

# LLAKES Newsletter

Issue 4, Spring 2012



## WELCOME from LLAKES Centre Deputy Director, Lorna Unwin

Welcome to the fourth LLAKES Newsletter. As LLAKES enters its fifth year of operation in 2012, we continue to contribute to, and to help shape, important debates

about the role of lifelong learning in contemporary society; and, in particular, its impact in promoting, on the one hand, economic recovery and competitiveness, and on the other, social cohesion.

The global economic crisis that took hold during the first year of LLAKES continues to have a profound effect on the life chances of individuals in many countries. In the UK, cuts to public sector budgets, increasing unemployment, and the highly uneven economic health of some regions of the country, are contributing to an already harsh climate. In this Newsletter, we highlight the ways in which LLAKES researchers are providing the type of robust evidence we need to inform the development of new ideas and strategies for tackling these problems. And there is certainly an urgent need for action. This was made clear at a packed LLAKES public seminar in January when Jonathan Portes, Director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), argued that the Coalition Government needs to be much more aggressive in education and other policy areas, if it really wants to make social mobility its “overriding social policy objective”.

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It's clear from our research that many people are working hard to find solutions to the social and economic challenges we face. Much of this work is done at local level in and between workplaces, educational institutions, civic associations, and communities. A major part of our work in LLAKES is to draw attention to this activity, as well as monitoring developments at the macro level through cross-national analysis. And our investigations into the interrelated barriers and opportunities that individuals face throughout their lifetime provide the third dimension to our research. During 2012, we will showcase the research findings from the first phase of LLAKES through a series of seminars and other events, culminating in an international conference in October. We hope to see you there!

## **LLAKES RESEARCH IN 2011: HIGHLIGHTS**

### **1. *Equality and Inequality in Lifelong Learning***

LLAKES researchers have created a new time-series data set for OECD countries on skills outcomes and lifelong learning system characteristics, bringing together existing data and developing new indicators where appropriate. Andy Green's comparative analysis of data on OECD countries shows that inequality in skills outcomes at age 15 is associated with system characteristics such as school choice and diversity, selection to secondary schools, ability grouping within schools, and devolution of powers to the regional level, whereas income inequality and levels of pre-school education and care have less effect. Analysis of the trends in PISA scores between the 2000 and 2009 surveys suggests that the variance in test scores has decreased only very marginally in the UK where outcomes are still amongst the most unequal in the OECD, particularly in respect to the impact of social background on individual achievement (social gradient) and the effects of the social mix of intakes on school average performance.

Andy Green and Germ Janmaat's new book, *Regimes of Social Cohesion*, (published by Palgrave, 2011), identifies the different forms of social cohesion (and associated models of competitiveness) to be found in advanced OECD countries. The book analyses the institutional and ideological foundations of the different 'regimes' and how each is responding to the current economic crisis. Using cross-sectional and time-series data, it assesses the

impact of inequality in skills and incomes, as well as labour market and welfare system effects, on social cohesion in different groups of countries. These issues are discussed in more detail on page 7 of this Newsletter.

Other highlights from this area of LLAKES research include Tarek Mostafa's study, published as LLAKES research paper 32, which suggests that 'peer effects' have a powerful impact on inequality of outcomes in certain countries, including the UK, and Germ Janmaat, Bryony Hoskins and Christine Han's work on a cross-national study of how young people experience and perceive inequality in various national contexts, and how these perceptions influence social outcomes relevant for citizenship and social cohesion. The project draws on qualitative and quantitative data from students and teachers in a number of lower secondary, upper secondary and higher educational institutions in England, Denmark, France and Singapore. Preliminary analyses of the data indicate that there are differences in the civic engagement levels between young people in vocational tracks those in academic tracks across all countries.

### **2. *New forms of apprenticeship in English city-regions***

LLAKES research shows that apprenticeship continues to be used in England as an instrument of government policy to pursue two very different goals: occupational skill formation and social inclusion. Now a third goal has been added – economic growth – as government seeks ways to boost a stalling economy, including what it sees as the need to reduce reliance on the financial services sector and increase the volume of manufacturing. As much of the country's industrial landscape has been laid waste, local authorities have sought to regenerate once thriving areas of their towns and cities and, thereby, improve social, cultural and environmental conditions, as well as economic ones. Alison Fuller, Lorna Unwin and Sadaf Rizvi have been examining the ways in which two cities, one in the north (Manchester) and one in the south of England (Southampton) are responding to this national agenda and the role that apprenticeship is playing in its regeneration strategies. The cities both have high levels of deprivation and an urban landscape blighted by the disappearance of once thriving industries.

In both cities, our research has involved a range of data collection activities including interviews and focus groups with participating employers, local authorities, government agencies, and education and training providers. In the Southampton case, we have closely followed one cohort of apprentices (and their supervisors and workplace trainers) throughout the journey of their apprenticeship. A core and longstanding challenge for successive governments aiming to expand apprenticeship and create a more highly skilled workforce in England has been lack of demand from employers. The Southampton initiative involves a group of public sector employers working together to create apprenticeships for local unemployed young people in their respective organisations. An interim report has been submitted to the Southampton Skills Development Zone Board (who invited LLAKES to undertake formative evaluation of the apprenticeship scheme) and a final research report is currently being prepared.

In Manchester, we have been researching the use of apprenticeship as part of the regeneration strategy to transform an area in the north of the city. The initiative involves the construction of social housing and the city council has used its planning powers to secure jobs for unemployed young people (as apprentices) and older adults. The Manchester and Southampton case studies reveal how the resources available in cities including the local authority, government agencies and employers can be mobilised to address shared goals. In 2011, the research team presented papers from the case studies at the Journal of Vocational Education and Training Conference in July in Oxford and at the Researching Working and Learning Conference in Shanghai in December.

