

LLAKES Newsletter

Issue 12, Summer 2017



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Editorial

Welcome to the Summer 2017 issue of the LLAKES Newsletter. In this issue, we report on a range of projects which are in progress at LLAKES, under the Centre's Theme Three, "Education, Inequality and Social Cohesion".

Germ Janmaat discusses the effect of post-16 tracking on Fundamental British Values (FBV), which include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect of diversity. In 2014, the coalition government promoted FBV in schools as part of a broader strategy which is aimed at thwarting the radicalisation of young people.

Using the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) data Germ Janmaat found that the vast majority of 22-23 year olds supported FBVs, which suggests that it is no longer necessary to promote FBVs. Secondly, school characteristics that individuals experienced during their final year of lower secondary and on post-16 educational trajectories, such as citizenship education, open climates of classroom discussion and arrangements to involve students in school decision-making, did not, contrary to expectations, show any lasting effect on support for FBVs. Post-16 tracking instead showed a positive effect on FBVs: those who

attended the vocational track were significantly less passionate about FBVs than those who followed the academic route.



Lucinda Platt reports on her research on children's outcomes using child cohort studies from UK (Millennium Cohort Study), Ireland (Growing up in Ireland), Australia (Longitudinal Study of Australian Children) and New Zealand (Growing up in New Zealand). In the first study she focuses on the differences in breastfeeding rates across the four countries. Breast feeding is beneficial to children's health, and to cognitive and behavioural development; and shedding light on cross-country differences in breastfeeding rates can highlight contextual, country-specific effects and suggest possible areas of policy intervention. Indeed, country differences are striking, with the UK and Ireland having relatively low rates (under 50 per cent at four weeks) compared to other Australia (78) and especially New Zealand (86). The aim is to analyse the extent to which the country-differences are accounted for by the different socio-economic and behavioural characteristics of the mothers and the extent to which they are accounted for by policy and cultural context.

The second study explores the link between early childcare and education settings and behavioural outcomes, focusing on a comparison of Ireland and England. Results from England show that childcare is linked to fewer behavioural problems among children in the early years of school. In subsequent work Lucinda plans to look in more detail at the interaction of childcare with parental employment and other aspects of the of the cultural contexts in Ireland and the UK.

Francis Green describes the research that he and other LLAKES researchers have been conducting on the free schools and private schools in Britain. They analysed the role of free schools as innovators and promoters of social equality. In one study, Green et al (2015) found that at the primary level, free schools were taking in children with an above average prior attainment. In other research, they found that innovation takes place in relation to management practices, but not in relation to the pedagogical approach and the curriculum. With regard to private schools, the high fees and exclusiveness of those schools mean that only 7% of English children attend private schools. The researchers also estimated the returns deriving from private education, and found that privately educated women – and even more so men – earn significantly more than their state-educated counterparts. They explored the mechanisms that account for the economic returns from private education and found that part of this return among women is explained by the fact that privately educated women are more likely to marry privately educated men.

Nicola Pensiero describes the results of his joint research with Andy Green on the effect of education system characteristics on competences. They link PISA and SAS country-level competences to construct a quasi-cohort change in competences between the age of 15 and 27. The outcomes of interest were both the level of competences and their distribution. They found that both outcomes are associated with a similar set of education system characteristics. Countries with comprehensive upper secondary education and training systems with little between-school variation (Sweden and Norway) and countries with dual systems of apprenticeship (Austria and Germany) are particularly effective both at improving competence levels and reducing inequality in the distribution of competences over time. This success is explained by the inclusiveness of education system at the upper secondary level (with high participation and lower social gradients of level 3 completion); by the greater esteem for vocational programmes; and by the mandatory study of maths and the national language as part of the upper secondary curriculum.

On the other hand, countries with mixed systems with many different school- and employment- based programmes of variable length and quality (England, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Spain), show relative declines in both literacy and numeracy, and a more unequal distribution of competences. The education systems in those countries show low levels of inclusiveness, tend to exhibit low esteem for vocational learning, and require less that students study maths and the national language at the upper secondary level.

