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Editorial

Welcome to the sixth issue of SERA's *Researching Education Bulletin*. We have a range of papers from university - based researchers this time but please remember that we welcome summaries of research from all education stakeholders. If you have something you wish to share or if you feel strongly about an issue in education then we would be delighted to hear from you.

We start this issue with the question – What is intelligence? Some may consider the answer self-evident but research suggests that silence around the nature of pupil abilities can lead to too much reliance on an individual's implicit theories about intelligence. In turn this can then affect teaching and learning experiences in classrooms. This is then followed by a contrasting individual reflective piece considering key documents concerned with poverty in schools. Our next paper investigates non-formal education for youth in the USA and Scotland. A final paper considers the challenges of trying to build inclusive school communities especially during a period of economic recession in Greece. We then have a short outline of a document that has just been released by the National Education Policy Center in the USA concerning class sizes. You will find a link to the full paper on that page.

I am sure that this rich range of papers will stimulate discussion and debate. On behalf of the Editorial team I hope that you will enjoy reading issue 6 of REB.

Lorna Hamilton
University of Edinburgh, June 2016.

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What is intelligence?

Lorna Hamilton, University of Edinburgh and Angela Jaap, University of Glasgow

Often we use the term intelligence with the assumption that it is some factual entity that can be captured and measured. Yet, there is a great deal of debate about the nature of intelligence and the different models coming from academia vary a great deal. From Renzulli's three ring concept of giftedness (1996) to Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1993), researchers have struggled over whether intelligence is innate or emerges as a result of environmental factors, or whether both may play a part. An even more important question arises then, is intelligence limited and fixed or is it something that can grow and develop? If we are uncomfortable with the term intelligence, we often talk about ability and in schools it is almost impossible to talk about pupils without using the latter term often linked to measured performance of some kind in the classroom. This study aimed to explore the implicit theories of student teachers through consideration of their beliefs about the nature of ability. Use was made of Harre's theory of tripartite personhood as adapted by Hamilton (2002) to investigate ability constructions and experiences. In this way, ability is conceived as experienced in different ways depending upon the perspective taken: perception of self and ability, perception of ability as a quality and beliefs about the ways in which others perceive self and ability. This led to the specific aim:

To explore the ways in which student teachers construct intelligence in relation to themselves and to pupils and whether they believe that they can improve or change the abilities of others

A small exploratory study was established to carry out the first stage of this research. Volunteers were sought from two initial teacher education programmes (PGDE - Post Graduate Diploma in Education) at a city university in Scotland: one year intensive courses for those who had already completed an undergraduate degree. One cohort was preparing to teach in high schools (young people 12 to 18 years) while the other cohort was preparing to work in nursery and primary schools (children 3 to 12 years). Forty-one took part from the primary contingent and forty-six from the secondary group. Total participants achieved across both groups n=87. A questionnaire which drew on both qualitative and quantitative elements was generated and piloted with focus groups and individuals. The key elements of the questionnaire were:

- The nature of intelligence (General, General + specific, separate intelligences, other)
- Is intelligence fixed or fluid?
- Extent to which intelligence is innate and/or environmentally shaped
- Relationship between grades and intelligence
- Self perception of own intelligence based on…?
- Perception of children's intelligence and teacher impact on intelligence

Main findings

A high percentage of each cohort believed that intelligence was made up of both a general component and specific intelligences associated with different subject areas (78% Primary and 60% Secondary) but, perhaps surprisingly, 34% of secondary teachers believed that intelligence was a general quality. General intelligence or *g* as it is commonly known is often associated with fixed notions of intelligence and is often seen as innate. Next in answer to whether intelligence was fixed or fluid, student teachers strongly believed that new skills and knowledge could be attained but there would not be an increase in intelligence (75% primary and 69% secondary). A small percentage by comparison believed that hard work could lead to an increase in intelligence (19% primary and 28% secondary).

Student teachers were subsequently asked about innate versus environmental influences. Here the responses showed greater variation and for the primary student teachers, the majority saw intelligence as mainly genetic and to lesser extent environmentally shaped (53%) while secondary student teachers focused mainly on environmental influences and to a limited extent on genetics (47%). When asked about the relationship between grades and intelligence, most primary and secondary teachers supported the idea that grades in part reflected intelligence and in part reflected other factors (78% primary and 65% secondary).

