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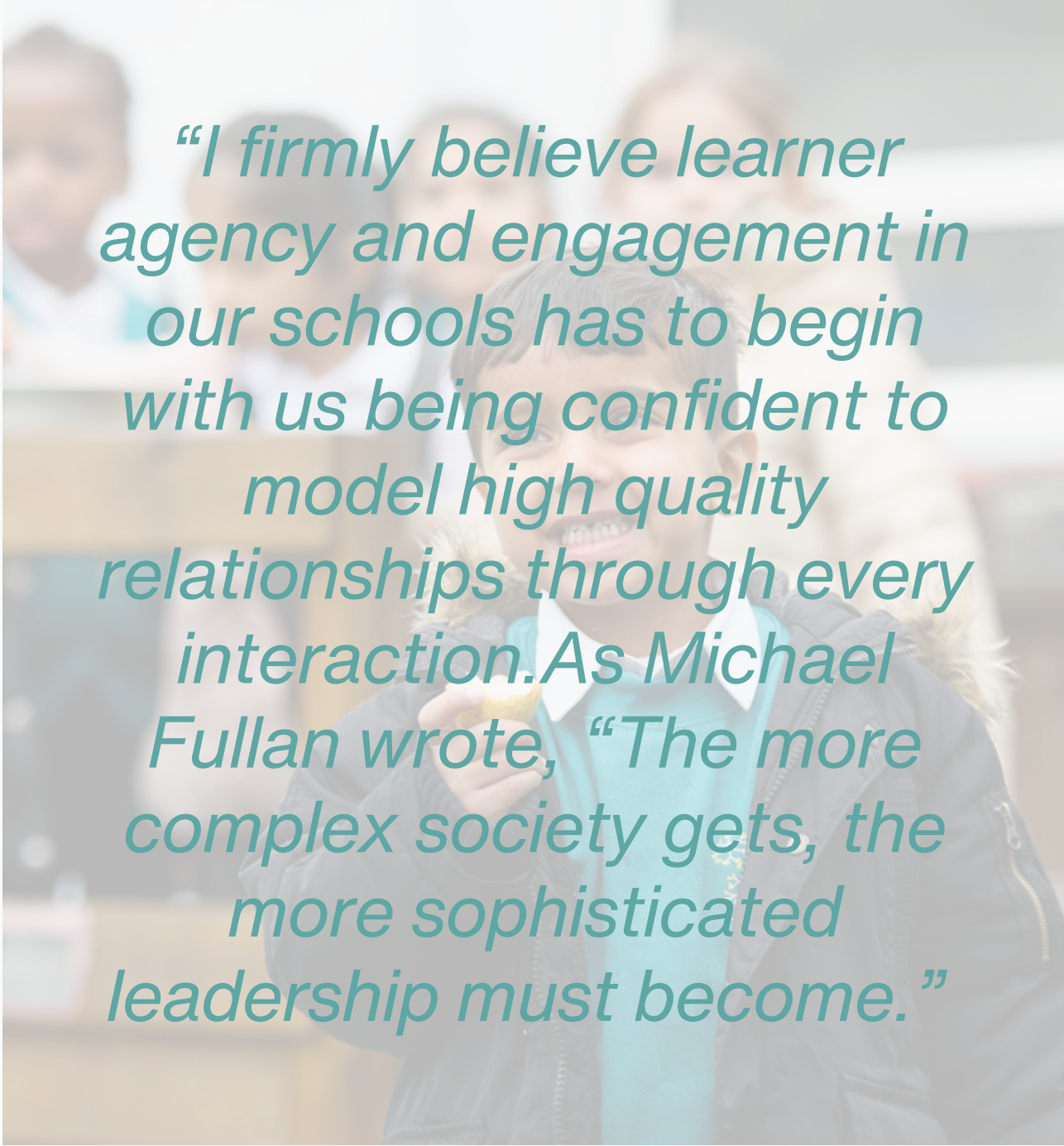
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Learning from Pupils: The TEP Engagement Census

Schools participating in the very first TEP pupil engagement census received their first round of data this week, providing revealing and significant information about how pupils think about their education. This is the first time many schools will have engaged in such an expansive survey which provides a national comparison between all schools and trusts part of the study cohort. It presents us with an opportunity to consider how schools support character development and better understand the relationship between learner engagement and academic success through analysis of pupil voice.



“I firmly believe learner agency and engagement in our schools has to begin with us being confident to model high quality relationships through every interaction. As Michael Fullan wrote, “The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become.””

Census findings, especially given the scale and size of the study cohort, provide valuable learning for the profession. It comes a week after MPs hosted an event at the House of Commons, coordinated by Dr Sam Rushworth MP, with the ambitious title '**Social and Emotional Learning: The Vision for Curriculum Teaching**', a noteworthy event given the cross representation of attendees, including the Chair of the Education Select Committee, Helen Hayes MP.