### **3. *Adult learning and economic competitiveness***

According to the National Employers Skill Survey, as many as two thirds of UK employers report that their employees need to update and improve their skills in order to help their firms compete effectively in their different markets. However, LLAKES research carried out by Geoff Mason and Kate Bishop of NIESR in several different city-regions in the UK suggests that the updating of adult skills is being hindered by a continuing medium-term decline in job-related training and other forms of lifelong learning. Although only a small proportion of firms have cut back on training altogether, there is a strong

tendency to confine training to in-house provision and restrict the use of external training providers – which limits the exposure of employees to ideas and information available outside their workplaces. Ongoing research suggests that opportunities for new skills development are particularly likely to be lost in areas such as renewable energy technology for which funding is increasingly limited.

### **4. *School engagement as a predictor of career development and social integration***

LLAKES research led by Ingrid Schoon indicates that school engagement, (i.e. the extent to which young people like school), is an important resource capacity guiding career aspirations and development and promoting mental health. School engagement has also shown to have long-term benefits, in particular for young people encountering problematic school-to-work transitions, such as those who leave school early or who became a teenage parent. Raising interest and engagement in school might be one of the levers available to set in motion a positive chain reaction, to open new perspectives and to create new opportunities, as positive school experiences can raise feelings of self-efficacy and help shape future orientations. Recent evidence now also points to a significant role of school engagement in shaping political trust, that is the confidence people have in their government and institutions. Increasing and promoting the engagement of young people in the school context can provide a crucial window of opportunity to not only promote successful career development but also to enhance political trust and the engagement of young people in society at large.

### **5. *Adult Basic Skills, Workplace Learning and Life Course Transitions***

This year, Karen Evans, Edmund Waite and Natasha Kersh have undertaken research that has explored factors that facilitate and inhibit the sustainability of state-sponsored workplace provision of the model (top-down; roll-out) used for the national literacy and numeracy strategy, Skills for Life (SfL). Key findings include:

- Complex and rapidly shifting funding arrangements, that place a heavy emphasis on target-bearing qualifications, have militated against sustainable workplace provision.

- Those organisations that have sustained provision in an economic downturn have succeeded in integrating SfL courses within a broader 'ecology of learning'.
- Workplace literacy provision is less prone to the intimidating associations of formal educational environments for learning, facilitating adult learner outcomes in a diverse range of work-related and personal activities within and beyond the workplace. These can entail a broadening of career horizons as well as willingness to take on more challenging work.
- The positive effects of provision are likely to be eroded over time unless the broader organisational setting supports the ongoing practice and development of skills for 'routine' workers, providing pathways for career development that are responsive to shifting horizons.

This work has been presented at the UKFIET (Oxford) Conference and the International Conference on Researching Work and Learning in Shanghai. The results are now feeding into policy-relevant inquiries nationally through NIACE (England); internationally through the Institute of Adult Learning (Singapore); the EDI - Network coordinated by the Danish Trades Union Federation; the Asia-Europe Hub on Lifelong Learning (ASEF); and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

## 6. *Technicians and Technical Expertise*

LLAKES researchers are involved in a study being led by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation to develop a professional Register for technicians in occupations related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Alison Fuller, Lorna Unwin and David Guile, along with colleagues Jill Turbin and Julie Wintrup at the University of Southampton, are investigating the role of technicians and technical expertise in the Healthcare Sector. Their research focuses on four areas: Dental Technicians; Radiography Support Workers; Maternity and Paediatric Support; and Laboratory Assistants. Geoff Mason (NIESR) is also contributing to Gatsby's work in this area by providing labour market analysis. Research papers should be available in late Spring 2012.

## DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN LLAKES

A number of PhD students are attached to LLAKES. Here we present a selection of their work.

### **Learner biographies and learning cultures: identity and apprenticeship in England and Germany** (Michaela Brockmann - PhD awarded in November 2011)

Research on school-to-work transition has commonly relied on theories of individualisation or social reproduction. Young people on vocational pathways, in particular, are often depicted as a homogenous group of 'disaffected', second-chance learners, who are passively socialised into what are perceived as low-skilled jobs, suggesting abiding identities. Studies have tended to neglect the rich biographical experiences of young people and the complexity of the processes of identity construction. Michaela's thesis presents findings from a cross-national comparative study of apprentices in retail and motor vehicle maintenance in England and Germany, using a multi-method ethnographic approach combining biographical interviews with participant observation. It explored young people's construction of their (learner) identities over time and within the two main learning sites of apprenticeship – the workplace and the college. The contrast of contexts of the two countries illuminates the ways in which structures facilitate particular patterns and processes of transition and identity formation.

Drawing on Judith Butler's work on performativity and on the biographical approach of Peter Alheit, the thesis argues that young people actively perform socially recognised identities, which they interpret in the contexts of their biographical experience. Learner identities are not natural or abiding, but are formed through concrete experiences of learning and are constituted in institutional settings and learning cultures with discursive frameworks that prioritise certain forms of knowledge. Thus, young people may reject certain types of learning and may develop alternative learning careers which they reflexively negotiate. Apprenticeship, therefore, may be a positive choice. While vocational education in England often reflects an academic/vocational dichotomy, leading to assumptions that vocational learners reject all classroom learning, apprenticeships in Germany centre on the integration of theory and

practice. The learner identities of young people in the two countries reflect these different discourses. Michaela is now busy adapting her thesis for a book to be published by the Tufnell Press.

### **Social Equality in Education: a Comparative study of France and England** (Ann Doyle)

The main question of Ann's thesis is concerned with the way in which political ideologies in France and England have impacted on social equality in education. She is exploring this through comparative historical analysis. The research sets out to explain the variation in how France and England go about reducing social inequality in education and why a discourse of egalitarianism appears to be stronger in French than in English education. The hypotheses developed to explain this is being tested systematically against the empirical evidence of two hundred years of history. Ann's review of the literature has identified three essential explanatory factors as follows:

- Persistence of ideology: revolutionary/republican in France; liberal in England.
- Social class alliances in the 19th century: progressive in France; conservative in England.
- The nature of the state: centralized in France; liberal in England.

