

Welcome to the PGCE Programme's research bulletin.

Thank you for your feedback on the first research bulletin. Topics that people are interested will be included in future bulletins.

Please continue to send feedback on topics that are of particular interest to you and your setting and we will do our best to include relevant items in future bulletins.

Also, please contact Alison Glover ([alison.glover@open.ac.uk](mailto:alison.glover@open.ac.uk)) if there is any research you and/or your setting are involved in, as we would welcome the opportunity to share this across the Partnership.

### In this issue .....



**Greening school playgrounds:** Parents' views of the advantages and disadvantages of green or paved school playgrounds.



**Homework:** Engaging parents in children's learning is valuable, yet parents' engagement with homework can be problematic. Some key principles for designing homework tasks are provided.



**Successful futures, successful curriculum:** Attention to the accountability, professional learning and social network context is necessary to realise the national curriculum aspirations.



**Teachers' well-being:** A study on the relationship between job-related well-being and job satisfaction.



**Evaluating the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales:** Members of the PGCE team worked with Arad Research to investigate 'system readiness' for the new curriculum. Report published.



**Other Open University research: Empowering teachers to help children read for pleasure** – A summary of how the Reading for Pleasure project is developing teachers and inspiring children across England and further afield to discover the joy of reading.



**Greening school playgrounds** *'Parents generally saw more advantages than disadvantages of a green schoolyard, and many parents indicated that disadvantages, such as children coming home dirty, are not very important to them.'*

Reconnecting children with nature lies behind the growing movement towards greening school playgrounds. Natural elements such as trees, flowers, sand and water are included, and children are encouraged to interact and play with nature. This Dutch study surveyed 402 parents and found that parents want to be involved in the green school playground, but only up to a certain extent. It concluded that schools should embrace the positive perception of parents, yet be sensitive to their needs, concerns and capabilities.

van Dijk-Wesselijs, J.E., Hovinga, D., de Koning, M., Maas, J. and van den Berg, A.E. (2021) 'Parental perspectives on green schoolyards: advantages outweigh disadvantages, but willingness to help is limited', *Children's Geographies*, 19(2), pp. 145-157. doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1751071.



## Homework

*'There are no formal guidelines for the amount of homework required for children of various ages in the UK.'*

International research suggests that four hours of homework a week is related to improved outcomes, but more than this can have a negligible impact on performance. Schools should involve parents in any changes to the homework processes. Homework should only be assigned if it is likely to be effective in supporting young people's mastery orientations to their work. Parental input should be more for moral support as opposed to content specific; for autonomy and self-belief – the attitudes and skills which will support learning and self-belief in the long run.

Goodall, J. (2021) 'Scaffolding homework for mastery: engaging parents', *Educational Review*, 73(6), pp. 669-689. doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1695106.



## Successful futures, successful curriculum

*'The curriculum is typical, in many ways, of recent worldwide 'new curriculum' policy.'*

New curricula in countries such as Scotland, New Zealand and the Netherlands have been attacked for downgrading knowledge. The over-emphasis on skills in such curricula have been criticised. Although autonomy for teachers can increase a sense of control, there is also the risk that 'anything goes'. In the absence of prescribed curricular content there can be more output regulation – inspections/achievement data.

Curriculum making capacity in schools seems to be assumed yet it is highly variable. Social network analysis reports that within school networks are densely connected, whereas cross-school networks are much sparser with a lower degree of connectivity. The participatory processes adopted in New Zealand and the Netherlands have been credited with the widespread high regard for the curriculum from its inception. Instead of what subjects should we teach it should be what knowledge, skills and attributes are needed?

Sinnema, C., Nieveen, N. and Priestley, M. (2020) 'Successful futures, successful curriculum: What can Wales learn from international curriculum reforms?', *The Curriculum Journal*, 31(2), pp. 181-201. doi.org/10.1002/curj.17.



## Teachers' well-being

*'Positive emotions provided the strongest contribution in predicting job satisfaction.'*

Teacher shortages and increasing turnover rates are of international concern. Teachers' job satisfaction is believed to be critical in retaining teachers who can maintain health and effectiveness in challenging conditions. Five dimensions are distinguished to conceptualise job-related well-being: positive emotions; engagement; relationships, meaning and achievement. This study surveyed 511 German schoolteachers. Well-being differed significantly in comparisons of teachers experiencing high and low job satisfaction. Female teachers reported higher engagement and job-related meaning compared to male counterparts. Younger teachers reported better relationships than older colleagues, but differences were small. Positive emotions, followed by relationships and achievement provide the most contributions to well-being. It is proposed that future studies could include observations, interviews and student data.

Dreer, B. (2021) 'Teachers' well-being and job satisfaction: the important role of positive emotions in the workplace', *Educational studies*. doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.1940872.



## Evaluating the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales – update

As reported in Issue 1, Arad Research and the Open University in Wales were commissioned by the Welsh Government to investigate 'system readiness' for the implementation of the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales. The final report presenting the survey responses submitted by Headteachers, senior leaders and practitioners can be found [here](#).



## Other Open University research: [Empowering teachers to help children read for pleasure](#)

More than 300 primary schools, 5,000 teaching professionals, 4,000 student teachers and millions of school pupils build reading communities. Drawing on data collected since 2017 the following are identified as key in helping teachers to encourage children to read for pleasure:

1. Enhanced knowledge of children's literature and other texts.
2. Understanding of children's everyday reading habits.
3. Reading for pleasure teaching practices, such as creating time to read, reading aloud, informal book talk and sharing recommendations in a social reading environment.
4. A 'Reading Teacher' identity as teachers who read and readers who teach.
5. Reciprocal and interactive reading communities within and beyond school.

[A free online course is now available](#) aimed at teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders, reading volunteers, parents and all those interested in nurturing children's reading.



**Reminder:** the closing date for abstracts for the Open University Partnership in Wales Research Conference is Friday 22 April.

**All PGCE3 students and practitioners in partner schools** are reminded to submit their abstracts (100-200 words) to participate in roundtable presentations that will share research practice across the partnership.

Further details available [here](#). Submit your abstract [here](#).