

Education of Children and Young People in Care: Research on What Works



IAIN MATHESON, NEW ZEALAND

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

HEALTH WARNING!



MAY CAUSE DROWSINESS
ALCOHOL COULD INTENSIFY THIS EFFECT
USE CAUTION WHEN OPERATING A CAR
OR DANGEROUS MACHINERY.



WHEN TAKING THIS MEDICATION
DO NOT DRINK
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

GENERIC FOR
NO REFILL
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Health warning

1. Many research and evaluation studies are small-scale
2. Not all are independent
3. Challenges of 'real life' research with children in care
4. Program fidelity often an issue
5. Interface between practice, policy and research
6. Use a wide definition of the term 'research'
7. Different countries not always comparable
8. Limited to research studies published in English
9. Findings often more encouraging than definitive
10. Studies don't always reveal why an initiative worked
11. Examples from my own doctoral research not necessarily typical

Health warning

What might be done to lift the educational achievement of children in foster care by some people and organisations with some children and youth in some circumstances and in some countries that might sometimes be helpful if implemented properly for reasons, along with effects when combined with other interventions, that we do not necessarily entirely understand!!!

Presentation outline



1. Summary of research on the educational attainment of children in (foster) care
2. Overview of research on education initiatives
3. Three recent research studies

Throughout, provide some illustrative examples from my own doctoral research

How do children in foster care fare educationally?



How do children in foster care fare educationally?

WELL

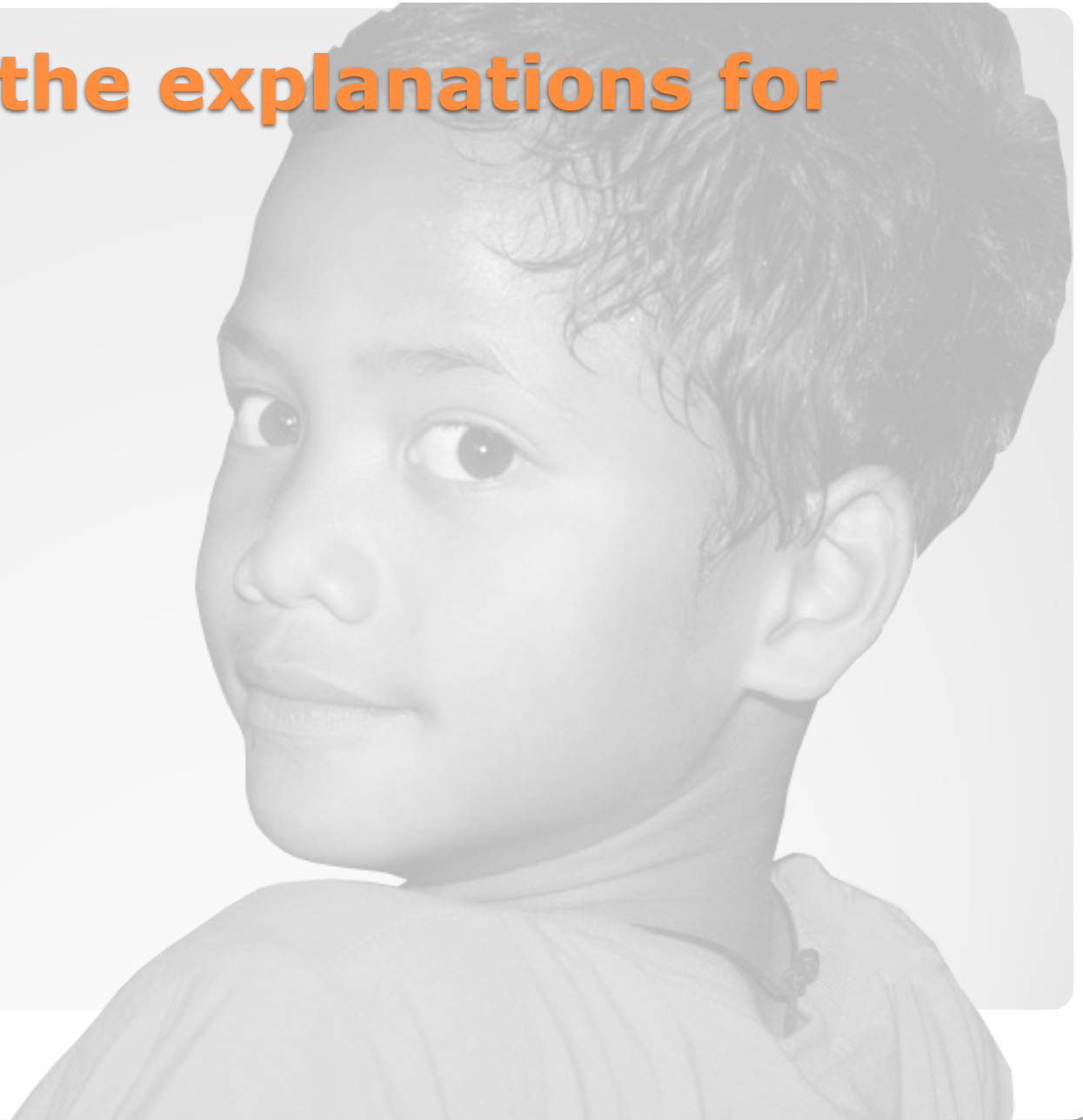
OK

POORLY

- Daly & Gilligan, 2010;
- Pecora, et al., 2006.