Ann's findings show that a national system of education was established in France and England on different foundations. In France, education was seen as paramount to forming citizens and a secular state-controlled system based on principles inherited from the French Revolution was set up. In England, a liberal and laissez-faire ideology was dominant and state involvement in education was delayed and reluctantly undertaken. This meant that universal primary education was introduced in a piecemeal fashion. In France, compulsory education was introduced equally late, but it was done systematically and was secular and free. Although the bourgeoisie in France was dominant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it formed an alliance with the peasantry and lower middle class and this brought about a more solidly middle class secondary education. In England, secondary education exemplified the hegemony of the conservative class alliance. It was divided on strictly social class lines with an elite dozen

or so public schools reserved for the landed and upper class and those embourgeoisé members of the middle class who wanted their sons to learn to become gentlemen. As well as these schools, there was a large number of endowed schools of varying standards and curricula.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while both countries had a parallel system with primary/elementary education for the popular classes and secondary education for the middle classes, there were important differences between both countries. The fate of the Ecoles Primaires Supérieures and the Higher Grade schools is one prime example of this difference. In France, the former was supported by Republicans and allowed to flourish and therefore it was gradually able to fuse with the modern section of the lycée thus clearing the way eventually for a common lower secondary school. In England, the Higher Grade schools were abolished after the 1902 Education Act and a sharp distinction between elementary and secondary education was maintained.

The myth of the revolution with its discourse of equality and secularism continues to exert an important influence on republican ideology in France. Ann's findings so far show that the Republican ideology, reinforced by the alliance of progressive social classes inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the centralised state, has been important in promoting the reduction of social inequality in education. On the other hand, the liberal ideology in England, reinforced by a conservative alliance of social classes and a liberal state, has hampered the reduction of social equality in education.

### **Faith Schools and Tolerance: a comparative study of the influence of faith schools on students' attitudes of tolerance** (Helen Everett)

Helen's PhD, which is nearing completion, examines the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Despite its prominence in the media, very little empirical work has actually been conducted in this area. Her research has looked at what differences in attitudes of tolerance exist between students in a variety of faith and non-faith schools. Furthermore it has tried to determine which aspects of the school might be impacting on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Overall the findings indicate that students in all the schools are tolerant of a wide range of groups and

behaviours, with few inter-school differences emerging. Nevertheless two differences have been found. The first is that students in both the faith and non-faith schools showed lower tolerance towards other faith groups than they did to other groups in society, such as immigrants. This was related to the type and quality of contact with religious groups that the schools were providing. Secondly, the students in one faith school showed lower tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened religious teaching. It was suggested that two aspects of the school may be playing a part in this: the way that the school was ineffectual at developing cognitive skills such as critical reasoning; and the way that the school was nurturing the students' religious identity.

### **Vocational Education and Training Policy in the European Union** (John West)

John West is researching the evolution of policy of the European Union in encouraging vocational education and training in the 'New Member States' of Eastern Europe during the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the accession of these countries to the EU. The research involves tracking the development of EU policy both on VET and on enlargement, the conjunction between the two, assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of VET in Eastern Europe during the 1990s and early 2000s, and the role of the aid programme and how it played into the experience of economic transition which was taking place in Eastern Europe over this period.

### **The English Apprenticeship Triquetra: Networks to Apprenticeship** (Ian Laurie)

The strength of the relationship between government, employment and education in the apprenticeship system – the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' – is considered in this project as being important for the provision of high quality apprenticeships. Ian's research examines the roles of and relationships between businesses, organisations and government departments and agencies involved in the apprenticeship system in England generally, and the city of Southampton specifically, with a focus on the retail and the creative and cultural sectors. The aim is to understand the benefits and problems of using apprenticeships as experienced by the actors working in the system and so highlight the differences that emerge between the sectors. As part of the research, Ian is interviewing a

range of key informants at national level, including from government departments and agencies, Sector Skills Councils, National Skills Academies, trade unions, and qualification awarding bodies. Local participants include education and training providers, businesses, museums, networks and charities. Early findings suggest that networks of actors from the national to the local are helping to expand apprenticeship in these sectors, but employer engagement remains problematic. Analysis of England's apprenticeship legislation provides an important historical backdrop to the research and suggests that today's fragmented apprenticeship system is the result of long-standing tensions between government and industry.

### **Teaching Unity? National Minority Education in China** (Fei Yan)

This doctoral project explores the major features of state education policy toward ethnic minority groups in China. It analyses how the state education policy has changed through out the time and what are the political and social backgrounds of these changes. It also examines the mainstream state textbooks to find out how is the state policy manifested in education system. It will analyse the way that minority culture is portrayed and how its relationship to Han majority in value-added textbooks such as History. It will finally analyse the state's response to the recent ethnic clash and then give suggestions on this issue.

### **Unlocking employer investment in workforce development** (Hilary Chadwick)

The UK is said to have a problem with skills and productivity, with a widening gap between the skills that UK firms and their workforces have, and the skills that they need for global competitiveness, community inclusiveness and individual fulfilment. A stable tradition of apprenticeships and other vocational education and training (VET) in European competitor nations continues to inspire fear and envy in the UK, as successive UK governments try a range of market-led and state controlled levers. These include a levy/grant system, public investment in the design and supply of national qualifications, and exhortation. One theme emerges as a consistent concern: the behaviour of employers. Drawing on a range of theoretical frameworks from political science and economics, Hilary's

research aims to explore what kind of problem this is and to challenge existing conceptions through the following questions:

- What is, or could be, the role of employers in the UK's so-called skills system?
- Where is there innovative and effective practice by employers in skills formation and utilisation?
- What lessons are there for policy makers wishing to secure a 'deal' with employers?

Hilary is taking a qualitative approach, to explore the behaviour of employers who work across a number of different national policy frameworks, mainly in the USA, France and Germany. She will be building on her professional experience as a former senior civil servant in the Skills Funding Agency, working closely with large multi-national employers who deliver accredited training including apprenticeships in different parts of their business.

