Quality and Equality: Building social capital

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Why does equality matter?

- It is often assumed that the desire to raise standards of performance in fields such as education is quite separate from the desire to reduce educational inequalities within a society. But the truth may be almost the opposite of this.... The achievement of higher national standards... may depend on reducing the social gradient in educational achievement

  – (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010, 108)
Children living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are

‘6 to 13 months behind their peers in problem-solving at age 5; 11 to 18 months behind their peers in expressive vocabulary at age 5; and around two years of schooling behind their peers at age 15’
Contexts (1)

- National policy guidance and support
- Appointment of Scotland’s first Independent Poverty Advisor (Naomi Eisenstadt)
- Appointment of Prof Chris Chapman as senior advisor on the Attainment Challenge
- Scottish Government’s commitment to bring forward a child poverty bill
- Three yearly survey of school behaviour and relationships
- Annual statistical bulletins
- Dashboard ‘INSIGHT’ for secondary schools
- Participation in PISA
Contexts (2)

• Local catchment schools
• Comprehensive schools
• Co-education
• National and long-standing commitment to public education, social justice, fairness and equality
• Restorative practices, Solution focused work...
Closing the gap?

or

Raising the bar?
THE COST OF
THE SCHOOL DAY

- Shirt
- Bus
- Pencil
- Sandwich
- Football
- Laptop
- Books
- £50
- £15
The cost of the school day

• “Political focus and investment in Scotland is currently directed towards narrowing the poverty attainment gap: this can’t happen if the poverty related barriers which shape and limit children’s opportunities at school aren’t first taken into account.”

http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cost-school-day-report-and-executive-summary
• The glass floor...

• Inter-generational opportunity hoarding...
Is there a problem with focusing only on outputs?
Time for courageous conversations about...

- Parental involvement and engagement
- Student participation
- Behaviour and relationships in school
• ‘a proliferation of ‘hopeful’ interventions with unknown effectiveness in enabling disadvantaged children to fulfil their ambitions’

• ‘Studies are often quick and micro in scope’
Working WITH parents

- What might look like ‘low aspirations’ may often be high aspirations that have been eroded by negative experience.
- What might look like ‘parental disengagement’ may actually be the result of a high level of commitment to their child’s education, which is not matched by the capacity to provide effective support or...
- by the ability of schools to work effectively with parents
- BUT helping poorer parents to believe in their own actions and efforts can lead to improved outcomes.
Working WITH students

• Children report that their views are not sought, listened to or acted upon consistently.
• There is good evidence of the negative outcomes for children that emerge when they are unable to have their voices heard.
• Only a minority of School Councils have been involved in making ‘important’ decisions
• What might look like ‘low aspirations’ may often be high aspirations that have been eroded by negative experience
• BUT increased student participation can lead to improved outcomes
The rocks remain...
What people think it looks like

What it really looks like
Courageous conversations- where next?

- Closing the gap or raising the bar?
- Research, data, evidence
- Parental engagement
- Pupil voices
- Relationships and behaviour
- Making the link between what happens in one school with one pupil and the bigger picture
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