches used by schools*. Research Brief No. RB843, May 2007, Department for Education and Skills, UK

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/Rb843.pdf>

Learning about personalisation: how can we put the learner at the heart of the education system?

This pamphlet is an adaptation of the Demos publication, 'Personalisation through Participation', which attempts to broaden the debate on how education can put the learner at the centre. The author argues that education reform needs to be radical so that outmoded forms of provision can be replaced. In this new system there would be improvement made to the basics, more choice made available to the consumer, and learners would be co-designers of services.

Leadbeater, C 2004, *Learning about personalisation: how can we put the learner at the heart of the education system?*, DEMOS, London, and NCSL, Nottingham, UK

www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/learningaboutpersonalisation/

North America

Big schools: the way we are

Research has shown that US schools with large numbers of students maximise achievement in affluent areas, while the opposite is true within impoverished communities. This article uses several snapshots of large schools to explore this statement and notes that factors such as school leadership, collaborative staff, and inter-disciplinary projects are able to defy the finding. Personalisation and personalised learning are an integral part of this process, through instilling a sense of belonging, a more intimate physical learning environment, the empowerment of staff, mentoring, a constructivist approach to teaching, and an emphasis on group projects.

Allen, R 2002, *Big schools: the way we are*, Educational Leadership, Vol. 59, Issue 5, pp. 36-41.

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at research@edumail.vic.gov.au.

The learning compact redefined: a call to action

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Executive Director, Gene Carter, posits that in order to create learning conditions that enable all children to reach their full potential, the whole child needs to be at the centre of each education decision. Education policy in the US needs to change to encompass all aspects of a child's capacity to learn not just focus on their academic achievement. The whole child needs to be supported by their parents, their teachers, and the wider community so that they develop into knowledgeable, healthy, motivated, and engaged individuals. This report outlines a new learning compact which encompasses personalised learning; a healthy lifestyle; preparation for further study or employment; connection to the school and the broader community; and a safe and engaging learning environment.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 2007, *The learning compact redefined: a call to action*, ASCD, Virginia, USA.

www.ascd.org/learningcompact

The building blocks of high school redesign

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) advocates urgent high school redesign (reform) to improve the school graduation rate in the United States and better prepare graduates for college and the workplace. It identifies three key building blocks of redesign: personalised learning, multiple assessments; and implementation of professional development initiatives for teachers. ASCD notes that high school students must also have opportunities and time to apply their talent and knowledge beyond the school. To that end, community organisations and business have a role in helping students exercise their skills in the real world.

Ewing, T 2007, *The building blocks of high school redesign*, ASCD Infobrief, Issue 49, Spring 2007, pp 1-8.
www.ascd.org

Personalised learning: preparing high school students to create their futures

The book presents a rationale for adapting the high school to best serve the students, through personalised learning plans, community-based learning, project-based teaching, standards-based portfolios, and high performance. Approximately thirty contributors discuss personalisation from a variety of perspectives. The book includes a useful list of practices and principles found in successful non-traditional schools.

DiMartino, J, Clarke, J & Wolk, D (eds) 2003, *Personalised learning: preparing high school students to create their futures*, Lanham, Maryland, Scarecrow Press.

The Big Picture: education is everyone's business

Dennis Littky is the co-director of the Big Picture Company, a 'non-profit education design organisation'. Littky and his partner, Elliot Washor, started 'The Met' – a group of six schools that have an innovative approach to education. The guiding principles behind the movement are social and economic justice, flexibility, change and innovation, individualised curriculum, acceptance of diversity, response to community needs, and ongoing evaluation of practice.

Littky, D & Grabelle, S 2004, *The Big Picture: education is everyone's business*, ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

Australia

Personalised learning: creating the ingredients for system and society-wide change

In this report the authors align the 'personalisation movement' with the UK government's aims of equity and quality education for the individual, within the broader context of public services, governance and long-term change in society. The report identifies key areas of system-wide change including universality, diversity, transparency, learning and teaching, the role of communities, roles and workforce, organisation and coordination. The authors argue that personalisation has the potential to become a 'disruptive' idea, in the sense that it can fuel demand for responsive services and new learning opportunities, and that it also has the potential to be either 'shallow' or 'deep'.

Bentley, T & Miller, R 2004, *Personalised learning: creating the ingredients for system and society-wide change*, IARTV Occasional Paper No. 87, Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria (now the Centre for strategic Education), Melbourne.

