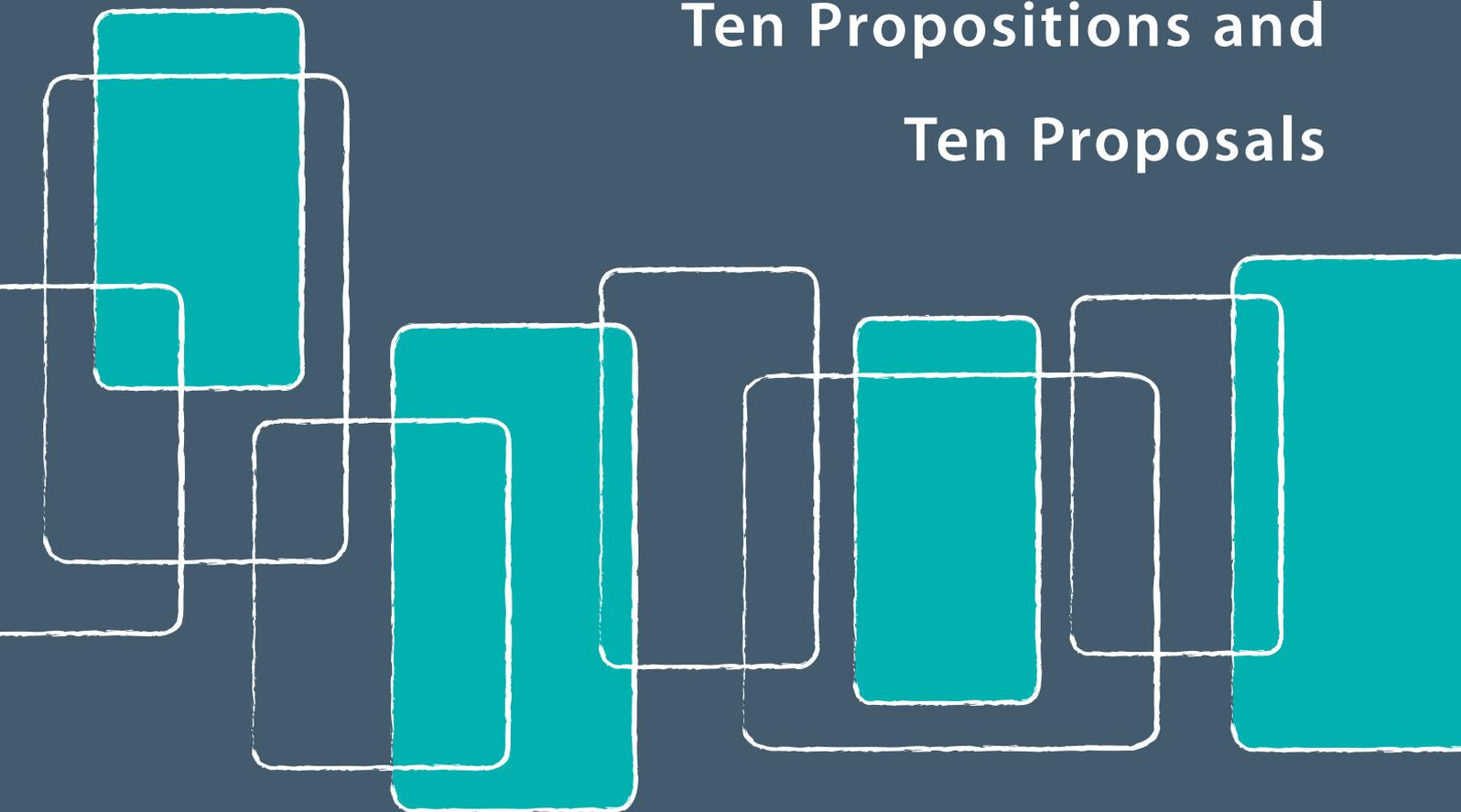


**Learning for Democracy**  
**Ten Propositions and**  
**Ten Proposals**



# Learning for Democracy

## Ten Propositions and Ten Proposals

### Ten propositions

#### Democracy is about:

**1. Freedom**

Human flourishing is achieved through freedom to act individually and collectively, only constrained by due consideration for others.