- Aldgate et al., 1992; Allard & McNamara, 2003; Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW), 2007; Barnardo's, 2006; Berridge et al., 2008; Biehal et al., 1992; Biehal et al., 1995; Blome, 1997; Borland et al., 1998; Brodie, 2006; Burley & Halpern, 2001; Cavanagh, 1996; Cheung & Heath, 1994; Children, Schooling and Families and the Department of National Statistics, 2008; Essen, Lambert & Head, 1976; Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Finkelstein, et al., 2002; Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Flynn & Biro, 1998; Harker et al., 2003; Heath, Aldgate & Colton, 1989; Heath et al., 1994; Jackson, 1987; Kufeldt et al., 2003; McClung & Gayle, 2010; McMillan & Tucker, 1998; Merdinger et al., 2005; Mitic & Rimer, 2002; Osborn & St. Clare, 1987; Ritchie, 2003; Stein, 1990; Stein & Carey, 1986; Trout et al., 2008; Weiner & Weiner, 1990.

What are the explanations for this?



What are the explanations for this?

Failed by the Child Welfare and Education Systems

Long term effects of abuse and neglect

Multiple reasons

Socially disadvantaged background

Particular educational needs

Is there good research to support current education initiatives?

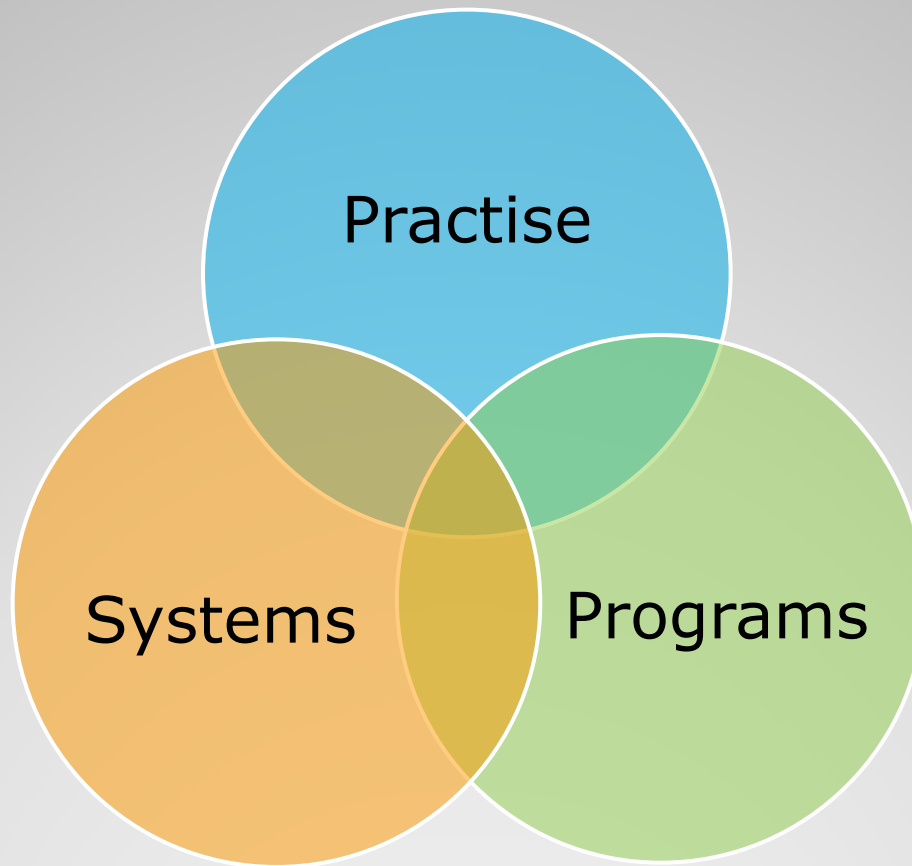


Is there good research to support current education initiatives?