The Overriding Effect of Tracking on Fundamental British Values

Germ Janmaat

In November 2014 the Coalition Government called on schools to actively promote fundamental British values (FBVs). This initiative was part of the more encompassing Prevent Strategy, which seeks to thwart the radicalization of young people. Defining these values as “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”, it urged schools to teach them as part of the Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils (Department for Education 2014: 5). FBVs were also integrated into teaching standards and became part of the Ofsted inspections framework (Richardson 2015; Panjwani 2016). Apart from specifying the values, the government also proposed a number of actions schools can take to promote FBVs, all of which have reference points in the academic literature on civic education and political engagement. Activities mentioned include (1) providing information about democracy and the legal system through citizenship education, (2) allowing students to have a voice through representation in school councils, (3) holding mock elections to mimic real ones, and (4) teaching debating skills (such as defending one’s point of view) (Department for Education 2014: 6).

Academics and professionals were quick to criticize the new policy, arguing, for instance, that the labelling of the values as “fundamentally British” had an alienating effect on minorities, particularly Muslims (Bolloten and Richardson, 2015), or that it made teachers fearful of addressing sensitive themes in class (Revell and Bryan 2016; Smith 2016). However, to my knowledge, so far no study explored how much support there actually is for FBVs among young people or whether schools are at all able to promote these values. Data of the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) offered me the unique opportunity to address these questions. Although the last wave of this study was collected shortly before the new policy was announced (namely in the summer of 2014 among a cohort of 22-23 year olds), it includes items suitable for the construction of a summary index measuring support for FBVs. It also has information on all the aforementioned activities when respondents were in their final year of lower secondary and on post-16 educational trajectories. As support for FBVs was assessed when respondents were 22-23 year old, the data allowed me to assess whether school activities experienced during Year 11 still left their mark many years later, or whether their effect would be trumped by the diverging educational routes of the respondents following compulsory education.

The downside of CELS is that it suffers from substantial attrition between Waves 1 and 6. To deal with this problem a weight was developed based on variables showing high levels of selective drop-out. This weight made the data of Wave 6 comparable to those of Wave 1, which were collected among a representative sample of Year 7 students in England. The FBV index was developed on the basis of 13 items and was constructed as a scale ranging between 1 (minimal support) to 5 (maximum support). Educational trajectories were measured with the highest qualification achieved at ages 22 and 23. A stepwise regression analysis was used to explore the effects of educational conditions on support for FBVs. Controls were included for gender, ethnic identity, social background and educational aspirations. The analytic sample consisted of 420 respondents, i.e. those who participated in Waves 1, 3 and 6.

It turns out that there is overwhelming support for FBVs: as many as 97.5% of the respondents scored higher than the midpoint of 3 on the FBV scale, indicating on balance more rather than less support for these values. Moreover, differences between social and ethnic groups were minimal as the variables representing sociodemographic characteristics were not found to be significantly related to support for FBVs. These findings cast doubt on the *necessity* of promoting FBVs. What can be gained if levels of support are already very high and no specific group can be identified expressing reservations about these values?

In terms of the influence of school activities on FBVs, a preliminary analysis only found evidence for citizenship education as an effective strategy. Neither an open climate of classroom discussion nor arrangements to involve students in school decision-making showed any lasting effect on support for FBVs. Once post 16 educational trajectories were included in the analysis, however, citizenship education was no longer associated with the outcome. By contrast, post-16 educational trajectories did prove influential: those who entered the vocational track and obtained a vocational degree, irrespective of the level of this degree, were significantly less passionate about FBVs than those who followed the academic route and acquired A levels or an undergraduate degree as highest qualification. These results did not change when variables were entered in the model that allow us to assess whether the effect of educational trajectory merely reflects differences in socio-ethnic composition. If the latter is the case, we speak of a so-called selection effect. As no evidence was found for such an effect, the influence of educational trajectory appeared to be genuine. This result is in accordance with other studies that found post 16 tracking to exacerbate cross-track inequalities in political engagement (Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016; van der Werfhorst 2017). These

studies mentioned differences in the curriculum, in peer socialization and in personal and political efficacy as reasons for why tracking has this effect.

