

LLAKES Newsletter

Issue 2, Autumn 2009



WELCOME from LLAKES Centre Deputy Director, Lorna Unwin

Welcome to the second LLAKES Newsletter. As it was being prepared, concern was growing in the UK about the impact of the economic recession on the lives

and life chances of young people. The statistics are grim. In June, 2,435,000 people were registered as unemployed, of whom just over 19% were 16 to 24 year olds. Thirty per cent of 16 and 17 year olds are out of work, and the total number of 16 to 24 year olds classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) hit 835,000 in April. In late August, the images of young people celebrating success in their A Level results were tempered with the news that some 50,000 of them would not find a place at a university due to the government's decision to cap the number of undergraduates, despite a 10% rise in the numbers actually applying.

As the new graduates leaving university prepared to enter the labour market, BT, the UK's ninth largest employer, announced it was suspending its graduate recruitment scheme. Meanwhile, school leavers wanting to enter apprenticeships were also struggling. Two months into being established, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) for England found itself having to issue guidance to employers and training providers about arrangements for apprentices who were made redundant. It also launched a scheme with employers in the construction sector (where

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apprenticeship redundancies have been particularly acute) to give £1,000 to each employer who took on a redundant apprentice.

Of course, economic downturns also affect older people, but there is strong evidence from the recession of the 1980s that young people can be seriously scarred by periods of unemployment. This isn't just a problem for the UK. In a speech on August 12th to mark International Youth Day, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, argued that it wasn't just unemployment that was a problem for young people round the world (and notably in developing countries). He stressed that we should all remember that for young people, informal, insecure and low-wage employment is the norm, not the exception. In terms of the UK, the starkest message has come from Jon Coles, the Director General of Schools at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In a controversial speech in July to the Westminster Education Forum, he referred to a conversation he had had with researchers who had found that one in six young people classified as long-term NEETs in a city in the North of England had died some 10 years later. The DCSF responded to media enquiries by stating that the study was "not representative" of England as a whole and there is no reference to the research on the DCSF website.

In this Newsletter, Martin Weale, Director of NIESR, provides a measured analysis of the nature of the current recession and notes that politicians and taxpayers will have many tough decisions to make over the coming months. The debate over the extent to which the education and training system is fit-for-purpose in terms of helping economic recovery is alive and well. We offer a new perspective on this age-old debate with an article by John Preston and Jordi Planas, which focuses on the relationship between competitiveness and lifelong learning. Despite the ups and downs of the economy, deep-rooted inequalities persist in many countries. Drawing on initial data from a LLAKES project based in England, France, Germany and Denmark, Magdalini Kolokitha and John Preston challenge some existing constructs in their discussion of economic and cultural experiences and perceptions of inequalities and their effect on the way and extent to which individuals feel they are represented and have voice. Our fourth article, by Bryony Hoskins, Germ Jammaat, and Ernesto Villalba, also offers a new perspective on the way in which school children learn from and make sense of the concept of citizenship. Using data from an international study of 14 year olds in schools in 28 countries, the authors argue that it is by learning through social participation that the concept becomes meaningful.

As the newsletter was going to press, public sector institutions in the UK were facing up to making very difficult decisions in the light of severe cuts to their budgets. In an ESRC-funded study of the options facing the government and opposition political parties

with regard to tackling the country's 'fiscal squeeze', Robert Chote and colleagues at the Institute for Fiscal Studies reported in September that: "The economic and financial crisis that has unfolded over the last two years has caused a dramatic deterioration in the UK's public finances, with public sector borrowing set to peak this year at a level not seen since the Second World War and public sector indebtedness set to climb to levels not seen since the late 1960s". One of the sectors facing tough choices is higher education and in her article for this newsletter, Susan Robertson considers the extent to which the main choice will be whether universities go down the privatised route. These and other issues related to the on-going impact of the economic crisis will form the context for a LLAKES event during the ESRC's Festival of Social Sciences in March 2010 – see page 4 for details.

As well as these articles, the Newsletter brings you up-to-date with LLAKES news and research progress. We hope you find the Newsletter informative and we look forward to seeing as many of our readers as possible at our seminars in the coming months.

LLAKES Centre News

The LLAKES research programme is organised in three strands. In this section we describe some of the main developments from each of these strands over the last six months, together with other news from the Centre.

Highlights from Strand 1

In this strand, we are using mixed-method comparative analysis to investigate the effects of different models of lifelong learning on economic competitiveness and social cohesion across OECD countries. This update focuses primarily on two of our comparative projects which consider the links between school curricula and values. This work is an important facet of Strand 1, as much work on 'values education' focuses on studies in a specific national context. By examining the comparative dimensions of both curricula and values education, we can gain insights into the ways in which values might be central to both social cohesion and competitiveness.

Work on Project 1.4 (School Ethnic Mix and Social Attitudes), led by Germ Janmaat, has focussed on using the IEA Civic Education dataset to investigate the relation between the social and ethnic composition of schools and a range of civic attitudes. We are also investigating the relationship in England, Germany and Sweden between classroom ethnic diversity, on the one hand, and trust, participation and ethnic tolerance on the other.

