EVIDENCE IN ACTION:

BRINGING THE ‘HOW’ OF EQUITY, EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION TO THE FOREFRONT OF POLICY DIALOGUE


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International indicators and targets have driven significant educational improvement. Those developing the UNESCO Education 2030 Agenda seek efficacy in achieving the targets.

The Open Society Foundations asks ‘How can we start valuing practices and outcomes of teaching and learning that are difficult to reduce to numbers? ... Compliance ... must not divert valuable resources away from the actual work of teaching and learning by imposing burdensome monitoring and accountability measures’.

A proposed target is to ‘By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.’ Other targets require elimination of disparities for indigenous peoples and equal access for children with disabilities and in vulnerable situations. They give priority to proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

Good intentions will be insufficient for rapid progress. If policy workers take a linear approach then a ‘Christmas Tree’ toppling effect can occur. Teachers and school leaders can be overloaded with requirements for focus and accountability that cause goal displacement. Achievement can decline and disparities widen through unintended negative effects when capacity building is neglected or issues of basic needs are under threat.

BRING CLASSROOM REALITIES TO THE FOREFRONT OF POLICY DIALOGUE, POLICY MAKING AND PLANNING

To counter such risks, this seminar focuses on implications of these targets for action and asks policy makers to bring classroom realities to the forefront of policy dialogue, policy making and
planning. The Cambridge Network, the Open Society, the OECD and Education International ask for recognition of the crucial role to be played by teachers as partners in advancing progress.

Education 2030 targets can be operationalized in ways helpful to an accelerated improvement agenda that does promote inclusion, quality and equity through improved (lived) curricula and transformative evidence-based pedagogy.

Example 1 is a smart tool developed by indigenous expertise7 in New Zealand:

In my school it feels good to be (my culture) always/mostly/sometimes/hardly ever/never.

Example 2 is an item from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study8.

I was hit or hurt by other students (e.g. shoving, hitting, kicking) never/a few times a year/once or twice a month/at least once a week.

When teachers in three schools serving our highest poverty communities considered early change data tracking the impact of access to expert professional learning on their students, they were able to see improved and accelerated mathematics achievement on scale scores. But they also saw evidence of violence reduction from 20.5% to 7.4% of students reporting being hit, or hurt by other students at least once a week.

Māori, Samoan, Cambodian and Iraqi students who initially reported that they never or hardly ever felt good to be their own culture at school explained that now they felt ‘normal’, ‘awesome’ and ‘proud’ to be their culture when learning mathematics9,10.

PROMOTE INCLUSION, QUALITY AND EQUITY THROUGH IMPROVED CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGY

The targets for the next 14 years call for much greater attention to use of evidence about the ‘how’ of capacity building. They require urgency to leverage expertise for wider action that is transformative across multiple goals.

The best evidence in action video ‘Developing Mathematical Communities of Learning’ brings classroom realities to the forefront. This high impact, culturally responsive approach11 was selected from a comprehensive search of thousands of studies for its impact across multiple valued student outcomes, and congruence with findings across best evidence syntheses. When well-implemented, it builds productive learning communities for diverse children, for teachers and leaders across and within schools, and forges educationally powerful connections with local communities. The video explains such impact though the voices of expert change leader Associate Professor Roberta Hunter, an indigenous Māori elder12, school leaders, teachers and children.

This short video is the first of a series on-line at http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/BES/developing-mathematical-inquiry/introduction


10 Kazemi, E. (2015). International quality assurance for the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme: Developing mathematical inquiry communities, Porirua East. Seattle: University of Washington. Unpublished report. Professor Kazemi concluded: “The quality of professional education and mentorship led by Dr. Bobbie Hunter and Dr. Jodie Hunter and their team from Massey University serves as an international exemplar of the highest quality... Importantly, this work is not “an intervention, it is a reinvention of pedagogy.”

11 Alton-Lee, A., Hunter, R., Sinnema, C., & Pulegatoa-Diggsin, C. (2012). *BES Exemplar 1 Ngā Kete Raukura – He Tauira 1 Developing communities of mathematical inquiry*. Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme | He Kete Raukura, Ministry of Education: Wellington, New Zealand. The original exemplar, quality assured by Professor Emerita, Courtney Kazden of Harvard University, revealed 4-5 years of acceleration in mathematics achievement for students of two teachers in one school with positive changes in students’ collaborative skills. The forerunner of this approach, *complex instruction*, by Elizabeth Cohen and Rachel Lotan led out of Stanford University, was featured in four *New Zealand best evidence syntheses*. The approach also that normalised bilingual resource use and translanguaging in mainstream classrooms. There is a developing body of evidence about critical success factors for accelerated improvement to scale in New Zealand. In 2014 Otumoetai Intermediate, who implemented this approach, received the Prime Minister’s Supreme Educational Excellence Award.

12 Māori kaumatua (respected elder) and retired educational psychologist, Laurie Loper. Laurie Loper has made a family bequest, the James Stewart Loper Bequest, to enable a new seeding opportunity for Developing Mathematical Inquiry Communities – Hangai te Uruponamu Pāngarau Mō Tātou to be implemented as best evidence in action in Christchurch, New Zealand, in which bilingual tasks in both English and te reo Māori can be progressively normalised in mathematics teaching in English medium schools.