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## **PM's education aspirations at risk from assessment system**

Findings from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, the UK's biggest-ever initiative in education research, show the steps that need to be taken to achieve the educational revolution set out in Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Greenwich University speech yesterday.

Professor Andrew Pollard, TLRP Director, said: "Much of Gordon Brown's vision for education is supported by evidence from educational research and points in encouraging new directions. I particularly welcome the emphasis on the child 'in the round', on culture and aspirations, on the importance of parents and social influences, and on making sure that we have good teachers who have high status and engage in continuous learning to enhance their professionalism."

But he warned that school education is still dominated by high-stakes assessment which can undermine authentic learning and constrain teachers and schools. He said: "The world-class standards in education which Gordon Brown wants will not be achieved until this issue is faced directly and a more appropriate balance is achieved. The next phase of educational reform would be considerably helped by a National Review of Assessment and Learning."

Professor Pollard added: "I welcome the PM's statement that: 'As we start to move to personalised testing, we must keep assessment under review to ensure that it supports learning and achievement and does not dominate teaching.' A national review of the evidence on assessment and learning would ensure that assessment requirements are fit for their purpose and that the excellent intentions, impressive investments and multiple initiatives of the government are given the best chance of success."

The TLRP has carried out 22 research projects on enhancing school learning. It provides evidence that underpins the next stage in UK educational development. It supports the PM's statement that children's learning must be supported 'in the round' and that social and cultural influences have a highly significant effect on the 'motivations, values and habits' of learners.

Examples include TLRP work on the exchange of knowledge between home and school, group work, peer relationships, pupil consultation and learning how to learn. All these deal with engaging children in the context of their lives and building social relationships that encourage learning. The VITAE project supports the PM's belief that 'world-class performance comes from consistent brilliance from teachers in every classroom; professionals who seek continuous

improvement'. It showed a clear link between teacher commitment and pupil performance.

A summary of TLRP's findings, in the form of ten 'evidence informed principles for teaching and learning', has been distributed to schools across the UK (see <http://www.tlrp.org/findings>).

The TLRP ([www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)) is the UK's largest-ever research programme on education at all phases of life and the biggest research programme managed by the Economic and Social Research Council. TLRP's budget is some £40 million from 2000 to 2011. Of this, half comes from HEFCE and the remainder from UK governments and research councils. TLRP welcomes media inquiries about its work via Martin Ince.

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