## RESEARCH COMMENTARIES

### 1. Regimes of Social Cohesion

*Andy Green and Germ Janmaat provide a summary of their new book.*

We all have ideas on what an ideal society should look like. It is therefore not surprising that normative approaches predominate in the study of social cohesion. However, rather than arguing how societies should hang together, we decided to investigate what forms of social cohesion can actually be identified as the empirical study of the ways in which societies stick together is underdeveloped. In our new book, we argue that societies achieve social bonding in different ways and that three different regimes of social cohesion can be identified among western countries alone: a liberal, a social democratic and a social market regime. As the crisis of globalization unfolds in the wake of the global financial crisis, social cohesion in each regime is vulnerable at different points.

#### *Three regimes of social cohesion*

The different ways in which western societies cohere have their origin in different traditions of thought on social harmony. These traditions,

which broadly refer to liberalism, republicanism and cultural conservatism, propose different roles for the state to ensure peace and stability. While liberalism advocates minimal state interference and maximum freedom for individuals and the market, republicanism accords a prime role for the state as a guardian of cohesion. In republican thought the state represents a political community of citizens and has the capacity and duty to promote the values of this community and ensure the equal participation of its citizens. Cultural conservatism differs from both liberalism and republicanism by emphasizing that cohesion is rooted in ethno-cultural homogeneity and a stable social structure. The state should ensure that the nation remains 'pure' and that the existing social stratification is preserved.

Through statistical analysis of key institutional and attitudinal data relating to OECD countries, we identified contemporary regimes of social cohesion which demonstrate to a large degree the characteristics proposed by the three traditions of thought. We found evidence of a liberal regime prevailing in English-speaking countries, a social-democratic regime (which partly draws on republican thought) predominating in Scandinavian countries, and a social market regime (partly shaped by conservative and partly by republican thinking) characterizing the societies of the original EU six countries.

In liberal societies, social cohesion relies on the triple foundations of market freedoms, active civil society and core beliefs in individual opportunities and rewards based on merit. Neither a wider set of shared values nor an active role of the state have been regarded as essential for a cohesive society. In social democratic societies, by contrast, social cohesion is characterized by a strong institutional embedding. Social solidarity is founded on egalitarian and solidaristic values promoted by the state. Levels of social and political trust are also much higher, which is partly due to the greater ethnic homogeneity of Scandinavian societies. Sweden, however, is both ethnically diverse and highly trusting. The social market societies also rely on institutions to shore up social cohesion, but here the emphasis is not so much on egalitarianism but on a broader set of shared values and a strong national identity. These societies are further characterised by high levels of corporatism,

relatively low levels of civic participation, and high levels of welfare and social protection.

### *Social cohesion during the economic crisis*

Every country is affected by the challenges of globalisation and particularly so during periods of economic crisis. However, as societies differ in what holds them together, their regimes of social cohesion are susceptible to different threats. What is likely to undermine cohesion in the liberal countries is the rapid erosion of people's faith in individual opportunity and fairness. The UK has high levels of income inequality and relatively low rates of social mobility. Inequality and lack of mobility are likely to grow due to the disproportionate effects of the economic crisis (in unemployment and public expenditure cuts, for example) on young people, women, the low-paid and those in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. As the prospects of secure jobs and home ownership diminish for many people, belief in the core unifying values of opportunity, freedom and just rewards are likely to decrease, causing social and political trust to diminish further.

Social market countries have generally experienced less social trauma from the global financial crisis than liberal countries such as Ireland, the UK and the USA. Although most social market economies suffered severe recessions, these were generally shorter and had a more even impact across all layers of society than in the liberal countries, although the crisis in the Eurozone now threatens to throw them back into recession. The free-market model of financial capitalism was never embraced as fully in social market countries as it was in the liberal states. The countries of northwest continental Europe have tended to balance the goals of individual opportunities with other, more social, goals. For the most part, there is less income inequality than in the liberal group of countries, and social mobility in recent years has been higher. Strains on social cohesion are, however, present in these countries. Increasing cultural diversity challenges the broader set of shared values and the 'national' culture on which social market countries have traditionally placed a high premium.

Unsurprisingly, the response of the social democratic group of countries to the economic crisis has been to spread the pain as equally as possible. Although most Nordic countries

experienced deep recessions, most have lower levels of public debt and unemployment than the liberal countries, which may allow quicker recovery. Arguably, the recession will have less effect on opportunities and life chances in these countries. The main threat to social cohesion in the social democratic countries arises out of the pressures placed on their generous welfare states by population ageing and immigration. To date, people have been willing to pay for their universal welfare services through high levels of taxation. But with the rising costs of health care, pensions and social protection, the Nordic welfare contract is under considerable stress.

Green, A and Janmaat, J.G. (2011). *Regimes of Social Cohesion: Societies and the Crisis of Globalization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

## 2. Anticipating skills needs

*How can we anticipate the skills that employers are likely to be utilising in the future? This challenge is being tackled by LLAKES Professor Francis Green, in conjunction with collaborators from TNS Infratest in Munich, and the Fraunhofer Institute in Stuttgart, in a 3-year long project for CEDEFOP, the European Union's premier agency for vocational education and training research.*

In 2010, the European Commission developed its An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, which was to be one of the seven flagship initiatives of its EUROPE 2020 strategy. Following this initiative, policy-makers concerned with both competitiveness and social inclusion wanted to improve their ability to anticipate skills requirements so as to aid governments and social partners in their planning of training provision. To help achieve this, CEDEFOP commissioned a new pilot survey to test whether an EU-wide survey could usefully add to their ability to forecast new skills needs. Drawing on Francis' experience with the UK Skills Surveys and other questionnaire design work at the European level, the team have designed an original instrument that aims to identify the extent to which generic and occupation-specific skills are changing, including any brand new skills that may follow from innovation in the workplace. The questions will be put by phone to senior managers of establishments in a range of pre-defined industrial sectors. The survey should also allow researchers to identify the forces that are driving

the changes, such as technological or organisational change. After extremely thorough scrutiny by an army of experts, and following translation and extensive cognitive testing of the instrument in five countries (Finland, Germany, Ireland, Poland and Spain), the questionnaire is almost ready for its proper test, a trial run with a large-scale survey of employers' establishments in these same countries. This project has broken new ground, and has called for creativity and the need to take some risks in trialling new approaches. The pilot will take place in 2012, and the true test will come when the collected data come to be analysed – watch this space!

