Implications for Malta of the report of the European Union High-Level Group of Experts on Literacy

Greg Brooks

Emeritus Professor of Education
University of Sheffield, UK

gregbrooksuk@yahoo.co.uk
http://www.shef.ac.uk/education/staff/academic/brooksg.html
Our vision for a literate Europe

• All citizens of Europe shall be literate, so as to achieve their aspirations as individuals, family members, workers and citizens.

• Radically improved literacy will boost innovation, prosperity and cohesion in society, as well as the wellbeing, social participation and employability of all citizens.

• EU Member States will view it as their legal obligation to provide all the support necessary to realise our vision, and this support will include all ages.
How do we achieve that vision?

Prerequisites:

• Physiological
• Social
• Linguistic
• Educational
• Governmental
Physiological (1)

Prerequisites
• Normal brain function
• Adequate intelligence

Implications
• Avoid ‘snake oil’, e.g. movement programmes & medical ‘solutions’
• Almost every child has enough IQ (p.30)
• Assistive technologies
Physiological (2)

Prerequisites
• Normal or corrected-to-normal hearing and sight

Implications
• Testing at correct ages
• Adaptations
Social

Prerequisites
• A supportive, and supported, family
• A supportive community

Implications
• Family literacy, e.g. PEFaL
• Effective & free preschool/ECEC provision; cf. p.58, 1999 survey in Malta, EPPE in England
Linguistic (1)

Prerequisite

• Command of at least one language (or Sign), in particular a broad vocabulary

Implications

• Every child to enter school speaking the language of the school – cf. pp.24-25
• Early and effective support for children with speech, language and communication needs (pp.60-61)
Linguistic (2)

Prerequisite

- Sufficient access to printed material in a language(s) which they speak natively or have learnt

Implication

- Recently-arrived languages?
Educational (1)

Prerequisite

- Effective initial teaching, suited to phonological & grammatical character & orthography of language(s) of instruction

Implication

- Systematic synthetic phonics within a rich & broad language & literacy curriculum, for Maltese AND ENGLISH
Educational (2)

Prerequisite

• A rationally organised, hierarchical and progressive curriculum

Implications

• Ignore England
• Look at Ireland & pp.42-43
• Build enjoyment
Educational (3)

Prerequisite

• Effective early intervention

Implications

• Interventions, not labelling (e.g. dyslexia)
• Aim for at least double normal progress
• Intervene as early as possible – the ‘late developer’ is a myth
• Boost literacy before transfer to secondary – cf. West Dunbartonshire
Educational (4)

Prerequisite
• Effective later interventions

Implications
• Literacy across the curriculum (pp.73-74)
• Programmes for disaffected teenagers, including young and adult offenders (pp.78-82)
• Adult literacy – but expect delayed benefits
Educational (5)

Prerequisite
• High-quality teaching; cf. McKinsey reports

Implications
• Training to be research-based
• Including identification, diagnosis & treatment of reading & writing difficulties
Educational (6)

Prerequisite

• High-quality teachers

Implications

• Recruit best graduates (p.44)
• All teachers to be qualified to Master’s?
• Licence to teach, & compulsory renewal?
• Higher status, including salaries
Governmental (1)

Prerequisite
• Act visibly now

Implications
• Mount literacy promotion campaigns
• Set up libraries in unexpected places
• Change the mindset on dyslexia so everyone knows their commitment is essential (pp.45-46)
Governmental (2)

Prerequisite
• Reduce the gaps – see pp.46-50

Implications
• Socio-economic, = reduce inequality
• Migrant – all can contribute
• Gender – diversify reading material
• Digital, = ensure access & effective use
Governmental (3)

- Establish a system to monitor literacy levels of adults (pp.78, 81)
- Communicate widely about the need for adult literacy development
- Strengthen the profession of adult literacy teachers
- Ensure broad and varied access to learning opportunities of sufficient length to make a difference (p.81)
Also …

- Set national & international targets & monitor progress – cf. pp.36, 43
- Maintain adults’ skills
- Develop workplace programmes (pp.82-84)
- Sustain programmes across years & political timetables (p.32)
- Institute awards & award schemes
- Abolish secondary selection
All in all …

Take seriously all the recommendations on pp.87-101!
Grazzi hafna!