Crossing the bridge: overcoming entrenched disadvantage through student-centred learning

'A quality school education is not a universal experience in Australia.' In 2006, the Education Foundation Australia undertook research to discover how schools in a number of disadvantaged Victorian communities turn around learning outcomes for middle years students. The study of nine government and Catholic system schools in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne tests the claim that schools catering successfully for students use a personalised or student-centred approach to boost engagement and learning. A case study of each school is included in this report which also identifies elements common to student-centred learning and proposes three models for 'deeper change' in school education.

Black, R 2007, *Crossing the bridge: overcoming entrenched disadvantage through student-centred learning*, Education Foundation Australia, Melbourne.

www.educationfoundation.org.au

Are learning technologies making a difference? A longitudinal perspective of attitudes

For a number of years Australia's national and state efforts to improve student outcomes have focused on ICT. This paper describes a longitudinal study (three years) of nine schools which were supported to embed ICT throughout mainstream curricula. An online survey was used to measure change in student attitudes towards school and changing attitudes towards the use of computers in learning. The general summary, with caveats, is optimistic, finding positive effects on attitudes towards learning and on self-esteem.

Dix, K 2005, *Are learning technologies making a difference? A longitudinal perspective of attitudes*, *International Education Journal*, vol. 5, Issue 5, pp 15 -28.

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>

Shifting from traditional teaching to an interactive learning environment

Situated in Perth, WA, the school described in this paper attempts to maximise curriculum opportunities in a technology-rich and outcomes-focused environment within the ICT curriculum. Curriculum materials and individualised learning programs are created online, and the focus is on learning that comes from student enquiry, critical thinking and problem-solving using a variety of sources. Through ICT, students are encouraged to be active learners responsible for their own learning, resulting in project-oriented, collaborative work that promotes autonomy and engagement.

Healy, J 2002, *Shifting from traditional teaching to an interactive learning environment*, *Education Horizons*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, pp 4-8.

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>

Customising the school for student learning

This article describes how Rosetta High School in Tasmania has customised its programs and developed personalised learning for its students in a 'transformation' that highlights relationships, personalisation and context. The features include personal bonds between students and teachers to motivate and engage, particularly 'at risk' students, and the scaffolding of learning where the learner's knowledge is valued and understood. The author also describes structures for communication and collective problem-solving, broader teacher roles, personalised instruction strategies, and teacher support.

Speight, G 2005, *Customising the school for student learning*, *Principal Matters*, May 2005, pp 41-43.

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>

Breakthrough classroom instruction

According to this paper, the key to effective reform is the smart use of data by teachers to inform classroom instruction suited to individual students. How then can individualised or personalised instruction become feasible in the busy classroom? The authors propose the Triple P Model comprising three core elements: personalisation; precision; and professional learning. The model is intended to assist teachers in skilfully measuring what students know and are able to do and, on the basis of this information, to design instruction responsive to students' learning needs. A 'Breakthrough Framework' is provided incorporating the Triple P Model and six supporting 'core functions': school and classroom organisation; assessment literacy; classroom teaching; professional learning communities; intervention and assistance; and home and school community partnerships.

Fullan, M, Hill, P & Crevola, C 2007, *Breakthrough classroom instruction*, Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series Paper No. 162, CSE, Melbourne.

New Zealand

Being a learner: a virtue for the 21st century

The concept of lifelong learning, essential to the personalisation of learning is a strong feature of 21st century education. What is it to be a lifelong learner? According to the authors of this paper it is an intentional, self-aware process, a personal activity with implicit social dimensions which encompasses a personal and social commitment to learning; respect for others' learning; and respect for truth. A sense of personal and social worth underpins one's identity as a learner. Lifelong learning requires the '...active awareness and engagement of the learner, in community'.

Crick, R & Wilson, K, 2005, *Being a learner: a virtue for the 21st century*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2005, pp. 359-374

For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

The Knowledge Bank connection

This edition of *Research eLert* highlights several case studies and Teacher Professional Leave (TPL) reports which focus on aspects of **personalised learning**. Below is a selection from primary, secondary and school clusters. Many more examples can be found on Knowledge Bank. Over 400 case studies and TPL reports, written by your colleagues, are there for you to read, share and use. To see more examples go to the Knowledge Bank website:

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/knowledgebank/about.asp>

Case study & teacher professional leave (TPL) reports

Primary schools

- [Child centred assessment and reporting strategies – Glen Katherine Primary School](#) (PDF – 218KB)
- [Supporting Students with Additional Needs \(SWANs\) – Sunshine North Primary School](#) (PDF – 97KB)
- ['I've got that Somers feeling' - Please explain! – Hastings West-Park Primary School and Somers School Camp](#) (PDF – 40KB)