### 3. Measuring Job Quality

*What do we mean by “job quality”, and how can we design indices to measure it? These are the central questions in another LLAKES European research project being led by Francis Green.*

The project follows a call from the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, an agency of the European Union based in Dublin, to carry out analyses of its 5th European Working Conditions Survey, which was completed in 34 countries during 2010. Working together with LLAKES researcher, Tarek Mostafa, Francis's bid won the contract to devise job quality indices from the data, and to use the indices to describe the distribution and growth of job quality.

From the outset, the idea of job quality needed to be defined, and Francis focused the concept squarely on objective features of the job, rather than on personal characteristics of the worker. He devised indices for wages, the intrinsic quality of the work, employment quality (security and prospects), and work-life balance features. Rather than focus just on wages, which economists generally favoured, or combining them artificially to form a single index, it was decided to analyse the four indices separately. Tarek and Francis have since been busy analysing how these aspects of jobs vary across socioeconomic groups, and between European countries. We know that wages were increasing steadily in many countries, prior to the great recession of 2008, and that earnings had become much more unequal, including in Britain. Of particular interest is what's been happening to the non-wage aspects of job quality over time. Is it getting any better? If so, in what dimensions? Is it becoming more unequally

distributed across the population? Up to now very little has been known about these matters. Francis presented some initial findings on these issues to a conference on job quality in early November at Cornell University, New York State, organised by the Industrial and Labor Relations Review, in a paper entitled “Is job quality becoming more unequal?” In US conferences one is sometimes urged to make sure to include your “elevator” answer in your presentation, (i.e. the summary you would give to someone important if you found yourself describing your paper's argument during a ride in the lift). In this case, Francis' elevator statement required less than one floor: “not in Europe”. It was found that work quality, work intensity and work-life balance features were all becoming less, not more, unequal between 1995 and 2010; while environmental security (i.e. absence of physical and ergonomic hazards) was pretty stable.

### 4. The Impact of Preschool Education and Care on Female Employment and Students Educational Performances

Debates about policy frequently involve identifying social and economic trade-offs. A policy which is designed to boost economic competitiveness may have negative social consequences or, conversely, policies designed to enhance social cohesion may come at a high economic cost. The tensions between economic and social goals seem particularly evident in times of economic austerity. However, social scientists occasionally identify policies which they claim would have clear benefits, both on the economic and social side. Pre-primary education and care (PSEC) is one such policy area.

A new LLAKES study by Andy Green and Tarek Mostafa suggests that pre-school education and care has a positive effect on female employment and on educational performance at the age of 15. However, despite this positive effect, PSEC does not help close the gap between poorer students and their peers.

This study showed clearly that PSEC opens the doors of employment for women. Affordable and accessible pre-school provision frees up mothers of young children to undertake paid work and is thus likely to increase the employment rates of women in general. Raising rates of employment makes an important

contribution to raising GDP per capita and improving living standards. At the same time participation in PSEC is held to improve the cognitive abilities of young children. Two datasets were used. The first is a macro dataset covering Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA from 1980 to 2008. The objective was to assess the impact of PSEC on female employment. The authors included a large number of determinants of employment including PSEC. These determinants are: PSEC; expenditure on unemployment (welfare); rigidity of employment; trade union coverage; coordinated wage bargaining; unemployment benefits' duration and replacement rate; the rate of house ownership; and prison population. They also included the following variables: the degree of centralisation of wage coordination (plant, firm, industry, or economy level); an index of employment protection; migrant stock; the ratio of minimum to average wage; taxes on labour; and trade union density. The last set of variables did not have a significant effect on total or female employment and was taken out of the equation. The second dataset is a micro-dataset, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009). Using this data, we assessed the impact of attending pre-school education on the achievements of 15 year-olds in Mathematics in the same countries mentioned above.

The findings are interesting. An increase in PSEC of 10% (making pre-primary education affordable and accessible) increases female employment by 6.1%. This result is substantial and intuitive since women are the major beneficiaries of PSEC. For the rest of the variables, the impact on female employment is as follows. Expenditure on employment (welfare), rigidity of employment, and trade union coverage have a negative and significant effect on it, while the impact of coordinated wage bargaining, house ownership, and prison population is positive and significant. By contrast, unemployment benefits' duration and replacement rate have an insignificant effect.

When comparing the social democratic economies with the liberal ones, it is possible to see that they attain high levels of employment through different roads. In the liberal economies, flexibility is paramount while in social democratic economies publicly provided PSEC and coordinated wage bargaining play an important

role. On the other hand, using the PISA 2009 dataset, the authors were able to prove that attending PSEC is positively and significantly related to performance scores on reading at the age of 15 for all social groups. Hence, the cross-national analysis does not support the argument that raising levels of PSEC participation necessarily reduces social gaps in attainment at 15 years of age. Participation in PSEC increases educational performance by similar amounts for children of all social groups in most countries. Social gaps in performance at 15 may only be mitigated by high levels of PSEC provision where children from less advantaged families get more – or better quality – provision.

The important implication of this for policy is that for PSEC to reduce social gaps in school attainment it is not sufficient merely to increase aggregate PSEC participation rates. It would require policies with a substantial bias towards children from disadvantaged families so that they receive more – or better quality – PSEC than children from other social groups. Policy in England seems to be moving in this direction. On Sept 19th 2011, the Department for Education set out plans to extend the existing free entitlement of PSEC to 15 hours per week, which currently applies to all three and four year olds, and to all disadvantaged two year olds (i.e. for those qualifying for free school means or in local authority care). This should increase PSEC participation rates for disadvantaged families. DFE estimates that approximately 140000 two year olds would be eligible to benefit. However, it remains to be seen whether this will bias participation towards this group sufficiently to reduce inequalities in learning outcomes.

