Working Toward a More Literate World: Reading Intervention Commentary

eTale 2022



This issue of New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development summarises recent and ongoing work to establish evidence-based practices in early reading instruction and intervention, and to improve access to and quality of literacy programmes in low- and middle-income countries. In this article, I present my own thoughts on the importance and implications of the reviewed articles.

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Source: Lovett, M. W. (2017). Working toward a more literate world: Reading intervention commentary. In A. Gove, A. Mora, & P. McCardle (Eds.), *Progress toward a literate world: Early reading interventions in low-income countries, New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 155, 131–141.

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- Projects of varying sizes and goals conducted at multiple sites in several countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America are described in this review.
- There is a commitment to documenting the efficacy and effectiveness of these programmes using the methodological standards of intervention science and education research whenever possible; that is, controlled evaluations, cluster random assignment, objective measurement, and longitudinal designs.
- Data from these projects have informed plans for future programming in countries worldwide, and results from large scale-ups have provided insight into the most important factors necessary for scale-up and sustainability.
- Access to early education has improved substantially in many countries; however, access and quality are two quite different factors.



The study

Review of the articles of this issue of *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* and some thoughts on their importance and implications are presented in this study.



Factors important to implementation success

- Extent of implementation and intervention (including intensity and frequency of the intervention and the fidelity of its implementation)
- Duration (longer is better)
- The extent to which the environment is enabling and facilitative.



Possibilities in lowest resourced countries

- Reading is a system that relies on written language skills and requires (and draws upon) speech and oral language development.
- Inability to understand the language of instruction is a major barrier in schools; thus, teaching to read in the mother tongue first may be important.
- It is important to integrate oral language, phonics, and authentic writing in multilingual and multicultural environments to attain better results.
- Teacher and student attendance is important; absenteeism and tardiness are considerable detractors from instructional time.
- Availability of reading materials is important when trying to learn to read.
- Learning to read fluently requires thousands of hours of practice and the development of a complex, consolidated system of linguistic skills.
- The importance of parental (especially maternal) literacy attainment to children's early reading progress has been long recognised. This helps parents to navigate and access health and educational services for their

- children and alters how they interact with their young children.
- Even the most promising evidence-based instructional programme will fail to deliver positive outcomes if not implemented with skill and intensity by teachers who understand the program, its goals, and how to teach with fidelity.
- Even when partnerships are successful and scale-up commitments strong, there often remain huge needs around teacher training and support. Such training takes time; thus, it is recommended to carefully calibrate time expectations for scale-up.
- Technology offers more possibilities for support to the teachers, and also to students who do not have access to school.