When the student teachers were asked about their own intelligence, they (across both cohorts) highlighted their creativity and problem solving abilities and their understanding and communication of ideas. However when judging children's intelligence they tended to use norm referencing through comparison between the child and his/her peers. Most believed that they could help children increase their intelligence (50%) but 25% of these felt that there was a limit to that improvement while 25% felt that there was no limit. A substantial number (48%) acknowledged that they could help children learn new things but they could not change their intelligence.

Finally, in capturing what they would draw upon to make judgements about young people's abilities, we found that there was strong agreement across both primary and secondary student teachers. Teachers were able to choose as many strategies as they wished but they had to also prioritise them. These included:

Standardised tests such as ERT,
Exam results/ national tests
I.Q Tests
Participation in class
Class tests

Other (please specify)

They identified teacher judgment as the most important component (almost unanimously) through choosing observation of participation in class, followed closely by exam results or national tests. This suggests great confidence in teacher judgments supported by test performance but surprisingly doesn't reflect the key aspects they used when judging their own intelligence. For the latter they highlighted their creativity, problem solving and handling of ideas. Previous research has suggested that teacher judgement can be too readily affected by perceptions/misperceptions of children and their behaviour and that tests are very limited in what they ask and what they might reflect (Dweck et al., 2012). Perhaps a robust debate on the nature of ability and the possible ways in which teachers can ameliorate skills, knowledge and understanding within schools in an inclusive and egalitarian system is necessary in order to help practitioners bring into the light the basis for ability judgements and provisions (Hamilton, 2007).

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Aims and Scope *Scottish Educational Review* (SER) publishes academic articles and research notes relating to the field of educational policy and practice. The journal is written for academics and researchers in the field of education, teachers and managers in schools and local authorities and those concerned with the development and implementation of education policy. While some of the focus is Scottish, we aim to publish work that is of wider interest to the readership. We also publish work relating to education out with Scotland that may be of interest to a Scottish audience.

Availability of papers SER is available in paper form by subscription. The website contains an archive of back issues (papers as downloadable pdfs). The most recent edition is available as **abstracts only**, but all older articles are available in full back to 1997.

Poverty Proofing for Schools

Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow

There have been a number of high profile international initiatives to preserve the right to the essentials in life and to combat poverty over the last sixty years. These include The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Millennium Goals (2000) and, most recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development goals aims to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce poverty by half by 2030. This is a laudable ambition as poverty affects many aspects of life including growth and development, security, health and the education of children and young people. The impact of poverty on the education of children and young people in Scotland is a major concern for a wide range of public bodies including the government, local authorities, charities, educational agencies and, of course, schools. In the last year two important documents have been produced. First, the EIS document *Face up to Child Poverty* (2015) and the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland report: *The Cost of the School Day* (2015). This short paper will explore *Face up to Child Poverty* and compare this to an earlier EIS document, *Poverty and Education Breaking down the Barriers* published in 1998. These two documents have been produced at certain points in time, within specific contexts and with different aims and purpose. It is, however, instructive to draw a comparison between the two documents to map similarities and the changes in emphasis between 1998 and 2015. The paper will be divided into four sections: (1) the context; (2) the impact of poverty (3) the cost of schooling and (4) recommended action.

(1) The context of *Poverty and Education Breaking down the Barriers* includes a robust support and defense of the comprehensive schooling system that has removed the injustice of the previous selective schooling system and has helped to narrow the gap in attainment. The document claims that comprehensive schools are popular with the public and any failure is attributed to the schools being under resourced – the result of 'savage cuts in public funding' (p.6). There is also a discussion about the impact of parental choice in schooling and that this has caused a new model of social segregation in urban areas as many parents exercise their choice to ensure their children do not attend schools that serve deprived areas (p.20). The context of *Face up to Child Poverty* is less focused on the school system and more focused on the challenges of a contemporary society that is characterized by high living costs, a low wage economy and severe changes to welfare (p.3). The document states that 222,000 children are living in poverty and that, under the present austerity measures, this could increase by 50% within five years. The document also warns of the dangers of low-income poverty and the emergence of 'no-income' poverty, a consequence of recent sanctions that can result in the suspension of benefits.

