

The end of education: expanding the capacity to learn

- ‘The test of successful education is not the amount of knowledge that pupils take away from school, but their appetite to know and their **capacity to learn.**’ Sir Richard Livingstone, 1941
- All skills will become obsolete except one, ‘the skill of being able to make the right response to situations that are outside the scope of what you were taught in school. We need to produce people who **know how to act when they are faced with situations for which they were not specifically prepared.**’ Seymour Papert, 1998
- ‘One of the core functions of 21st century education is **learning to learn in preparation for a lifetime of change.**’ David Miliband, 2003
- ‘Pedagogy should at its best be about what teachers do that not only helps students to learn but actively strengthens their **capacity to learn.**’ David Hargreaves, *Learning for Life*, 2004
- ‘Effective teaching...should aim to help individuals and groups to develop the **intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to flourish in a diverse and changing world.**’ ESRC TLRP Report, March 2006

Positive learning dispositions

Resilient Resourceful Reflective Reciprocal

Curious (proactive)	Questioning (how come?)	Clear-thinking (logical)	Collaborative (team member)
Adventurous (up for a challenge)	Open-minded (‘negative capability’)	Thoughtful (where else could I use this?)	Independent (can work alone)
Determined (persistent)	Playful (let’s try...)	Self-knowing (own habits)	Open to feedback
Flexible (trying other ways)	Imaginative (could be...)	Methodical (strategic)	Attentive (to others)
Observant (details/patterns)	Integrating (making links)	Opportunistic (serendipity)	Empathic (other people’s shoes)
Focused (distractions)	Intuitive (reverie)	Self-evaluative (how’s it going?)	Imitative (contagious)

Aspects of an epistemic culture

- **Language** – we all speak ‘learnish’
- **Activities** – a potentiating milieu
- **Split-screen thinking** – the warp and weft
- **Wild topics** – rich, real and responsible
- **Transparency and involvement** – students as epistemic co-explorers
- **Transfer thinking** – looking for wider relevance
- **Progression** – stronger, broader, deeper...
- **Modelling** – walking the learning talk

Talking ‘learnish’

- o How did you do that?
- o How else could you have done that?
- o Who did that a different way?
- o What was hard about doing that?
- o What could you do when you are stuck on that?
- o How could you help someone else do that?
- o What would have made that easier for you?
- o How could I have taught that better?
- o How could you make that harder for yourself?

Epistemic milieux

- **Prohibitive** – close down and restrict learning-to-learn
- **Affording** – allow learning-to-learn without encouraging it
- **Inviting** – make being a learner attractive
- **Potentiating** – learning is both attractive and challenging

Wild topics

- o **Rich**: there is much to be explored
- o **Challenging**: the topic contains real difficulty
- o **Extended**: there is time and opportunity to go into depth
- o **Relevant**: the topic connects with students' own interests and concerns
- o **Responsibility**: students have some genuine control over what, why, how and when they learn
- o **Real**: solving the problem or making progress genuinely matters to someone
- o **Unknown**: the teacher doesn't already know the 'answer'
- o **Collaborative**: there is opportunity to work together with others

An Ofsted report extract

- Pupils' personal development is good and is very well promoted through the schools '4R' code – resilience, reciprocity, reflection and resourcefulness. Pupils understand what these words mean and they are used very effectively, both in lessons and around the school, to bring about the very good atmosphere of learning and playing... The 'distraction scale' is proudly displayed in all classrooms and encourages pupils to take part in managing their own behaviour... Using the '4R' code well, they have good attitudes and are happy to take on a variety of responsibilities and show initiative...

From the UWE evaluation...

- 'The maths SATs paper this year had lots of reasoning. The class did brilliantly at those sorts of questions – even children who wouldn't previously have attempted them. All the children who've been through [the programme] attempted every question from all sorts of angles, even though they may not have got the right answer. The children are much freer, more courageous. If they don't find a solution one way, they'll find another solution, some other way...'
– A Year 6 teacher

The student voice – why Kyle goes to school

- Why do I come to school? To develop my learning power, of course! They give us interesting things to explore that get harder and harder. In finding out how to grapple with them, we develop the ‘learning muscles’ and learning stamina that will enable us to get better at whatever we want, for the rest of our lives. People like scientists and historians have figured out special-purpose way to learn: as we get older, we practice those, and think about how they might help us in everyday life.
- As powerful learners, we will be better able to learn new skills, solve new problems, have new ideas and make new friends. No matter how so-called ‘bright’ you are, everyone can get better at learning. Even professors have learning difficulties! Oh, and by the way, as we become more powerful learners, so we naturally do better on examinations too! It’s a no-brainer, really.

- A copy of this paper, and the PowerPoint presentation, can be downloaded at

www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk

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