



litCo

Vortragsveranstaltung und Fachgespräch



“The Future of Literacy in a Multilingual World”

Freitag, 20. Nov. 2015
Humboldt Universität Berlin,
Hegelplatz, Dorotheenstraße 24
Raum DOR 24 1.103

Programm

17:00–17:15	Einführung (LitCo)	
17:15	Prof. Dr. Daniel Wagner, University of Pennsylvania	„Literacy research and policy: Failed promises, new opportunities”
18:00	Prof. Dr. Jeanne Kurvers, University of Tilburg	“Literacy acquisition in multilingual contexts: Policies, practices and empirical findings“
18:40-19:45	Diskussion	

Die Veranstaltung findet in englischer Sprache statt.

Abstracts

Literacy research and policy: Failed promises, new opportunities

Daniel Wagner

Literacy is the learned skill that has most concerned educational policy makers since the advent of public schooling. Unlike language acquisition, literacy acquisition requires specific human effort and a supportive social and cultural context. For a varied set of reasons, all countries today have literacy as a central focus of their education systems, even though its acquisition is highly variable both within and across societies. This latter finding – that literacy is far from universal, in spite of near-universal schooling – often surprises both policy makers and the general public. Indeed, policy makers (local, national and international) have, over the decades, promised to ‘eradicate’ illiteracy through massive campaigns, more years of schooling, and awareness efforts. Whether for young children, adolescents or adults, such promises have rarely been kept. In this paper, several reasons (conceptual, institutional and methodological) for these failures are discussed. The paper then provides a set of new opportunities for improving literacy in the wake of the just ratified UN Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular for the education dimension of these goals.

Literacy acquisition in multilingual contexts: Policies, practices and empirical findings.

Jeanne Kurvers

The presentation will highlight the field of literacy acquisition in multilingual contexts and focus on top-down policies, bottom-up practices and some empirical findings from studies in Eritrea, East Timor and The Netherlands that represent different language and literacy policies.

Eritrea and East-Timor are young nation-states that adopted new language and literacy educational policies after independence. Both countries had experienced a period of occupation in which a foreign language (Amharic in Eritrea and Indonesian in East-Timor) was the only and compulsory language in education and public institutions. Eritrea adopted a mother tongue policy for nine national languages (three writing systems), East Timor choose Portuguese (the pre-Indonesian colonial language) and Tetum (*lingua franca*) as two official languages.

The Netherlands changed the integration policy for migrants from non-western countries during the last twenty years: Dutch only and language requirements for settlement and citizenship. At the same time the adult literacy and second language educational field had been active and innovative in improving teaching, learning and practicing L2 and L2 literacy.

The presentation will summarize the top-down policies and give some examples of the bottom-up instructional practices in dealing with these policies. Some main outcomes of large scale studies and in-depth classroom studies will be presented: attitudes on languages and literacy (education), uses of literacy, instructional practices and acquisition processes.

The speakers

Dr. Jeanne Kurvers studied psychology and psycholinguistics at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. She has been working as a senior researcher and associate professor at the School of Humanities of Tilburg University, Netherlands. Her PhD-study investigated the impact of literacy on the knowledge of language and writing of children and adults. Dr. Kurvers was involved in several studies on the acquisition and teaching of (second language) literacy of children and adults in the Netherlands, Eritrea and East Timor, on integration programs for migrants, on emergent and family literacy, and on the acquisition of academic language. She has published widely on linguistic, sociolinguistic and cognitive aspects of second language literacy acquisition, was involved in the development of teaching materials and in professional development of literacy teachers. Since the start in 2005, Dr. Kurvers participates in the international LESLLA group that focuses on research, policy and practice regarding second language and literacy acquisition of unschooled and low-educated adults, including the organisation of conferences and co-editing proceedings.

Dr. Daniel Wagner is the UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy, and Professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. He is Director of the International Literacy Institute, co-founded by UNESCO and the University of Pennsylvania, and Director of Penn's International Educational Development Program (IEDP) in graduate study. He received his Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Michigan, was a two-year postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, a Visiting Fellow (twice) at the International Institute of Education Planning in Paris, a Visiting Professor at the University of Geneva (Switzerland), and a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Paris. Dr. Wagner has extensive experience in national and international educational issues, and has served as an advisor to UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, USAID, DFID, and others on international development issues. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Educational Research Association. His most recent multi-year projects have been in India, South Africa, and Morocco. He recently served as Chair of the Brookings Global Research Task Force on Learning. Dr. Wagner was the recipient of the 2014 UNESCO Confucius International Literacy Prize. Dr. Wagner's research interests include literacy across the lifespan (children, youth, adults), comparative studies of basic education and literacy, education in developing countries, and appropriate uses of educational technologies. His current international projects have been in India, South Africa, and Morocco. Most recently, he has completed a major review in the area of learning indicators for use in understanding the quality of education in the developing world.