The study has been published as LLAKES research paper 32, which is available (along with all the other LLAKES research papers) at [www.llakes.org](http://www.llakes.org).

## NEWS AND EVENTS

### *Commission of Inquiry into the Role of Group Training Associations*

LLAKES is hosting this Commission which will be chaired by Lorna Unwin. The GTAs were a product of the Industrial Training Act (1964) which also established Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) and a compulsory training levy raised from employers. The GTAs were conceived as employer co-operatives,

addressing challenges (particularly supporting apprenticeships) which were particularly acute in smaller companies (SMEs), although not unique to them. The Commission is supported by GTA England, the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service, but will act in a fully independent capacity. The Commissioners are:

Professor Lorna Unwin (Chair)  
Anita Esser, Head of Wider Healthcare Teams  
Education, University Hospital Southampton, NHS  
Foundation Trust  
Neil Bates, Group Chief Executive, Prospects  
Learning Foundation  
Neil Fowkes, Learning and Development Manager,  
Rolls-Royce plc  
Fred Grindrod, Apprenticeships Policy & Campaign  
Officer, TUC  
Jan Hodges, Chief Executive, Edge Foundation  
Halina Simpson, Chair, ATG Training

Four oral evidence sessions will be held during February and March and written submissions will be invited. The Commission aims to report its findings by the end of April 2012. Please contact Richard Arnold ([r.arnold@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:r.arnold@ioe.ac.uk)) if you would like further information, and also if you would like to submit evidence to the Inquiry.

#### *Public Debate: Learning, Inequality, and Social Cohesion in Recession*

In November 2011, Andy Green, Lorna Unwin and Geoff Mason of LLAKES joined Professor John Field (Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning at Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling), Wendy Burton (Scottish Trades Union Congress), and Victor Dukelow (Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning) in a public debate hosted by LLAKES and the Institute of Education at the University of Stirling. This event was organised as part of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science. It was supported by Skills Development Scotland and chaired by Professor Walter Humes. Each member of the panel offered a different perspective on the issues and challenges associated with learning, inequality and social cohesion in the context of the on-going economic downturn in different parts of the United Kingdom.

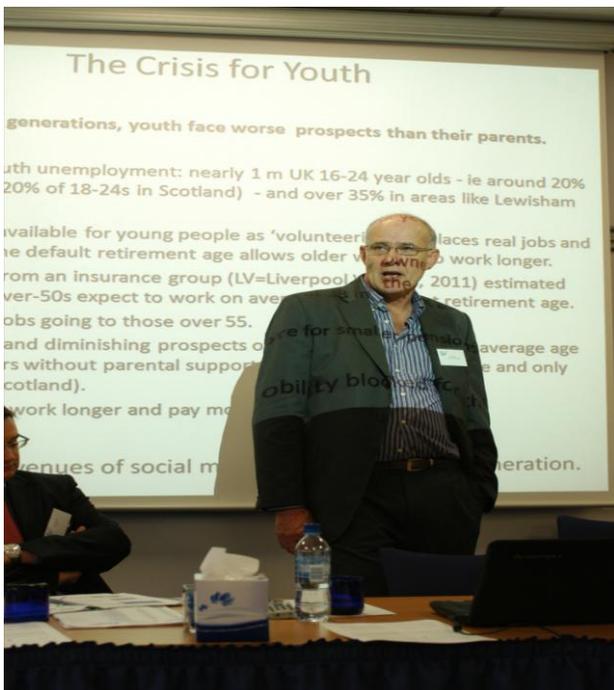


*John Field and Victor Dukelow at the Stirling Debate*

Reflecting on the experience of Northern Ireland, Victor Dukelow highlighted challenges such as closing the productivity gap, rebalancing the economy and fostering innovation for sustainable growth. Despite the recession hitting Northern Ireland particularly hard (for example, manufacturing and services output has declined over 13%), he emphasised opportunities including a relatively young population where new entrants to the labour market are better qualified, political stability, and strong inward investment. Presentations were followed by a lively debate involving members of the audience during which a number of questions were raised about the persistence of inequality, the relative power of nation states and regions to respond effectively to global economic pressures and how to ensure that research evidence makes a difference to policy.



Lorna Unwin speaking in Scotland



Andy Green addresses the Festival event

*'Making European Muslims': Islam and the Struggle over Beliefs, Perceptions and Identities among Children and Young People in Europe*

In October, the Arab and Islamic Studies Unit and the Child and Youth Unit at Aarhus University, in Denmark invited LLAKES researcher, Sadaf Rizvi to present a paper on the socialisation and integration of Muslim young people in the UK. The conference aimed to broaden the perspectives in relation to the ways in which Islam is constructed in changing social, intellectual and cultural contexts, and how boundaries between religion and culture are negotiated and shifted in the intense struggle over the making of young European Muslims. Sadaf presented findings from her research on 'Muslim faith-based schools in the UK', highlighting the complexity of multiple factors that have led to the establishment of Muslim schools, the different forms of curricula (Islamic, National and Islamicised) being used in the schools for constructing the multi-layered identities of young people, and the diversity of young Muslims' experiences as a result of a complex interplay of individual, familial, educational, ethnic and religious factors. The conference was a part of an ongoing Danish project on 'Islam and Muslims in Danish public schools'. It enabled collaboration between institutions conducting research in the areas of Muslim education and social cohesion across Europe and established the foundations for a multi-author book, *Making European Muslims: Islam and the Struggle over Beliefs, Perceptions and Identities among Children and Young People in Europe*, with a target publication date of 2014.

*Geographies of Inequality after Recession: LLAKES hosts the Economic Geography Research Group Annual Symposium*

In November, LLAKES hosted the Annual Symposium of the Economic Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society & Institute of British Geographers. The event, *Geographies of Inequality after Recession*, brought together economic geographers from across the UK with members of LLAKES to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest related to economic restructuring, social inequality and learning.



