

Welcome to the PGCE Programme's research bulletin. If you / your setting are undertaking any research/inquiries we would welcome the opportunity to share this with the Partnership. If you wish to know more about any of the items included in these bulletins please contact Alison Glover ([alison.glover@open.ac.uk](mailto:alison.glover@open.ac.uk)).

### In this issue .....



**What children need to flourish:** A study exploring the impacts of the Lockdowns on mental health and well-being of primary-aged children.

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**Vocabulary acquisition via drama:** A new method of teaching Welsh to Year 5 learners examined via two experimental groups and one control group.



**A family engagement framework:** A new framework is suggested that can be built upon to be part of the work to improve parental engagement with learning.



**Recognising and tackling gender stereotypes:** Practitioners' reflect on their gender construction and the influence within their pedagogy.



**Early implementation of Curriculum for Wales:** Members of the PGCE team worked with Arad Research to examine schools' early experiences of Curriculum for Wales.



### What children need to flourish

*'If they're happy, they're going to be good learners, if they're unhappy, they're not going to learn.'*

This study explored the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of primary-school-aged children in the UK. Nine teachers were interviewed, and 136 parents completed an online survey. Results highlighted the assortment of children's experiences and the detrimental impacts of the lockdowns on social development. Many participants drew attention to the benefits of the less pressurised schooling, which was perceived as having a positive impact on behaviour, well-being and academic progress. The paper contends that prioritising children's social and emotional development is key to supporting children flourishing in the recovery period and is a prerequisite for effective learning more widely. While individualised interventions such as counselling may be part of the solution, what is needed is a deeper and longer-term transformation of the system in which time and capacity for fostering strong relationships and children's active engagement are placed at the heart of primary education.

Martineau, W. and Bakopoulou, I. (2023) What children need to flourish: insights from a qualitative study of children's mental health and wellbeing in the pandemic, *Education 3-13*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2023.2186973>

A new method of teaching vocabulary to Year 5 Welsh second language learners through the medium of drama is tested. Vocabulary Acquisition via Drama (VAD) is based on principles derived from process drama and communicative and task-based approaches to language teaching, and involves three phases: pre-drama, drama and post-drama activities. The research design involves two experimental groups and one control group, and a pre-post-test format on three measures of vocabulary acquisition: picture naming, sentence formulation and improvisation tasks. Results show a beneficial effect for VAD. The discussion section of the paper addresses the potential contribution of this approach to teaching second/foreign language vocabulary.

Kalogirou, K., Beauchamp, G. and Whyte, S. (2019) Vocabulary Acquisition via Drama: Welsh as a second language in the primary school setting, *The Language Learning Journal*, 47(3), pp. 332-343, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2017.1283351>



### A family engagement framework

*'Engagement is a process involving a set of relationships and actions that cut across individuals, circumstances and events.'*

This paper examines the widely used Epstein framework and proposes a new framework to advance parental engagement in schools. Understanding of the value and realities of parental engagement with learning have changed significantly since the Epstein framework first appeared almost 25 years ago. Epstein's framework has six types of parental involvement (Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at home, Decision-making and Collaborating with the community). The new framework aims to be 'family, rather than school centric'; 'it focuses on relationships'; 'it supports staff learning and practice'; 'aimed at fundamental, not superficial change'; and 'a focus on the home learning environment'. It also 'moves from practice to process' and 'supports effective evaluation and forward planning'. The new framework is a suggestion to build upon as opposed to being a static tool, and be part of the work to improve parental engagement with learning.

Goodall, J. (2022) A framework for family engagement: Going beyond the Epstein Framework, *Wales Journal of Education*, 24(2). <https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.24.2.5>



### Recognising and tackling gender stereotypes

*'It is apparent that teachers' perceptions of gender do influence their practice.'*

Teachers' representations of femininities and masculinities were examined to consider how understanding of gender might impact the developing gender constructions of the children taught. In 14 interviews, teachers reflected on their gender construction in their personal lives and how this impacted on their displayed attitudes to gender within their pedagogy. Findings suggest that teachers made associations between femininity, nurture and physical appearance, and, in contrast, associated masculinity with physical strength, enjoyment of sport, and the role of financial provider. Data suggests that limiting binary gender stereotypes perpetuate, and with them the possibility that teachers might still be constraining their pupils' opportunities. Having reflected in this way, the teachers in this sample presented as more inclined to modify their practice for an increased focus on equality.

Sheehy, A. and Solvason, C. (2023) Teaching lads' lads and girly-girls: why recognising and tackling gender stereotypes still matters in education, *Education 3-13*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2023.2224842>



## Early implementation of Curriculum for Wales

*'Experiences help us remember things more. Facts are easier to remember if you see things in the real world.'* (Learner)

Members of the PGCE team have worked with others to examine schools' early experiences of the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales. The findings from the first wave of interviews with 64 Senior leaders was reported on earlier in the year and can be found [here](#). The Wave 2 report presents the findings of qualitative research with 62 senior leaders in schools and Pupil Referral Units to understand how the curriculum and assessment reforms were working. Evidence from fieldwork with groups of learners in primary and secondary schools, outlining their experiences of curriculum delivery is also presented in the [Wave 2 report](#).

## PGCE Research Conference report 2023

The second PGCE Research Conference was held in June 2023; full conference proceedings available [here](#).

The conference included a keynote from Rocio Cifuentes (The Children's Commissioner for Wales); student teachers and partner school colleagues shared research findings on a range of studies, and a panel discussion with Dr. Natalie Canning (OU), Daniel Davies (Clase Primary School) and Melanie Simmonds (Save the Children Cymru) offered valuable insight into the importance of child-centred research.



**After the pandemic: a generation-defining challenge**

The COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) study is the largest study of its kind into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis on the life chances of a generation of young people.

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