(2) The discussion of the impact of Poverty in *Poverty and Education* is very interesting. It is claimed that the term *absolute poverty* is no longer used and the key terms are *relative poverty* and *social exclusion* (p.8). Nevertheless the document refers to the effects of absolute poverty when it discusses the choices that families have to make about essentials in life (p.13). It is striking how contemporary the document appears as it outlines those who are most vulnerable (including lone parents and disabled) and the advocacy of multi-agency approaches to combat disadvantage (p.8, p.10). The document devotes considerable attention to the issue of adequate housing that is 'warm, well insulated' and where there is space for studying and homework (p.16). The document draws attention to the number of children who do not experience adequate housing and the significant number of children who belong to homeless families (p.16). The document comments on rural poverty and the challenges faced by those in deprivation who live in rural communities, e.g. cost of transport which can affect access to Further Education (p.18-19). The impact of Poverty in *Face up to Child Poverty* is a key feature of the document and the impact on schooling will be discussed below in section three. One of the disturbing points raised by the document is the growing problem of child hunger. The report states that the Red Cross has been involved in the distribution of food in Scotland for the first time since the Second World War. The report also points out that there has been a 400% rise in the use of food-banks in the last year and a significant number of those accessing these services are in employment.

(3) The cost of schooling is highlighted in section 3 of *Poverty and Education.* In particular, the document discusses the cost of school uniforms and school trips within the context of families who have very limited financial resource. The cost of schooling and poverty proofing for schools is the main focus of *Face up to Child Poverty.* There is extensive discussion on the costs of schools uniform, equipment and resources (and the effect on completing homework), school trips and charity and fund raising activities. The costs of school uniform can be very difficult for some families to meet and clothing grants may not be adequate (p.6). The replacement of worn items of school uniform is costly and children from low-income families can have incomplete uniforms. The report points out that families living in poverty are often unable to buy even the most basic of equipment, paper, pens, colour pencils and glue and this has an impact on the successful completion of homework activities (p.8, p.10). School trips, even those that appear to be relatively cheap, can place great pressure on some family budgets as can charity and fund raising activities that require some monetary contribution (p. 12, p. 14).

(4) The recommended action in *Poverty and Education* is a series of general points in the conclusion that consolidate some of the earlier issues: necessity of closing the poverty gap; being aware of the complexity of poverty and desisting from blame; resisting the use of crude measurements of attainment and inclusion of achievement; funding models for councils must be changed and comprehensive education must be

authentically inclusive. The recommended action in *Face up to Child Poverty* is a series of action points for EIS members in schools that are targeted at local intervention. This takes the form of 'Advice to Members' and 'Poverty Proofing'. The Advice to Members includes, for example, discussion of school/College policies and, at the classroom level, sensitivity to the fact that some pupils will be experiencing the effects of hunger in the school day. The document lists signs of hunger that can be detected in children and young people. The Poverty Proofing includes advice on referrals for children who are hungry, ensuring that these children access all available support (such as breakfast clubs) and that families are advised on all forms of aid including food aid.

The two documents raise awareness of many serious issues. They also provoke many profound questions about the challenges that families on low income face on a daily basis and the difficulties they, and their children, face in negotiating the hidden costs of school education. There are some recent success stories highlighting interventions that are helping families, children and young people to overcome disadvantage and progress in school (McKinney et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2014 ; McKendrick, 2015) Nevertheless, the serious issues and challenges identified above cannot be ignored and must remain at the forefront of discussion, debate and research into school education.

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Analysing a model of non-formal education for young people: A comparative case study of national programmes in the United States and Scotland

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Introduction

The learning opportunities gained outside of formal school had an undeniable impact on my lifelong learning. Furthermore, my work at UNESCO illuminated how disadvantaged and vulnerable groups have been affected by their socioeconomic status, especially within economies and societies that have experienced recessions and increased global competition. These experiences inspired my doctoral research, which focused on themes of youth work, community education, learning outside the formal school context and youth transitions.

Specifically, my research addressed the conceptualisation, administration and delivery of non-formal education (NFE) through national community education programmes in the US and Scotland. It also made comparisons between the programmes, at the national and local levels. The literature explained that education outside the formal school context has been defined as NFE, informal education or a combination of both. For my research, I established a working definition of NFE and explored how it has been conceptualised in western governments and societies, its role within communities and young people's lives, and potential learning outcomes.