Very few programmes or initiatives specifically designed to raise the educational attainment of children and young people in care have been systematically evaluated (Borland et al., 1998)

Too few US studies on education interventions to include in their literature synthesis (Trout et al., 2008)

Research on how to raise educational attainment



Practise focused research

**SCHOOL
ENROLMENT**

**PLACEMENT
STABILITY**

**SCHOOL
CONTINUITY**

**SIGNIFICANT
ADULT**

**REPEATING A
GRADE?**

**NEEDS
ASSESSED**

**VALUING
EDUCATION**

**SCHOOL
EXCLUSIONS**

**RIGHT
SCHOOL**

**SPARE TIME
ACTIVITIES**

**EDUCATION
EXPECTATIONS**

**SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE**

**OPPORTUNITIES
TO ACHIEVE**

**EXTENDED
FAMILY**

**FOSTER FAMILY-
SCHOOL
CONTACT**

Systems focused research

**ORGANIZATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING**

**FOSTER FAMILIES
SUPPORTED**

**CARER/STAFF
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

**LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN
EDUCATION
TEAMS**

**EXTENDING AGE
FOR FOSTER CARE**

**SUFFICIENT POOL
OF FOSTER
CARERS**

**SOCIAL WORK &
EDUCATION
COLLABORATION**

**FOSTER CARE
STANDARDS**

**EDUCATION
SUPPORT FUNDING**

**TEACHER
INFORMATION ON
CHILDREN IN CARE**

**MULTI-
DIMENSIONAL
TREATMENT
FOSTER CARE
(MTFC)**

**INFORMATION
SYSTEMS**

**PERSONAL
EDUCATION
PLANS/PLANNING**

**LEGISLATION/
GUIDANCE ON
CORPORATE
RESPONSIBILITIES**

**LOOKING AFTER
CHILDREN (LAC)
AND SIMILAR
INITIATIVES**

Program focused research

**PAIRED
READING**

**PRIVATE
TUTORING**

**WORK
PLACEMENTS
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE**

**READING
'FAIRS' AND
STORYTELLING**

**OFF-SITE
EDUCATION
PROVISION**

**DESIGNATED
TEACHERS**

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL
CLUBS
OUTREACH**

**SUPPORT AT
KEY EDUCATION
TRANSITIONS**

**FOSTER CARER
TUTORING**

**COLLEGE
CAMPUS
SUPPORT
PROGRAM**

**COMPRHENSIVE
NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

**BOOK
CLUBS**

**BOARDING
EDUCATION**

**VIRTUAL
PRINCIPAL FOR
CHILDREN IN
CARE**

**COMPUTER
INITIATIVES
FOR FOSTER
CHILDREN**

**FLYNN, R., PAQUET, M.-P. & MARQUIS, R. (2010).
CAN TUTORING BY FOSTER PARENTS IMPROVE
FOSTER CHILDREN'S BASIC ACADEMIC SKILLS?**

INTERVENTION LOGIC

Children benefit from parental tutoring

PROGRAM (INTERVENTION YEAR 1)

- Michael Maloney's (1998) *Teach Your Children Well*
- 68 foster parents recruited, trained and supported
- Foster parents agree to tutoring 3 hours x 30 weeks
- Foster parent collect weekly performance data
- Teacher(s) encouraged to adjust homework
- Child reward component

FINDINGS (INTERVENTION YEAR 1):

1. Significant gains in sentence comprehension and math calculation
2. No significant gains in word reading or spelling



METHODOLOGY

Randomized controlled trial:

- 2007-10 - intervention year | 2008/09
- Intervention group 42 and control group 35

DATA COLLECTION

- 3 x 4th edition of Wide Range Achievement Test (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006)
- 3 x Connor's ADHD/DSM-IV Scales-Parent (CADS-P; Conners, 1999)
- 3 x ASEBA Child Behaviour Checklist for Ages 6 to 18 (CBCL/6-18; Achenbach & Rescoria, 2001) (N/A)

CHILDREN:

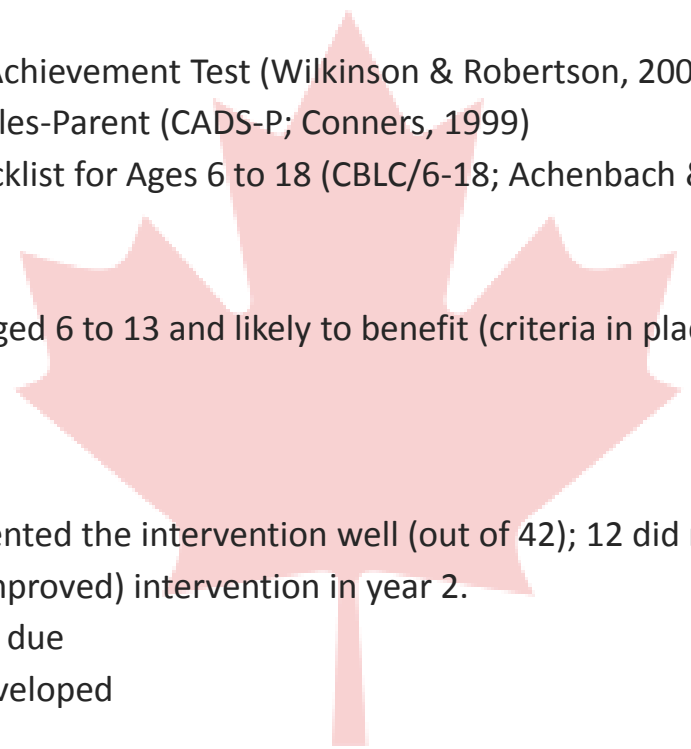
77 children in family foster care aged 6 to 13 and likely to benefit (criteria in place), recruited from 9 participating Children's Aid Societies

