Literacy Development and the Challenge of Equitable Achievement

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Research programme contributing to solving:

Theoretical challenges:

An integrated model of children’s development – in families and schools in proximal and distal (including policy) contexts, which can adequately represent the interactions of culture, living conditions, schooling and child agency as they each support literacy development.

Systemic challenges:

Equitable outcomes and increased quality- in a ‘High Quality / Low Equity’ system (OECD, 2010). A long standing pattern in a system ‘Fair’ to ‘good’ - not ‘great’ or ‘excellent’ at improvement (McKinsey Report, 2010).
Achievement more closely linked to SES than the OECD average and other high performing countries. One sixth of the difference in students’ performance (17%) is explained by SES, (compare 9% in Canada) PLUS achievement of low SES children appears to be worsening and the relationship between SES and achievement in New Zealand is strengthening (across the OECD it is weakening)
NZ Context (includes)

1. Cultural
   - recognition of indigenous (Māori) rights (including bilingual / cultural provisions)

2. Educational
   School population: 2013 (n=767,258 ; 2,500 schools)
   - 53% Anglo/ European (Pākeha)
   - 23.3% Māori
   - 10.2% Asian
   - 9.8% Pacific Islands communities (Pasifika)

3. Geographic (long and narrow)
   - 1,600 kms (15,000 km of coastline)
And 40 million sheep

In NZ always the year of 羊 yáng
Research foci

- Child agency as learner
- Family socialisation and cultural practices
- School socialisation practices (including nature of teaching expertise)
- Connections between each
- Enablers and constraints in wider systems

All of the above used to try to increase effectiveness of schools
Learner agency across settings

❖ Self regulation:
  - studies demonstrating role (eg activating self corrections in early oral reading effects on accuracy, fluency, word learning¹)

❖ Experimental conditions basis for parent programme and connecting settings:
  - ‘Pause, prompt and praise’ (1987)
  - Māori version Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi (1994)
  - High ES on reading progress when linked (Best Evidence Synthesis, Robinson et. al. 2009)

Family literacy and language practices and culture

- Analyses of inter and intra group variability in practices and testing ‘match’ hypothesis with school literacy:
  - fixed and dynamic properties (e.g., authority of text)

- Basis for designs for parent programmes for reading books (English, Māori, Pacific):
  - culturally additive (e.g., recitation and narrative dialogue)
  - Interaction styles added for development at school

School practices

- Redesign of school instruction to better connect needs of low SES, culturally diverse learners to school practices¹
  - eg² intensive PLD for more explicit and deliberate focus on needed knowledge, skills (mostly ‘unconstrained’) and participation in instructional activities in first 6 months
  - high but variable implementation
  - demonstrate *accelerated* learning to within expected levels after a year (effect sizes from 0.27- 0.71 on range of measures)


Designing Better Schools?¹

- Despite all the above... an epiphany:
  - national patterns largely intractable
  - need better ‘programmes’?

  No – change the approach

- eg Not ‘What works’ but:
  - “What works for whom under what set of conditions... at scale?” (Bryk et. al. 2015)
  - “How do we build the capability for schools to do X?” (Shonkoff & Fisher 2013)
  - What do systems constrain and enable?

Variability in NZ School Improvement: Average Gains by Schools (n=83), over 2009 (n= 8,610 students).
School Specific Impact (n=147 schools, 866 students) of Reading Recovery in the US¹

¹From Consortium for Policy Research in Education (2013)
Designing Better Schools?

- Design based approaches in partnerships with schools (similar to Improvement Science – Bryk et. al. 2015; and Snow et. al. 2012)

- Series of studies focused on different ‘urgent problems of practice’ (recently summer learning or use of digital environments¹) in different contexts. Where redesign is built into the capability of schools.

Partnership model applied in three phases of iterative design and development

1. *Profiling urgent ‘problem’*
   - to identify potential ‘solutions’ and exclude unproductive foci

2. *Building capability*
   - bringing resources such as professional development to bear on the ‘problem’

3. *Sustaining focus* and specifically problem solving (process) focus
Intervention logic. Outcomes via:

1. Professional Learning communities engaged in systematic ongoing inquiry to solve ‘problems’ in *valued student outcomes* (using variability)

2. Contextualised ongoing use of evidence (*teaching, learning and other*) to identify practice challenge and for redesign of practices.
Can get gains sustainable at scale - eg annual acceleration in Reading Comprehension

‘Original’ and ‘Like’ clusters – urban, low SES high cultural diversity ‘Unlike’ cluster – rural, mixed SES

On-going larger queries

1. Enablers and constraints: Balancing school and teacher autonomy
   - In New Zealand more collective learning needed (cf Shanghai or Singapore)

2. How do we take research partnerships / collaborations to scale?

3. New / extended roles for researchers
   - What are the theories, skills (including social skills) and knowledge needed to collaborate in change with schools?