Summing up, in view of the already high levels of support for FBVs it does not seem to be necessary to promote FBVs still further. If the government nonetheless insists in continuing the policy, it might be much more effective to mitigate differences between post 16 tracks, for instance by implementing a *uniform* programme of citizenship education, rather than to focus on lower secondary, as a way to both enhance overall support for FBVs and diminish inequalities in them.

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Comparing young children's outcomes in different countries: what can we learn?

Lucinda Platt

Early childhood years are increasingly being stressed as a key period for fostering optimal development and for addressing social inequalities in later childhood adult outcomes. The Nobel Prize winner, James Heckman, has continually emphasised the benefits of spending in early years relative to later years, and getting children off to a good start in infancy has driven a range of health-related as well as early education initiatives.

Policy learning from other national contexts offers a way to design and implement interventions to improve early child outcomes with confidence and without prior need for experimentation. But such policy learning faces the challenge that there are many things that differ between national contexts over and above their policies. Indeed separating 'cultural influences' from policy directions is often challenging. In addition, those who are affected by policies, often mothers, may differ in systematic ways across national context. That is, in some countries, mothers may be on average younger, or more advantaged, or more likely to be single parents etc. than in others. And such differences may be linked to the child outcomes that we are interested in. If we observe key differences in outcomes across children from one country to another, that may reflect those differences in their mothers, rather than to differences in the policies or the wider context.

In this project, we draw on a series of child cohort studies covering a small number of countries to try to engage more closely with how early child outcomes differ across countries and to explore how we can understand them, focusing on rates of child breastfeeding and on children's behavioural development and early childcare experience.

Breast feeding has been linked to a wide range of positive outcomes, not only in infant health but also in more recent work to children's later cognitive and behavioural development. It is regarded as highly desirable for children to be exclusively breastfed in the first few months of their lives, where possible, though precise guidelines have changed over time.

High quality pre-school child education and care settings have been linked to positive child cognitive outcomes. But the picture for different forms of pre-school child care and their impact on children's behavioural outcomes is more complex. Behavioural problems can impact on learning and have long-lasting consequences where children cannot adapt to

the school setting, and some vulnerable children, such as disabled children, are particularly at risk of behavioural problems increasing rather than decreasing over early childhood. It is therefore relevant to understand how childcare settings may support positive behavioural outcomes.

Child cohort studies follow children born at a particular time and trace their experiences and development as they move through infancy and childhood and ultimately into adulthood. There are now increasing numbers of such studies worldwide, which give us an insight into contemporary children's development in different countries. We focus on those for the UK (Millennium Cohort Study, children born 2000-2001), Ireland (Growing up in Ireland), Australia (Longitudinal Study of Australian Children) and New Zealand (Growing up in New Zealand). These countries have many historical links and a range of similarities in context. Yet they are also distinctive in their child outcomes and in policy context.

In our first study we focus on attempting to understand differences in breastfeeding rates across the four countries. These differences are striking. The UK and Ireland have relatively low rates (at the time of the studies under 50 per cent at four weeks) compared to other countries such as Australia and especially New Zealand, which had rates of 78 and 86 per cent respectively at four weeks, at the time of the studies.

Our aim was to understand how far such differences can be understood a) in terms of whether (and how much) particular maternal characteristics (e.g. socio-economic status, smoking, employment status) are associated with breastfeeding across the four countries; and b) in differences between those who become mothers in the four countries.

It is relatively straightforward to establish whether 'the same things'—such as parental socio-economic position or smoking status—matter for child outcomes in different countries. In general, the same factors were associated with breast-feeding propensity in all countries. But it is also worth understanding whether the effects are the same. For example, (higher) socio-economic position is linked to (higher) rates of breast feeding across our studies, but the differences between those with low and high socio-economic status are greater in some countries than in others. This gives us some insight into how far class-cultural differences across groups may play a role in differences in breast-feeding.