*Participants in the November Symposium*

John Bryson from the University of Birmingham presented a paper titled: *British Manufacturing Beyond Deindustrialization: Innovation, Adaptation and Services*. Debunking a series of myths about the decline of manufacturing in the UK, he used a wide-ranging set of case studies of British firms (including those producing jewellery, locks, cars, and ceramics) to show the increasing importance of intangible resources and assets such as branding and design in manufacturing. His presentation highlighted the new ways in which manufacturers are blending design, marketing and the organisation of production to increase competitiveness.

Mia Gray from the University of Cambridge presented a paper titled: *Inclusive Regional Development? Social Networks in an Age of Austerity*. She explored the differences in the ability of individuals to 'get in' (i.e. obtain a job) and 'get on' (i.e. get promoted) in different kinds of labour market. The paper compared a sponsorship model, where individuals are mentored and new jobs are structured to reflect their strengths, and a contest model, where promotion to existing positions is based on qualifications. She concluded that the current period of economic restructuring in the UK will lead to less formal, more flexible labour markets where a sponsorship model flourishes, and class, gender and race inequalities are exaggerated.

From LLAKES, Andy Green presented a paper on *Education, opportunity and social cohesion*, and Lorna Unwin presented a paper on *Apprenticeship as a vehicle for social and economic regeneration*, both of which drew on LLAKES research discussed earlier in this Newsletter.

*LLAKES Public Seminar: Education and social mobility: where next for research and policy?*



*Polly Toynbee and Jonathan Portes at the January seminar*

The Government has stated that its primary social policy objective is to increase social mobility. Both academics and policy-makers agree that the single most important policy lever is education, broadly defined. Yet there is little consensus on the impact on social mobility of changes, past and future, to the education system. At this seminar on 25 January 2012, Jonathan Portes, Director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), discussed the relationship between social science research on education, inequality and social mobility and current social policy. He argued that both the UK and international evidence suggests a clear link between income inequality, social immobility, and the socio-economic gradient of education (the extent to which the children of the better off achieve better educational outcomes). Although the precise patterns of causality - and the time lags - are unclear, it is reasonable to assume that reducing socio-economic gradient would over time improve social mobility.

Portes presented evidence that suggests that the fall in social mobility seen in recent decades reflects both the sharp rise in income inequality seen in the 1980s and increased educational inequality in 1980s and 1990s, in particular in progression to higher education. However, in the short term there might be some cause for optimism; inequality, especially at the bottom end, stabilised in the 2000s, while the socio-economic gradient of educational attainment had fallen in recent years, at least for some age groups. Looking to the medium term, though, he was less optimistic. Income inequality is likely to rise, both as a result of austerity measures and wider labour market trends. Both current levels of youth unemployment, and wage stagnation for lower-middle income workers, are likely to have a damaging impact. The focus of government policies to increase social mobility, however, is the reduction of educational attainment gaps, and over the long term, at least, this seems appropriate. Portes argued, however, that it is far from clear that policies implemented so far will have an overall positive effect. He concluded by focusing on two areas of policy:

- Reforms to schools: to the extent that structural reforms to the school system increase selection (and/or socio-economic segregation), this is likely to reduce social mobility. International evidence strongly suggests that selection increases socio-economic attainment gaps without improving outcomes, and UK evidence suggests that grammar schools were at best neutral for social mobility;
- Removal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA): this clearly reduced socio-economic attainment gaps, so its abolition is likely to reduce social mobility. This will be counteracted by the introduction of the pupil premium, but plausible quantitative estimates, based on the research literature, suggest that, even with optimistic assumptions about impact, this is unlikely to do more than reverse the negative effect of the abolition of EMA. Whilst welcome, it is not plausible to assume that the pupil premium will do more than mitigate the impact of other government policies.

Portes concluded by arguing that the government will need to take more considerably more aggressive policy action in education and other policy areas if it really wants to make

social mobility its “overriding social policy objective”.

## FUTURE EVENTS

### **Lifelong Learning, Crisis, and Social Change**

LLAKES International Conference

The second LLAKES international conference will take place on 18 and 19 October 2012. Against a backdrop of continuing economic uncertainty, increasing austerity and social unrest, new ideas based on robust research evidence are urgently needed to tackle the challenges facing many countries. During its first phase of operation (2008-2012), LLAKES has been investigating a number of those challenges. Through research in the UK and comparative research across a range of countries, and through collaboration with other research teams, LLAKES has built a considerable body of inter-disciplinary evidence to advance our understanding of the interrelationship between: innovation, economic growth and regional regeneration; skill formation and workforce development; the role of lifelong learning in relation to social values and inequality; and the impact of risk through the life course.

The event will include papers from LLAKES and from a range of UK and international speakers in parallel workshop sessions, as well as four keynote presentations. Will Hutton, Observer columnist, Chair of the Big Innovation Centre, and Principal of Hertford College, University of Oxford, will give one of the keynote presentations.

The conference will provide a major opportunity for researchers and policymakers to debate the latest research. Watch the LLAKES website for further announcements!

### **LLAKES Research Seminars**

Forthcoming seminars include:

“Muslim schools in Britain: socialisation, identity and integration”, by Sadaf Rizvi (1 March 2012)

“Privatization or Restatization of Higher Education in China?” by Professor Mok Ka-Ho (13 March 2012)

Details of other seminars to be held during the Summer and Autumn Terms of 2012 will be posted on the LLAKES website, at [www.llakes.org](http://www.llakes.org). You can also follow LLAKES on Twitter, via [www.twitter.com/llakescentre](http://www.twitter.com/llakescentre).

## LLAKES Books

*Multidisciplinary Approaches to Educational Research: Case Studies from Europe and the Developing World*, Routledge, 2011.