Proponents of NFE conclude that it creatively and flexibly responds to socio-economic challenges, allowing for personal and professional development that fosters transitions. In practice, these contributions are highly dependent upon the viability of NFE and the context in which it is delivered. Additionally, NFE has been discussed as a complex concept to understand and implement. Another component of the literature review examined the relationship between community education, NFE and the nature of youth work in the US and Scotland. In addition, human and social capitals were integrated within the topic and explained throughout the literature.

Methods

In order to apply the literature to the specific topic and research questions, I developed a conceptual model of NFE. The model was structured top-down since the community education programmes were formed and are managed by the US and Scottish national governments. In conjunction, a

theoretical model was created using human and social capital theories to examine programme formation, operations and outcomes for youth.

As a comparative case study, the research used United States' 'Promise Neighborhoods Program' and Scotland's 'Youth Work in Community Learning and Development' as the main case studies for national community education. Both included a principal component for helping young people who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. The research design also included two embedded case studies within each main case study to analyse community level implementation.

In order to provide analysis from national, local and micro levels (micro levels being the practices and outcomes for youth), data was gathered from government policy documents, community level reports, proposals and interview responses. I interviewed a governmental level policy leader in each country, community level programme administrators (managers, directors, officers, youth workers, key workers and social workers), and young people. Overall, the research primarily used qualitative analysis.

Overview of Findings

The evidence in both case studies re-confirmed the literature's explanation about the variability, strengths and limitations of NFE. It also showed how social and human capitals were linked to the conceptualisation, formation and outcomes of the case studies. Congruent with western ideology of civic engagement and increased accessibility of education for all, each country's unique historical narrative of community education had an impact on the programme plans and thus operations. A critical discussion was interwoven throughout the research that discussed the challenges and tensions at all levels of the model, including conflicting norms between national and local levels and issues in building and creating social and human capitals.

The top-down construct demonstrated that policy influenced implementation within communities. Community level administrators could also plan programmes, however, within the limits of national policy. Both case studies were similar in their overall goals, but also had differences. At the national level, community education in the US is a concept applied within different programmes that are constructed and delivered throughout multiple government agencies. Youth Work in CLD's structure is different in that it is not a programme but more like a sector. As a result, Scotland seems to have a more centralised focus for developing and implementing community education throughout the country. Additionally, approaches to monitoring and assessment differed between countries. Overall, the US has a strategy that provides guidelines for assessing local programs

through technocracy and emphasises managerialism to oversee and assess the PN Program. Scotland provides a more fluid and interpretive guidance language to evaluate the programmes.

At the local level, Scottish programme officers and managers were more integrated within daily practices as compared to the US directors and managers. They worked closely with the key workers, youth workers and young people and were able to explain first-hand experiences of programme practices and outcomes. In the US programme directors could communicate directly with the national government and manage and allocate funding. Whereas, Scottish managers link directly with its local authority, and funding was managed by the local authority.

The case studies also revealed intermediary outcomes of practices and contributions of NFE. These were seen through the lens of social and human capital development, like skills acquisition and social networks that were formed among youth participants and other networks that extended beyond the programmes and to the larger community. NFE continues to try and gain an autonomous footing within the wider educational narrative. Programmes could have realised more outcomes if they had greater recognition and wider acceptance with community institutions, like schools.

Relevance to Literature, Policy and Practices

This research helped to expand current literature on NFE, which remains comparatively limited to formal education literature. It also contributed by organising and analysing US and Scottish literature on youth work, community education and policies and provided an interpretation on how these themes and concepts interrelate in current national programmes.

NFE's inclusion within government policy, its application throughout communities and the outcomes for youth are testaments that NFE is integral and influential within the overall education and lifelong learning narratives. Further, NFE research and practices should be encouraged in order to better understand its role and impact. The emphasis here is made to expand the research on NFE because of socio-economic inequality, concerns about youth transitions and the importance of learning beyond the formal educational sector are universal and consistent issues.

Building Inclusion in school communities

Dimitra Tsakalou, Teaching Fellow, University of Edinburgh.

Introduction

This research was based in selected Greek high schools but has relevance for anyone interested in the ways that schools attempt to build inclusion. Looking at three case study schools, using observation of classes and interviews with head teachers, teachers and parents, I knew that strong new national policies (influenced strongly by EU imperatives around inclusion) would be encouraging schools and teachers to engage with inclusion. However, it was anticipated that schools might have different beliefs about what inclusion might look like and how it might be constructed in their contexts. Each school was based in a city but comprised quite different student populations and all were affected by the anxiety and privations of communities during the economic crisis in Greece.