Turning to our second aim, we wanted to understand how much the different composition of mothers contributes to differences in breast-feeding rates (e.g. if women of high socio-economic status made up a

higher share of mothers in Australia than the UK, then this could help to explain Australia's higher breastfeeding rates). To investigate this, we estimated a counterfactual, where we replaced the composition of mothers in the UK with that of mothers in Australia, while retaining the UK relationship between characteristics and probability of breast-feeding. This enabled us to identify the part of the gap driven by the different circumstances under which women become mothers, but still left a remaining gap that could only be explained by differences in the policy and cultural context.

In our second study on the link between early childcare and education settings and behavioural outcomes, we focused on a comparison of Ireland and England. Initial work on England has demonstrated how out of home childcare is linked to fewer behavioural problems among children in the early years as they enter and adjust to school. In subsequent work we aim to unpick this relationship further by looking in more detail at hours of childcare and its interaction with parental employment, as well as investigating how the different child care and cultural contexts in Ireland and the UK do or do not translate into comparable adaptation to the early years of school, net of maternal characteristics.

Often when conducting single-country analysis, relationships between family characteristics and child outcomes can end up being emphasised in a way that divorces them from the wider influences and cultural context in which these relationships arise. Looking across studies of comparable child populations can rebalance this emphasis and demonstrate the potential for children to fare very differently, even from similar family backgrounds, in a different setting.

LLAKES studies schools and inequality

Francis Green

For the last three years, I and other LLAKES researchers have been involved in related studies of the schooling system in Britain, with a focus on free schools and private schools. The most striking new feature in England is the founding of free schools, begun with just a handful in 2011. By the beginning of 2016 there were 75,000 pupils being taught in 379 free schools, and the intention of the government is continue opening new ones. These new schools have come at a fortunate time, in that there is an overall demand for new school places in England to meet demographic needs. Thus free schools have not (as yet) displaced other schools, which might have encountered opposition.

The questions that have arisen surrounding their role derive from the original state aims of the free school policy. Have free schools served relatively disadvantaged communities, as was hoped? Are they being truly innovative, as intended?

In one study with Rebecca Allen and Andrew Jenkins (Green et al., 2015), we found that, if anything, free schools were taking in children at primary school level who were significantly above the mean in terms of starting attainments. At secondary level they were situating themselves in areas of somewhat above average in terms of free school meals, a well-known indicator of disadvantage, but admitting children from the less-deprived families within these areas.

In another study with Susanne Wiborg, Peter Taylor-Gooby and Rachel Wilde (Wiborg et al., 2017) we found that more innovation is taking place in regards to management practices than in respect of curriculum and pedagogical practices. Many schools have altered the working and teaching day. Innovation in curriculum and pedagogical practices is very limited. Creating a free school offer that seems to differ from other schools appears to be done through marketing and branding rather than innovation. Parent power, OFSTED, and the relative isolation of free schools appeared to constrain innovation from taking place.

We have also been looking at private schools, which are socially exclusive across the whole of the United Kingdom. About 7% of English schoolchildren attend private schools (though more in the south around London) and around 12% do so at some time in their childhoods. But the influence of these schools extends far beyond this. Many private schools, especially those at secondary level and including the well-known "public schools" with ancient traditions and very high fees, aspire to offer much more than just academic development.

In one study with Rachel Wilde, Peter Taylor-Gooby and Susanne Wiborg (Wilde et al., 2016) we looked at how headteachers perceived their public benefit obligations under the current law, as determined by the Charities Act of 2006 and subsequent court rulings. To summarise our findings: "schools interpret public beneficiaries widely to include one or more of state school pupils, local communities, other charities, and general society through raising socially responsible adults. Private schools pursue their own goals through public benefit provision, and balance the advantages of public benefit activities against the costs. The schools are not constrained by the 'more than tokenistic' minimum set by the regulator. The findings highlight the difficulties faced by governments

who seek to pursue redistributive educational policies through charitable law."