Sadaf Rizvi (Editor)

This edited collection has been published as part of the Routledge Research in Education Series. The book provides an original perspective on a range of controversial issues in educational and social research through case studies of multi-disciplinary and mixed-method research involving children, teachers, schools and communities. Authors from 'across continents' and 'across disciplines' reflect on the relevance of research approaches in different cultural and national settings. The case studies explore a range of issues, including: the relevance of research approaches to very different national settings, and to the kinds of questions being asked; the barriers of language and culture between researcher and researched; articulating the thinking and feelings of very young children; the challenges of dealing with 'partiality' of data; issues of identity, subjectivity and reflexivity; and transferring research approaches from one national setting to the problems posed in another. The book is the first of its kind in bringing together such examples of research conducted in Europe and the developing world, where both young and more experienced researchers deal with the challenges of using multidisciplinary approaches in complex field settings.

*Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, Springer, 2011

David Aspin, Judith Chapman, Karen Evans and Richard Bagnall (Editors)

This is a substantially revised and updated edition of the International Handbook of Lifelong Learning, and represents a comprehensive survey, analysis, exploration and development of problems, themes and issues in the field of lifelong learning. It includes state-of-the-art contributions from a wide range of international

contributors from an extensive number of countries, showing how lifelong learning policies, programs and practices are being conceived, articulated, implemented and assessed. It is a thoroughgoing, rigorous and scholarly work, with profound and wide-ranging implications for the future of educating institutions and agencies of all kinds in the conception, planning and delivery of lifelong learning initiatives. The contributions demonstrate that lifelong learning requires a wholly new philosophy of learning, education and training, one that aims to facilitate a coherent set of links and pathways between work, school and education, and recognises the necessity for government to give incentives to industry and their employees so they can truly 'invest' in lifelong learning. Members of LLAKES contributed the following chapters: 'Life Chances, Learning and the Dynamics of Risk in the Life Course' (Karen Evans, Ingrid Schoon and Martin Weale); and, 'A Critical Approach to Work: The Contribution of Work-based Learning to Lifelong Learning' (Lorna Unwin).

*Lifelong Learning Systems: Origins, Dynamics and Social Consequences*, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming

Jan Germen Janmaat, Marie Duru-Bellat, Philippe Mehaut, and Andy Green (Editors)

This book will examine both the origins and consequences of the lifelong learning systems of western societies. The first part discusses these systems in terms of trends and cross-national differences and draws on theories from political economy, sociology and history to make sense of the patterns found. The second part of the book focuses on the output of lifelong learning systems. The consequences of education for social cohesion will receive particular attention. It must be stressed that most contributions concern original studies with many new findings. The book is primarily aimed at academics and students, but will also be valuable for policymakers and professionals engaged in social and educational policy.

*Rethinking Apprenticeship* (edited by Tony Dolphin and Tess Lanning, published by IPPR, November 2011)

LLAKES researchers, Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin, were invited to write a chapter on 'The Content of Apprenticeship' for this new book which attempts to set out a policy agenda for strengthening the role of apprenticeships in the

UK, how to create more and better apprenticeships, and develop an institutional framework to enable apprenticeships to flourish. Twelve chapters provide perspectives from academic researchers (e.g. Ewart Keep and Susan James from the ESRC Research Centre, SKOPE, on the role of employers), policy-makers (e.g. John Hayes, Minister for Further Education and Skills, on restoring the worth of apprenticeships), and industry professionals (e.g. Oliver Tant and Neil Sherlock of KPMG). The book can be downloaded for free at: [http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/apprenticeships\\_Nov2011\\_8028.pdf](http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf)

*Encyclopedia of Adolescence* - 3 Volume Set, Elsevier, 2011

B. Bradford Brown and Mitchell Prinstein (editors)

LLAKES researcher, Lorna Unwin, contributed a chapter on 'Vocational Training' in Volume 2 of this Encyclopedia. The Encyclopedia has been awarded the Prose Award for 2011 for a multi-volume reference book in Humanities and Social Sciences by the American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence.

### LLAKES Research Papers

The following LLAKES research papers were published in 2011.

Paper 20: "What is Skill? An Interdisciplinary Synthesis, by Francis Green.

Paper 21: "Mapping Demands of Social Change", by Rainer K. Silberiesen and Martin J. Tomasik

Paper 22: "The Impact of the 2008-9 Recession on the Extent, Form and Patterns of Training at Work", by Alan Felstead, Francis Green, and Nick Jewson

Paper 23: "Is Workplace 'Skills for Life' Provision sustainable in the UK?", by Edmund Waite, Karen Evans, and Natasha Kersh

Paper 24: "The Spatial Dimensions of Skills for Life Workplace Provision", by Natasha Kersh, Edmund Waite, and Karen Evans

Paper 25: "Learning at work as a low grade worker: the case of hospital porters", by Alison Fuller, Ian Laurie, and Lorna Unwin

Paper 26: "Modernising the Pharmacy Curriculum", by David Guile and Farah Ahamed

Paper 27: "Industrial Doctorates: Employer Engagement in Knowledge and Skills Formation", by Fumi Kitagawa

Paper 28: "University Incubators and Knowledge Mediation Strategies: Policy and Practice in Creating Competitive City-Regions", by Susan L. Robertson and Fumi Kitagawa

Paper 29: "From learning for the knowledge-based economy to learning for growth: re-examining clusters, innovation and qualifications", by Laura James, David Guile and Lorna Unwin

Paper 30: "Estimating the effect of lifelong learning on women's earnings using a switching model", by Richard Dorsett, Silvia Lui, and Martin Weale

Paper 31: "Production Regimes, Employee Job Control and Skill Development", by Duncan Gallie

Paper 32: "Pre-school Education and Care: a Win-Win Policy?", by Andy Green and Tarek Mostafa

Paper 33: "Economic development and skills policy: what can we learn from Territorial Innovation Models and Territorial Knowledge Dynamics?", by Laura James

All the LLAKES research papers can be downloaded from:

<http://www.llakes.org/llakes-research-papers/>



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