Background

Educational policies throughout the world during the last twenty years have increasingly emphasized the need for the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or additional support needs (ASN) in mainstream schools. I use the term SEN here as this is the one most closely reflecting the terminology used in Greece at this time. Efforts to include students with SEN in mainstream education have recently shifted from viewing inclusion as an innovation within special education, to viewing it within the broader context of school restructuring (Florian, 2014). This reform movement has proven challenging, as multiple conceptualizations and understandings of inclusion exist. In Greece, a nation in the midst of deep social and economic crisis, these challenges are magnified. Despite the recent passage of legislation entitled "Special Education and Education of Individuals with Disabilities or with Special Educational Needs" (2008) – declaring inclusive education compulsory for all educational stages and students with SEN (Law 3699, p. 3500) – in practice, implementation difficulties persist. Indeed, while inclusion has a prominent place in Greek policy, it does not have an equally prominent place in Greek schools (Zoniou - Sideri & Vlachou, 2006). As a result, many Greek students with SEN – particularly those in secondary education – remain marginalized in special settings or excluded from mainstream schools.

To understand inclusion as a social construction within school communities, research must move beyond merely identifying what constitutes 'good inclusive practice'. Instead, it must thoughtfully explore key stakeholders' conceptualizations, experiences, practices, and relationships, both within and beyond the school community (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Curcic et al., 2011). I selected one special school (Acropolis), one mainstream school with integration units (Parthenon), and one mainstream school without provision for special education (Caryatids). I hoped, by investigating inclusion over the spectrum of secondary education in Greece, to provide insights that might improve the educational experiences of SEN students and other stakeholders.

Main findings

The strong top-down orientation of the Greek education system raises serious concerns. Indeed, the state appears to 'dictate' policies to schools and local authorities, rather than encouraging a ground-up movement for reform. In this study, each school responded differently to inclusive policy, due to a lack of clear definitions and guidelines regarding inclusion and special educational needs. Although inclusive education is mandatory for all students till the last class of lower secondary school (approximately at the age of 15), not all mainstream secondary schools provided integration units and/or one-on-one support to students with SEN. So, despite the obligatory nature of inclusive and special education in schools, in practice, it was based on the good will of the head teacher to make decisions regarding the support provided to students with SEN along with their mainstream peers. Moreover, within this law there was a vague articulation of the definition of additional needs and inclusive education, along with a limited number of rules regarding the implementation of inclusive practice. The medical model of disability and education was found to be prevalent within the language used in the policy texts regarding identification and definition of inclusion, deeply influencing the conceptualizations, visions and understanding of school members regarding inclusion. Another significant challenge was that there were no specific LEA's or schools' education policies, as all regulations, circulars and policy documents were generated and enacted by the central authorities. This left limited opportunities and space to both local authorities and school members to take part in the policy and decision making processes, and for that reason they struggled to implement inclusion.

While head teachers, teachers and parents suggested they were in favour of inclusion on a theoretical level, they tended to exhibit negative or neutral attitudes toward the inclusion of students

with SEN in mainstream classrooms. Most participants in Acropolis, Parthenon, and Caryatids conceptualized inclusion as a form of integration, as a 'quick fix' or as a means of punishment for low-achievers or SEN students. Head teachers and teachers in this study expressed concern about the impact of inclusive legislation on the overall academic achievement of students with and without SEN. The academic nature of the Greek educational system and the prioritization of academic achievement and excellence likely contributed to these concerns. Indeed, head teachers and teachers in the three case schools were found to largely define inclusion in terms of whether a student needed curriculum modifications, rather than the broader idea that inclusion extends to social relations, equality, and opportunities for all. Head teachers' and teachers' training in special education and inclusion – or lack of – was also found to influence their perceptions, in addition to the shortage of human and material resources, the lack of support and advice from local educational authorities, and the absence of collaborative relationships. Parents of students both with and without SEN were also influenced by the nature of the Greek curriculum, supporting the exclusion of students considered unable to meet high achievement standards. Even those stakeholders with more positive conceptualizations and a broader vision of inclusion were found to have doubts about the practical implementation of inclusion in mainstream schools.