ISSUES ARISING

- Only 20 foster parents implemented the intervention well (out of 42); 12 did not implement at all
- Year 1 control group offered (improved) intervention in year 2.
- Intervention year 2 results now due
- Group tutoring option to be developed

LOCATION

Ontario (Canada)



**OSBOURNE, C., ALFANO, J. & WINN, T. (2010).
PAIRED READING AS LITERACY INTERVENTION
FOR FOSTER CHILDREN.**



INTERVENTION LOGIC

Benefits if foster carers have a direct role in education

PROGRAM (2008/09)

- Paired reading (Morgan, 1976)
- Training workshops
- Children select reading material
- 3+ x 20+ minute reading sessions x 16 weeks
- Monitoring sheet/school liaison

FINDINGS

1. Marked increase in mean reading age from 8 years to 9 years over 16 weeks (mean 'gap' halved)
2. Foster carers also reported other positive impacts

METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods approach with dominant QUAN method (Pre-test/post-test)

DATA COLLECTION

- 2 x Salford Sentence Reading Test (Bookbinder, 2002)
- 16 x Completion of foster carer monitoring sheets

CHILDREN

68 primary-aged children in family foster care in participating schools initially identified (open to all such children). However, data only available on 35 of 68

ISSUES

- Individual gains ranged from 1 to 31 months
- Children most 'behind' benefitted more
- Foster carers also reported increase in child's confidence and interest in reading
- As a by-product, facilitated links between foster carers, social workers and teachers
- initially identified children
- Program feedback from 16 foster carers only
- Program also implemented for 2009/10 & 2010/11 (includes high schools)
- Results on 2009/10 cohort due

LOCATION

Hampshire (United Kingdom)

TIDEMAN, E., VINNERLJUNG, B., HINTZE, K. & ISAKSSON, A. (2011). IMPROVING FOSTER CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS

INTERVENTION LOGIC

Children benefit from intensive, support based upon thorough assessment of needs and potential

PROGRAM (2 YEARS)

- Part-time Psychologist and Special Needs teacher
- 9 standardized psychological and pedagogical tests
- Children, foster carers & teachers given results
- Education plan with quarterly planning meetings
- Teachers tutored (direct work with some children)
- Tools for teachers and foster carers

FINDINGS

Significant gains in IQ (as measured by WISC-III), reading and spelling skills

Weaker, non-significant improvements in maths skills.



METHODOLOGY

Pre-test/post-test design

DATA COLLECTION

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children 3rd Ed (WISC-III) (Wechsler, 1999); VMI (Beery and Beery, 2004); Beck Young People Inventories (Beck et al, 2004); Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) (Goodman, 1997; Smedje et al, 1999); Visual Analogue Scale (Badia et al, 1999); Letter-Word Chains (Jacobson, 2004); DLS Reading Speed Test (Jarpsten and Taube, 1997); DLS Spelling Test (Jarpsten, 1999); Magne Maths Diagnostic Test (Engstrom & Magne, 2003); Classroom observation (relationships) and teacher interviews (school competencies)

CHILDREN

25 of all 30 children aged 7-11 years (median age 10) in long term family foster care in one large town

ISSUES

- As well as being intensive and based upon a battery of standardized tests, other characteristics were that it was comprehensive, highly individualized, structured, collaborative and strengths-based
- A complex program with many variables
- Only 1 child left the program

LOCATION

Helsingborg (Sweden)

Conclusion



1. Education is a critically important gateway for children in foster care.
2. The education of children has become a major priority in many jurisdictions.
3. We are making some progress.
4. We do require more validated 'education' initiatives that demonstrably 'work'.
5. We also need to mediate our understanding of these through, and integrate with, our professional experience.

Conclusion



“... five factors emerged as critical to their success:

- having people who care about you
- experiencing stability
- being given high expectations
- receiving encouragement and support
- being able to participate and achieve”

(Happer et al., 2006).

Quality Foster Care!

Thanks

For copy of presentation and/or references email
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Conclusion (cont...)

