



PROFESSOR THE BARONESS GREENFIELD

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Politicians, brain scientists and teachers rack brains to give UK classrooms the cutting edge

Teachers and scientists tell Parliament "left brain /right brain" distinction is a no-brainer and no substitute for cutting edge science

An influential All Party Group of MPs and Peers led by Baronesses Susan Greenfield and Estelle Morris and Phil Willis MP had a meeting of minds with educationalists and brain scientists today to determine how British classrooms can be reshaped by the best brain-science research to meet challenging social changes and to make them the most advanced in the world.

The consensus of the seminar (hosted by the Scientific Research in Learning and Education All-Party Parliamentary Group) was that effective collaboration between scientists and educationists can help provide new tools for developing classroom practice, informing teachers' professional expertise with an understanding of the processes underpinning the learning of key skills and abilities such as numeracy, literacy, attention and memory.

The group also concluded that some of the current educational products and policies that claim to be based on the latest scientific research often have a weak evidence base, although teachers find learning benefits in engaging with 'brain-based' ideas in the classroom. **One classroom myth that was debunked was distinguishing pupils as so-called "left brainers" and "right brainers" – something that has no scientific basis and which could be detrimental to learning.**

The group gathered for the seminar called for changes in initial teacher training, professional development and the assessment of 'brain-based' products and policies to provide teachers with better access to the expertise that exists in the UK in scientific research on learning and development.

This parliamentary seminar also saw the launch of the **Neuroscience and Education: Issues and Opportunities Report**, the latest in a series of commentaries on topical education issues from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme. It puts forward a battery of ideas for how our increasing knowledge of the brain can contribute to a more complete picture of educational processes.

Professor Andrew Pollard, Director of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, said, "This report highlights the benefits that can be gained from building bridges between education, neuroscience and psychology research. We are finding out more about scientific ways of enhancing learning and I am sure we will see new breakthroughs."

Former Secretary of State for Education and Labour Peer, Baroness Estelle Morris, said, "In the past twenty years one of the most exciting and fascinating frontiers of science has been in the domain of neuroscience research. Educationalists are keen to explore how these understandings can help inform their practice. Dialogues such as these today set the scene for improved collaboration between education and science in the future, which are necessary to help reshape our education system around the need of our children."

Crossbench Peer Baroness Greenfield (Professor Susan Greenfield), who chaired the seminar, added, "I am excited by the steps that are being taken to foster closer links between education and scientific research. Together, I hope that we can uncover some crucial understandings of the processes that form the basis of learning. I am very proud and pleased that Parliament is providing the neutral forum for these flanks of civil society to combine and exchange experiences and ideas."

"A shared passion for realising every child's potential is bringing this broad coalition together - and Whitehall needs little persuading to get involved. They know that as a middle-sized country, Britain must foster and trade on its brain power to stay ahead in a globalised economy" the neuroscientist peer added.

ENDS.

For more info / notes for Editors:

Enquiries about this seminar, or the Scientific Research in Learning and Education All-Party Parliamentary Group, should be made to Dr Jonathan Sharples, Policy Officer at The Institute for the Future of the Mind, in Oxford. (Tel:01865 281 529, Email: jonathan.sharples@pharm.ox.ac.uk). The Institute for the Future of the Mind is part of the James Martin 21st Century School at Oxford University. Researchers explore how to harness scientific understanding and new technologies to maximise the potential of each individual and safeguard their individuality.

The TLRP (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 2012. Of this, half comes from HEFCE and the remainder from UK governments and research councils ([further details of funders](#)) TLRP welcomes media inquiries about its work via Martin Ince. (Tel: 020 8672 6977, 0771 9390958, Email: martin@martinince.com)

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