In other papers I have studied some long term outcomes of attending a private school. Together with Anna Vignoles and Golo Henseke, we asked the question: why do privately educated people in Britain earn more? (Green et al., 2016) We focused on some important characteristics involved in the jobs: leadership, participation in decision-making and the requirement to put in hard work. Privately-educated workers have jobs where they exercise significantly greater leadership, and are more likely to participate in work organisation matters. From the perspective of their job quality, however, their jobs require somewhat greater work intensity. Among those aged 42 with similar social backgrounds, privately educated men earn 35% more than state-educated men; while privately-educated women earn 21% more than state-educated women. Education was by far the most important factor explaining the private-state gaps. Indeed, even though jobs requiring leadership are better paid, we found along with other studies that the earnings premium for privately educated women is almost all accounted for by their educational achievements.

In the most recent research, Golo Henseke and I, along with three researchers from the Department of Social Science –Sam Parsons, Alice Sullivan and Dick Wiggins) have studied the propensity for privately educated women to marry privately educated men (what we call "school-type positive assortative mating"), and also better-educated men. The consequence is that the husbands of privately educated women are likely to be earning approximately 15% more than the husbands of state-educated women. Our paper "Does Private Schooling have a Dividend Through Marriage? A Study of Females' Private Schooling, School-Type Homogamy and Husbands' Earnings " was presented in April this year at the British Sociological Association annual conference in Manchester, and featured in the *Daily Mail* (!).

With the further expansion of free schools expected in the next few years (assuming no change of government policy), and with the continued dominance of elite schooling by the private schools, we at LLAKES will continue building up a body of research that tries to understand better the role played by these types of schools, and their relationships to issues of social inclusion. In the next 12 months new work is in progress to examine participation in private schools, and a book is in the pipeline that will open up the debate beyond academic discourse.

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Enhancing competences and reducing inequality in further education: evidence from LLAKES comparative research

Nicola Pensiero

England has very high levels of skills inequality compared to other countries, particularly with younger age groups. At the same time, the competences of the young age groups are relatively low. England is the only country in the developed world in which those aged 16-to-24 perform worse in literacy and numeracy than those aged 55-to-65.

Andy Green and I have been conducting research on the education system characteristics that account for the competence levels and distribution in England and in other OECD countries, looking in particular at the changes occurring between the age of 15 and 27.

We used SAS and PISA data to conduct a quasi-cohort analysis of the life-course changes in skills levels and inequality. The use of data on competences at different points in time enables us to define country profiles of competence development over the life course.

We pool data from PISA 2000 numeracy and literacy skills at age 15 and SAS 2011 numeracy and literacy skills for the age group 27, which is the age that the PISA sample would have in 2011. Given that similarity between PISA and SAS in terms of survey design and methods of assessment of skills, we regard the

changes in skills between PISA and SAS to be representative of the same cohort. This longitudinal design has the advantage of controlling the initial level of competences at age 15, which means that our results regarding the effect of upper secondary education characteristics are not confounded by the fact that countries have low or high levels of competences to start with. Apart from the longitudinal variation, we exploit the country variation in competences. Some countries change more than others between the ages of 15 and 27 in terms of skill levels and distribution and the objective of the analysis is to quantify the effect of the post-compulsory education and training systems and characteristics in accounting for this country variation in competence development over the life-course.

We conducted two studies, one looking at the competence levels (Pensiero and Green 2017), the other one at the competence distribution (Green and Pensiero 2016). We found that in countries with comprehensive upper secondary education and training systems with little between-school variation (Sweden and Norway) and countries with Dual systems of apprenticeship (Austria and Germany) are particularly effective both at improving skills levels and reducing inequality in the distribution of competences over time. In countries with a dual system of apprenticeship, the vocational track contains significant mandatory components of general education, but at the same time have distinctive forms of regulation based on social partner organisations.

On the other hand, countries with mixed systems with many different school- and employment- based programmes of variable length and quality (England, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Spain) all show relative decline in both literacy and numeracy, and a higher level of inequality.

