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Hello and welcome to Issue 17 of the National Learning to Learn Action Research Project Newsletter.

This year we have seen changes in the learning landscape that will have a substantial impact on schools, colleges and learners. There have been much more fundamental changes, however, in our attitudes. We have seen a marked drop in confidence and trust in 'the system', following bank collapses, closure of major businesses, the ongoing row over MPs' expenses and an increasing sense of the ground shifting beneath our feet. One disturbing consequence has been political, in a rise in support for extremist parties.

We cannot pretend that adopting Learning to Learn approaches gives schools and colleges a 'magic bullet' that will proof them and their learners against the impact of economic, political and social change - but I do believe these can help in significant ways. Firstly, Learning to Learn students are developing important 'soft' skills - in communication, teamwork, planning and organisation, for example - that make them more employable. These are the skills employers regularly identify - in CBI and British Chamber of Commerce surveys, for example - as their highest priority. Secondly, the Learning to Learn approach encourages learners to work together in various groupings,

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appreciating each other's strengths, helping each other learn and understanding diversity - a step, we must hope, towards valuing difference and countering political extremism. And perhaps most significantly, Learning to Learn students expect to be consulted and are used to taking responsibility, weighing evidence and drawing informed conclusions, which puts them in a strong position to make active political and social choices.

'The true mark of democracy is its capacity to withstand and benefit from a noisy and fractious citizenry; the true test of democracy is whether it can educate a citizenry with enough competence and judgement to understand that it bears the ultimate responsibility for the success of its representative institutions.' 'A Passion for Democracy: American Essays' (2000) American political theorist Benjamin Barber's conclusions on how our citizens should be and our role as educators in fostering this shows what we can aspire to achieve through Learning to Learn approaches in our schools and colleges. By helping our learners to challenge, to take responsibility, to work together and to understand the implications of the choices they make, we are helping them become effective, enthusiastic lifelong learners, but we are doing far more - if we get it right, we are also helping them to become engaged, reflective and responsible citizens in future.

Tricia

Tricia Hartley
Chief Executive
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With Regards,

Matt

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