**2. Equality**

All people are of the same moral worth and are obliged to mind the equality of others.

**3. Justice**

Justice and democracy are interdependent. An unjust society is an undemocratic society and an undemocratic society breeds injustice.

**4. Solidarity**

Shared aims and values arise from the pursuit of common purposes and mutually supportive ways of living.

**5. Diversity**

Dialogue between different cultures and identities can enrich society and help to build a common culture.

**6. Accountability**

The state is accountable to its citizens for providing the policy framework within which judgements about the common good are made and contested. Those who hold power are answerable to the people.

**7. Dialogue**

Democracy requires dialogue and the possibility of dissent. This means learning to argue, articulate beliefs, deliberate and come to collective decisions concerning what constitutes the good society.

**8. Responsibility**

Consistency and coherence between private and public behaviour are essential to the quality of democratic life.

**9. Participation**

Democracy is something to be negotiated from below rather than handed down from above. Citizens require the opportunity to talk back to the state.

**10. Sustainability**

A commitment to the environment and to future generations requires determined opposition to those forces which are wasteful and destructive.

# Ten proposals

## Learning for democracy means:

### 1. **Taking sides**

Educational workers are not merely enablers or facilitators. The claim to neutrality can reinforce and legitimise existing power relations. Practitioners need to be clear about what they stand for - and against.

### 2. **Acting in solidarity**

Practitioners should proactively seek opportunities to engage in a critical and committed way with communities and social movements for progressive social change.

### 3. **Taking risks**

Critical and creative learning is necessarily unpredictable and open-ended. Exploring official problem definitions and challenging taken-for-granted ways of thinking can be a liberating process.

### 4. **Developing political literacy**

Politics needs to be made more educational and education made more political. Learning to analyse, argue, co-operate, and take action on issues that matter requires a systematic educational process.

### 5. **Working at the grassroots**

Democracy lives through ordinary people's actions; it does not depend on state sanction. Practitioners should be in everyday contact with people on their own ground and on their own terms.

### 6. **Listening to dissenting voices**

Activating democracy is a process of creating spaces in which different interests are expressed and voices heard. Dissent should be valued rather than suppressed.

### 7. **Cultivating awkwardness**

Democracy is not necessarily best served by the conformist citizen. This means that the educational task is to create situations in which people can confront their circumstances, reflect critically on their experience and take action.

### 8. **Educating for social change**

Collective action can bring about progressive change. Learning for democracy can contribute to this process by linking personal experience with wider political explanations and processes.

### 9. **Exploring alternatives**

Learning for democracy can provide people with the opportunity to see that the status quo is not inevitable – that 'another world is possible'.

### 10. **Exposing the power of language**

The words used to describe the world influence how people think and act. Learning for democracy involves exploring how language frames attitudes, beliefs and values.

## Learning for Democracy

### Ten Propositions and Ten Proposals

These ten propositions and proposals are the result of extensive discussion and consultation. This work started with a large meeting of interested people from across Scotland held in the Scottish Parliament in 2007 to discuss the content of an Open Letter widely circulated towards the end of 2006. Here is an extract:

**We see our work in community-based education as part of a broader democratic process. This is about enabling people to demand social justice and equality for themselves and others. There is now an historic opportunity to renew democracy in Scotland, and yet we are beginning to feel a profound sense of disappointment about the way in which both our own work and the lives of people in communities are being managed, regulated and controlled. ... What is required, in the first instance, is a much more open, democratic and imaginative dialogue and debate about what kind of society we want to live in, and how we can begin to build it in Scotland today. Education and learning in communities can contribute to making this vision a reality, and they are a rich resource for tackling significant problems in society. Ordinary people need the opportunity to have their say, to be listened to and to talk back to the state. This is essentially a democratic process. It cannot simply be managed and measured; it has to be nurtured and cultivated in communities. It requires faith and trust in the people, and a valuing of genuinely democratic dialogue and debate.**