The characteristics of the education systems that account for those country differences are the inclusiveness, the esteem of vocational programmes and the curriculum standardisation with regard to the study of maths and the national language. Countries which do badly, like England, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Spain, have 'mixed systems' with low levels of inclusiveness, including low rates of participation at 17/18, high social gradients of level 3 completion. They also tend to exhibit low esteem for vocational learning, with lower rates of enrolment on vocational programmes, particularly in apprenticeships. They also require less that students study maths and the national language at the upper secondary level.

Conversely, Nordic countries and German-speaking countries, all relatively inclusive at the upper secondary level, with high participation at 17/18, lower social gradients of level 3 completion. They tend to

exhibit greater esteem for vocational programmes, with high a high proportion of upper secondary students in vocational programmes or apprenticeships. All require the study of maths and the national language as part of the upper secondary curriculum.

The two studies suggest that there is no trade-off between inequality and performance in educational outcomes. Countries which perform well in terms of average competence levels are also the countries which have the more equal distribution of competences at age 27. This means that a more inclusive education system is not achieved at the expense of overall performance, but rather the inclusiveness of the education system is one of the factors that can improve overall performance. The second implication is that the learning of Maths and English should be mandatory for the duration of all upper secondary education and training programmes, including apprenticeships and publicly funded private training provision.

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New approaches to student finance

The LLAKES Director, Professor Andy Green, has published a new book entitled: *The Crisis for Young People: Generational Inequalities in Education, Work, Housing and Welfare*. Based on LLAKES research, the book analyses one of the most pressing social issues of our times: intergenerational inequality.

Amongst other issues, the book addresses the highly inequitable current system of student finance in England, which is increasingly costly and on the verge of spiralling out of control. Students are taking on debts of up to £50,000, which many will never earn enough to repay in full, leaving taxpayers with an estimated 43% of the loan bill, which will increase if fees are allowed to rise further.

The current mechanism also enhances inequalities within and between generations. Fees for undergraduate courses are much the same, so graduates are expected repay similar amounts regardless of the financial benefits of their particular qualifications on the labour market, which vary considerably. At the same time, the system increases intergenerational inequality as one generation is paying for a public service that previous generations have obtained without cost.

However, the Labour Party's proposal, made during the 2017 General Election campaign, to return to funding Higher Education out of general taxation may not be the best alternative. Higher Education has become very expensive, with the total costs, including restored maintenance grants, coming to around £11.8 billion per year just for first degree students in English universities. Few countries have been able to maintain completely free tuition, as funding these costs entirely out of general taxation loads too much of the burden onto non-graduate taxpayers. The argument that graduates should make some contribution to the costs of their Higher Education, from which they have benefited financially, has generally been accepted.

Andy Green suggests that a more equitable alternative would be to fund Higher Education out of an all-age graduate tax. All graduates in England earning over £21,000, who had received subsidised first degree Higher Education in English universities, could contribute to the cost of their studies through an additional tax of around 2.5%. This approach would substantially reduce the average future repayments of young people who started their degrees after 2012. Graduates on average earnings above £21,000 would pay back £812 per year, compared to the £2,025-per-annum loan repayments for the same group today.

The graduate tax would raise an annual revenue of about £8.3 billion, about a third of the total costs of study and, including the costs of restoring and enhancing maintenance grants, would require a public subsidy of around £8.25 billion, much the same the costs of the current system. However, the graduate tax would represent immediate additional revenue for the Government, which is currently paying the full cost of tuition fees by funding the loans issued by the Student Loan Company and which will not see the loans repaid for many years, if at all. Over the longer term, an all-age graduate tax would also generate increasing annual revenue.

At the same time, University costs could be controlled by government action to restore the caps on numbers taking bachelors degrees. This would also encourage more investment and

participation in high quality shorter technical degrees which may offer better job opportunities to the additional students in an expanding tertiary system. This revised approach would place Higher Education funding on a much more stable foundation for the future, as well as making an important contribution to reducing intergenerational inequity.

The Crisis for Young People: Generational Inequalities in Education, Work, Housing and Welfare is published by Palgrave, and is available on open access at: <https://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319585468>

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