Secondary schools

- [Student led interviews as an assessment and reporting initiative – Copperfield College Kings Park Campus](#) (PDF – 94KB)
- [Global Journey Program – Kambrya College](#) (PDF – 61KB)
- [Managed Individual Pathways for students \(MIPS\) program – Mordialloc College](#) (PDF – 53KB)

School clusters

- [Student Leadership – Elwood 'Village of Learning' Cluster](#) (PDF – 388KB)
- [Digital Portfolios – Sale Cluster](#) (PDF – 397KB)

Upcoming events

Below is a list of upcoming conferences which may be of interest. For a comprehensive list of conferences, workshops and events, check out the Education Network Australia site at:

<http://archive.edna.edu.au/edna/go/pid/225>

MindMatters National Conference: 'Leading health and wellbeing'

23-24 August 2007

Melbourne, Victoria

<http://online.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/calendar/calendar.htm>

NCVER Research Forum: 'Supporting Vocational Education and Training (VET) Providers in Building Capability for the Future'

28 August 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
<http://www.ncver.edu.au>

Australasian Evaluation Society 2007 International Conference: 'Doing Evaluation Better'

3-7 September 2007

Melbourne, Victoria

Evaluation is now a core activity for government departments, community agencies and non-profit organizations, whether it is framed in terms of organizational learning, accountability, quality improvement, evidence-based practice or results-based management. The Department of Education is a sponsor of this conference which will draw together what has been learnt about doing evaluation well and ways to do it better.

<http://www.aes2007.com.au>

Australian Secondary Principals Association National Conference: 'The Roaring Forties – Winds of Change'

30 September – 3 October 2007

Hobart, Tasmania

<http://www.windsOfChangeConference.com.au/>

Australian School Libraries Association Biennial Conference: 'Learning, Literature and Literacies'

2-5 October 2007

Adelaide, South Australia

<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/conference/>

Navcon2K7: 'Generation.com, Where to Next?'

2-5 October 2007

East Gosford, New South Wales

<http://www.navcon2k7.org/Navcon2K7-Home.html>

ASCD and ACEL 2007 International Conference: 'New Imagery for Schools and Schooling: Challenging, Creating and Connecting'

10-12 October 2007

Sydney, New South Wales

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.83f4b2b5537730a98d7ea23161a001ca/template.article?articleMgmtId=acfd0f05c1520010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD>

Australian National Schools Network: Habits of Mind International Expo

22 October 2007

Melbourne, Victoria

http://www.ansn.edu.au/habits_of_mind_international_expo

Curriculum Corporation 14th Annual Conference: '21st Century curriculum'

12-13 November 2007

Sydney, New South Wales

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/conference/2007/>

Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association: 'Rethinking Education – you say you want a revolution?'

19-21 November 2007

Melbourne, Victoria

<http://www.vitta.org.au/conference/2007/>

Australian Association for Research in Education 2007 Research Conference: 'Research Impacts: Proving or improving?'

25-29 November 2007

Fremantle, Western Australia

<http://www.aare.edu.au/conf2007/index.htm>

Contributions & feedback

- Do you have or know of a research paper that you think would be worth considering for inclusion in *Research eLert*?
- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
- Is there a particular topic or theme you would like *Research eLert* to cover?
- Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?
- Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve *Research eLert*?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we'd love to hear from you. Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Reflections & action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- Which personalised learning research papers would be worth tabling for professional reading in my workplace? How will I facilitate this?
- What are we currently doing that supports current research on personalised learning? Do we have strategies in place that would be worth sharing via the *Research eLert*?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of personalised learning? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organisational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Next edition

The next edition of *Research eLert* will feature *Evidence-based research for expert literacy teaching*, a summary report of research work recently commissioned by the Department of Education. This report links to *Research eLert* No. 9 which focused on literacy teaching and learning in Victorian schools. It provides school leaders, literacy coordinators and teachers with evidence-based tools and strategies aimed at improving student literacy. The report also confirms the notion that expert literacy teachers demonstrate a deep understanding and knowledge of literacy processes and related theoretical underpinnings.

We are keen to include information on how schools and other learning organisations are using research to inform and guide their practice and would like to include some of this work in the *Research eLert*. If you are interested, please contact the Research Branch at: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

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Coming soon...

Research
eLert *extra*

The *Extra* will provide information on the Department's research forums, and keep you up-to-date with the latest news about education research. The first *Extra* will feature Bernie Smith, Head Teacher of Four Dwellings High School and winner of the UK's 2006 School of the Year Award. Bernie's presentation focused on the vital role of community partnerships.