The TEP pupil engagement census adopts a similar evaluation model to that used by the well established Canadian Education Association (CEA) which you can read more about [here](#). The CEA defines learner engagement as:

- **Academic engagement:** To understand the importance of learning through commitment (being diligent)
- **Social engagement:** Active participation in the life of a school - feeling involved, belonging to a community of learning (being involved)
- **Intellectual engagement:** The emotional and cognitive investment in learning that leads to confidence as knowledge builders, problem-solvers, conceptual thinkers, self motivated learners (being curious).

I have included some reference slides below...

Academic Engagement

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Show up

- Daily attendance
- Participation in lessons
- Subject attendance



Stay with it

- Engage with the teacher
- Engage with the students
- Engage with class norms



Stick the learning

- Ask questions
- Complete tasks
- Submit completed work

Intellectual Engagement

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Personal challenges

- Adaptive teaching
- Culturally relevant
- Timely/actionable feedback



Purposeful tasks

- Sequenced to explicit goal
- Real world connections
- Flexibility & choice



Propelling curiosity

- Increasing rigour
- Opportunities for advancement & challenge
- Linked to individual interests

Social Engagement

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Student to teacher

- Personal relationship
- Coaching relationship
- Mentoring relationship



Student to student

- Organic friendships
- Interest groups
- Planned collaboration



Student to student groups

- Learning partners
- Discussion groups
- Student mentorship

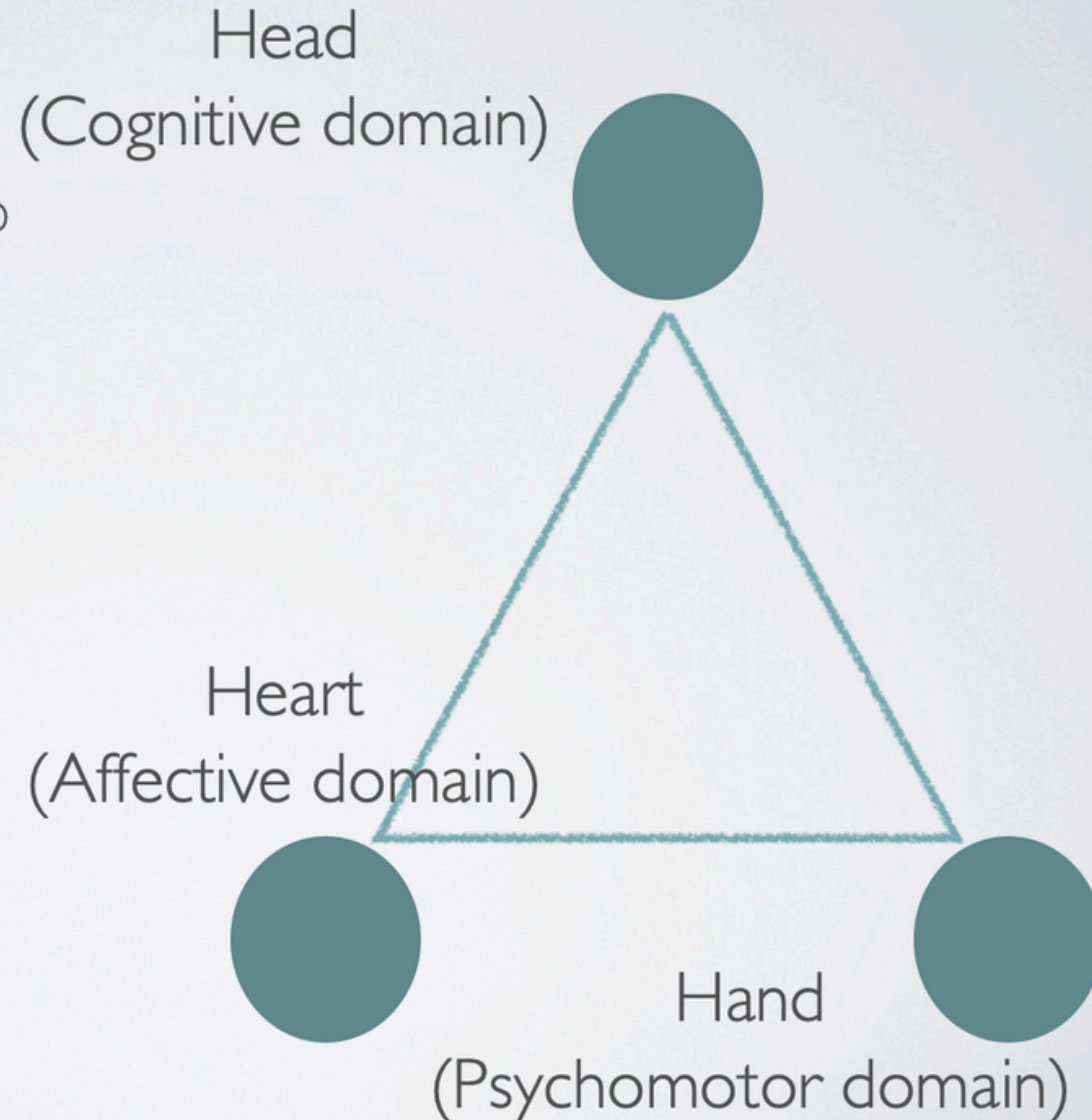
Similarly, the TEP student engagement census will enable participating schools and trusts to synthesise how students engage with school through the lens of **cognitive learning (thinking), emotional learning (feeling) and psychomotor learning (doing)**. It will be important for schools to evaluate the findings with openness and a spirit of enquiry.