The present study found a strong relationship between school stakeholders' conceptualizations of inclusion, and their decisions about school structures. For example, head teachers with negative conceptualizations and little commitment to inclusive values were found to implement inclusive policy in more restricted ways, and to establish few opportunities for collaboration and distributive leadership (Ainscow, 1997; Frederickson & Cline, 2002; Angelides, 2008). On the other hand, head teachers with broader views and understandings of inclusion were found to implement more inclusive school purposes and strategies, and to further support inclusive classroom practices, moving beyond the traditional boundaries of their role. While teachers in all three case schools responded positively to the *idea* of adopting more inclusive purposes and practices, they ultimately perceived inclusion as reducing the efficiency and effectiveness of their teaching practice. As a result, they did not provide all students with equal academic and social opportunities.

The nature of relationships both inside and outside schools – including the power, voice and agency of head teachers, teachers and parents – was also found to be a key component in the construction of

inclusive school communities. Educational policy-making in Greece is characterised by unequal formal and informal power relationships (Liasidou, 2011); this inequality was found to impact both decisions made about school structures, and the relationships constructed within schools. Head teachers, as school leaders, held the lion's share of power and authority within each case school surveyed.

Collaboration between school stakeholders and communities – or the lack thereof – was found to have profound implications for school leadership and decision-making (Kugelmass & Aincow, 2004; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). While previous scholarship suggests that collaboration helps school stakeholders define and conceptualize inclusion (Dyson et al., 2004; Ainscow et al., 2012), developing collaborative relationships was challenging for the school members involved in this study. Indeed, the lack of shared ownership in decision-making and problem-solving processes was found to result from a failure on the part of all stakeholders to establish collaborative rapports. The contribution of teachers and parents to the construction of inclusive school communities was found to be particularly limited, as they were largely voiceless and powerless in decision-making and problem-solving processes. Indeed, they often suggested that they felt side-lined, marginalized and unable to engage other stakeholders and authorities. For schools to be inclusive, they must develop a culture that encourages collaboration, partnership and diversity. Central and local educational authorities, as well as head teachers should be aware that strong democratic leadership, committed to inclusive values, is necessary to foster, promote, and support trusting relationships and participatory approaches to decision-making.

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We would like to draw your attention to a press release from the National Education Policy Center based in Boulder, Colorado – see below. Note the link that will take you to the full paper on the web.

How Effective is Class Size Reduction?

Key Takeaway: All else being equal, smaller class sizes will improve student outcomes, especially for low-income and minority children.

Find Documents:

Press Release: http://nepc.info/node/8070

Contact:

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More NEPC Resources on Class Size

BOULDER, CO (June 21, 2016) – Parents and teachers know that smaller class sizes allow more personalized attention and greater student learning. However, since the majority of a school's budget is comprised of teacher pay and benefits, the cost of small classes can be a contentious issue for school administrators.

In a brief released today, *The Effectiveness of Class Size Reduction,* William Mathis explores the research on class size and finds that the clear conclusion to be drawn from reviewing high-quality peer-reviewed papers is that smaller classes are academically, socially, and economically beneficial. New light was cast on this perennial issue by a new study across 28 years and 28 states. Finance reforms directed toward small class sizes, longer school years and teacher salaries produced large gains in achievement, lifetime earnings and reduced adult poverty.

In the 1980s, the evidence of the impact of small class size on student academic achievement provided by the Tennessee Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) experiment and its follow-up reports had an impact in the political arena. In the 1990s, annual evaluations of the Wisconsin Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) reproduced the STAR results. Class sizes of 15, SAGE researchers found, had a significant impact on student test performance.

Class size reduction benefits all students; however, poor and minority students benefit most of all. Small classes can be expected to narrow the racial achievement gap by about one-third.

Despite claims to the contrary by some policymakers, Mathis concludes that reduction in class sizes may prove the most cost-effective school improvement policy overall. In Mathis' view, money saved today by increasing class sizes will likely result in additional substantial social and educational costs in the future.

Dr. Mathis is Managing Director of the National Education Policy Center, housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education. This brief is the one in a series of concise publications, *Research-Based Options for Education Policymaking*, that takes up a number of important policy issues and identifies policies supported by research. Each section focuses on a different issue, and its recommendations to policymakers are based on the latest scholarship.

Find William Mathis's brief on the NEPC website at: http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/research-based-options

This policy brief was made possible in part by the support of the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice (greatlakescenter.org).
The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, produces and disseminates high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions. Visit us at: http://nepc.colorado.edu

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