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Beginning Literacy eight years on: Seeking
harmony between a literacy programme and the
change programme

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The presentation

1. Emphasis on literacy in Icelandic compulsory education
2. A short account of Beginning Literacy as an approach to literacy education and professional development
3. A few words about the Beginning Literacy research project
4. An account of our critical investigation of the structure and effectiveness of the BL professional development programme

Literacy emphasis in Icelandic compulsory education

Fundamental pillars of education

- ▶ Literacy (in the widest sense)
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Health and welfare
- ▶ Democracy and human rights
- ▶ Equality
- ▶ Creativity

Key competences

(compulsory & upper secondary)

- ▶ Expression and communication
- ▶ Creative thinking
- ▶ Working independently and cooperatively
- ▶ Responsible, creative and critical handling of knowledge & information
- ▶ Responsibility for own education and evaluation of own performance

BL – a brief overview

- ▶ Pioneered by Rósa Eggertsdóttir in four schools in 2004–2006
- ▶ In general use since autumn 2006
- ▶ Currently (spring 2014) in use in 68 primary schools – 42 % of the primary school population in Iceland
- ▶ An interactive approach to literacy teaching
- ▶ Theories of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1991)
- ▶ Definitions of inclusive education and classroom communities

The PD programme – an overview I

Teachers – year one	Teachers – year two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two days course in August • Five workshops over the school year • Eight classroom observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One day course in August • Five workshops • Six classroom observation,
<p>Both years: Regular year group meetings – Regular key stage meetings – Access to Moodle – Literacy materials – Practical handbook – DVD – BL newsletter</p>	
Development leaders – year one	Development Leaders – year two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two days course in June • Five whole day courses • Attend all programs BL teachers go to • Eight classroom observations • Eight phone/Skype meetings with CSD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One day course in August • Four whole day courses • Attend all programs BL teachers go to
<p>Both years: All material teachers get and materials used in workshops – Leadership material – Run most workshops for teachers, supported by CSD consultants</p>	

The PD programme – an overview II

The CSD consultants

- Always conduct in-service days in June and August
- Visit each school twice a year, visit classrooms, meet with teachers, leaders and head-teacher.
- Regular contact with leaders in each school

The head-teachers

- No planned involvement so far.
- Organise the initial introduction to staff
- Oversee the formal agreement with SDC at UNAK
- Meet with the consultants when they visit the schools
- Expected to support the implementation process and BL teachers involved, and meet regularly with the school's development leader.

The BL study

- ▶ Commenced in 2011
- ▶ Team of researchers from the University of Akureyri and the University of Iceland
- ▶ Teaching and learning and professional development
- ▶ Six cases studies
 - ▶ Classroom observations, focus group and individual interviews and document analysis
- ▶ On-line questionnaire survey
 - ▶ In 68 BL schools (571 teachers / leaders + 68 heads)
 - ▶ In 53 Non-BL schools (345 teachers + 53 heads)

The questions

1. Where does the BL implementation programme stand against the current school improvement and professional development literature?
2. How well has it served its purpose to change the skills and behaviour of teachers?

Themes

1. Change as transformation of culture
2. The process of change and professional development
3. Communities of professional learning and knowledge creation
4. Planning, success criteria and evaluation

1. Change as transformation of culture

- ▶ David Hargreaves (2003) – incremental innovation as improvement vs. radical innovation leading to transformation of culture and practices
- ▶ Fullan (2007) – restructuring vs. reculturing

2. The process of change and professional development

- ▶ School improvement and student learning
- ▶ The interrelationship between change and professional learning
- ▶ Change takes time
- ▶ Tri-Level responsibility
- ▶ Individual and organisational development
- ▶ Leadership

3. Communities of professional learning and knowledge creation

- ▶ Collective responsibility for pupil learning
- ▶ Intentional learning, infrastructure and conditions supportive of professional learning and practice
- ▶ Collaboration, mutual trust, respect and support
- ▶ Three criteria (Bolam et al., 2005)
 - ▶ Ultimate impact on pupil learning and social development
 - ▶ Intermediate impact on professional learning, performance and morale
 - ▶ Operational performance as a PLC

4. Criteria for success and evaluation of change

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The professional learning activities of participants | 1. Student learning outcomes |
| 2. The learning of participants | 2. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills |
| 3. Organisational support and change | 3. Organisational support and change |
| 4. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills | 4. Learning of participants |
| 5. Student learning outcomes | 5. Professional learning activities of participants |

Gaytan & McEwan, 2010; Guskey, 2014

Conclusion

- ▶ In most ways BL's implementation programme is consistent with the literature of professional development, we have explored for this paper. There are also many indications in our data to suggest the effectiveness of the programme.
- ▶ Nevertheless some critical points should be addressed for the future development of BL
 - ▶ The length of the period and sustenance of success in the schools
 - ▶ The development of shared leadership and the leadership functions of head-teachers
 - ▶ The creation of a school-wide culture supportive of literacy education
 - ▶ Success criteria, evaluation plans and evaluation practices in the schools

Beginning Literacy on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A329I9O_6GE

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