Speaking optimistically, the findings provide us with an opportunity to re-evaluate how we organise learning, curriculum and assessment and personal development in our schools with the aim of better understanding how the micro climate of a school can best support young people to thrive and achieve. The findings also give us a reason to look deeply into our organisations to explore the practices and habits which, unintentionally or otherwise, may or may not lead to greater levels of learner engagement amongst our communities. I firmly believe the TEP pupil census has the potential to drive positive school and trust approaches to self evaluation. Many schools are familiar with leading pupil surveys but the TEP pupil census provides information benchmarked against a national data set.

The evidence base for understanding how learner engagement impacts on academic and social success is strong. Canada and Australia (through the brilliant work of the AITSL) have long understood the importance of what is sometimes referred to as '*affective domain*' and its relationship with formal learning, including learner agency and self-efficacy. (See below).

THE DOMAINS OF LEARNING

- Cognitive domain: development of intellectual skills and concepts leading to application, synthesis and evaluation
- Affective domain: values, motivations, attitudes leading to ownership (internalisation)
- Psychomotor domain: connecting physical processes with reasoning. Progresses from repetition of manual tasks to adapting skills to new tasks



As an example of how the data might be used, in Singapore, the education ministry has worked closely with school leaders to re-design priorities in an ambitious plan to ensure Singaporean school leavers are *'future economy'* ready. Their mission is to cultivate life-long learning with the aim of:

- Nurturing diverse talents
- Expanding pathways for learning for ALL learners
- Creating an enabling environment for both academic and skills-based learning

Singapore has long since departed from a curriculum design approach that prioritises knowledge as the gateway to achievement. They have tilted their focus towards teaching pupils the importance of hope, belonging and engagement (which they refer to as lasting memories). In practice, students undertake fewer 'high stakes' examinations and experience curriculum pathways which offer greater diversity based on individual needs. Importantly, creativity is increasingly seen as a proxy for success – Singapore scored second globally in critical thinking evaluated by PISA in 2018.

And by the way, this is not a sentimental *'apple pie and motherhood'* approach to education. It is born out of a strong evidence base and a mission led approach to ensure young people are equipped with both the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in what is undoubtedly a more complex world.

The [Children's Society Good Childhood Report](#) publishes data annually on young people's hopes, fears and well being, including attitudes towards school. In 2024, young people from 10 to 17 years old expressed an increasing dissatisfaction with school. They refer to pressures of our examination system, social relationships with peers and a curriculum which does not always prepare them to "*meet the world*". Until now, policy makers and influencers in the English education system have largely ignored this evidence base. At best, we have offered well intended platitudes but failed to listen deeply to the voice of young people. It will be interesting to read the soon to be published Curriculum and Assessment Group's initial findings from the on-going review and assess how early recommendations might support greater learner engagement in our schools.

At IPAT, we are starting the process of digesting the TEP student engagement survey findings. Overall, pupils across key stage 2 are self-reporting levels of learner engagement similar to those from the national cohort of participating schools. However, it is clear that some pupil groups feel less engaged than others. We need to understand why. **Year 6 pupils, for example, report significantly lower scores in relation to looking forward to going to school. Fewer children who are entitled to free school meals believe ALL pupils are treated the same in school. When we look at pupil groups who fall into more than one category, the contrasts are marked.**

It is important we explore why some children feel this way and approach the process with a commitment to thinking differently to overcome any potential barriers. The concept of human flourishing can only become a reality once we address the challenges of equality and equity for ALL learners. The TEP pupil engagement census is a bold first step in the right direction in achieving this.

To read Rob's previous blog on IPAT's school improvement strategies follow the link.