As part of identifying the various comparative models of lifelong learning in Project 1.1 (Equality and

Inequality in Lifelong Learning), led by Andy Green, we have already developed over 30 indicators for organisational and curriculum characteristics of lifelong learning in OECD countries, and have used these to assess 'system effects' on the distribution of education outcomes. We are focussing on 'curriculum regimes' in different parts of the world. In the first part of the project, the team will be focussing on values embodied in the school curriculum. It was decided that the first set of countries would include England, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy, and Hungary. We expect these countries to show considerable differences in school curriculum characteristics. A second set of countries – intended to expand the scope of the first – was also drawn up, and will be included in the analysis if time permits. A set of indicators was created for the status of values education (including state control of the curriculum, and assessment) and curricular manifestations (e.g. spread and infusion of values in the curriculum, and the types of values promoted). These indicators will be supplemented by a qualitative description and analysis of the values content. The team is now in the process of populating the dataset, and conducting the literature review with a view to framing the analysis of the data.

Alongside these two projects, Strand 1 is also conducting a macro cross-national analysis of the relationship between educational outcomes – in terms of the levels and distributions of skills – and forms of competitiveness and social cohesion at the national level. As a background study for this project (led by Andy Green), we have reviewed the historical and contemporary literature (in political philosophy, sociology and comparative political economy) on concepts and traditions of social cohesion in western and east Asian countries to identify the distinctive forms that social cohesion takes in different regions. Using administrative data on labour market and welfare system characteristics, as well as survey data on social attitudes, values and behaviours, we have conducted a statistical analysis to test the conceptual models of social cohesion identified from the literature. The analysis largely confirms the existence of relatively durable and distinctive regimes which we label 'liberal', 'social market', 'social democratic' and east Asian. A LLAKES research paper on 'Regimes of Social Cohesion', by Andy Green, Germ Janmaat and Christine Han, will be published this Autumn.

Highlights from Strand 2

Research in Strand 2 focuses on the ways in which people in city regions gain access to learning opportunities as part of work and their lives more generally. More specifically, it examines the role of lifelong learning in the shift towards the 'knowledge

economy' in city-regions in the UK, and the consequent implications for communities, employers and education and training providers. This update focuses on two of the Strand's projects.

As part of Project 2.2, led by Alison Fuller, we are building a detailed picture of the inter-connected landscapes of provision that are emerging in cities in relation to the way local authorities and other stakeholders are attempting to achieve both social and economic goals. In Southampton, for example, we have been studying an innovative initiative led by Southampton City Council which used planning laws to bind an international retail company, that wished to build a new facility in the city, into a series of social inclusion measures for the unemployed. This has provided an empirical lens through which to question the extent to which existing theories of the 'privatised state' can fully explain the dynamic and shifting interplay between the state and local actors in the area of welfare-to-work initiatives. The study is showing the important role played by 'third sector' providers (who include charities, voluntary organizations and hybrid organizations that straddle the for 'profit'/'not for profit' line) in providing training and other services for welfare-to-work clients. As part of the analysis of our data, we are taking an historical perspective to show how these providers have evolved over a long period of time and have increasingly become reliant on state funding.

In project 2.4, led by Geoff Mason, the research team at NIESR have been studying the provision of and access to training by adult workers. The team has conducted a telephone survey of around 500 firms based in selected sectors in the Strand's five city-regions. The main aim of the survey was to learn more about skills upgrading for adult workers and the extent to which firms make use of external training provision. The sectors and city-regions covered by the study involved the retail sector (Portsmouth and Southampton), electronics manufacturing sector (Bristol and the South West), cultural industries (Manchester), architecture and construction services (Birmingham) and social work (Glasgow). Having completed a series of face-to-face interviews with relevant Sector Skills Councils, FE colleges and commercial training organisations, the research team is now undertaking a follow-up survey of the firms in order to capture the impact of the recession on recruitment, training, product development and business strategy.

Highlights from Strand 3

This LLAKES strand is examining the social, economic and cultural factors that influence and impede individuals' attempts to control their lives, and their ability to respond to opportunities and to manage the consequences of their choices. The three core projects

focus on: degrees of 'riskiness' in socio-economic environments for life chances across the life course; the ways in which individuals react to these risks; and how differences in outcomes are influenced by institutional and structural factors, as well as factors such as parental background, educational attainments and participation in education and training after entering the workforce.

Project 3.1 (Education-Employment Transitions), led by Ingrid Schoon, was one of the first LLAKES projects to get underway. Adopting a life course approach, this project aims to examine the notion of contextualised capabilities that underlie variations in transition strategies, their antecedents and outcomes in times of social change. Indicators of social cohesion and social attitudes, including indicators of institutional trust, have been developed. Findings on the potential mediating role of school motivation and education in a trans-generational model of status attainment and on the determinants of social attitudes and trust in institutions highlight the role of early socialisation as well as later direct experiences with institutions in shaping perceptions of society. Additional funding has also been secured for an international Post-Doctoral Fellowship programme, PATHWAYS, funded by the Jacobs Foundation (£1m).

Project 3.3 (Economic Experience in Working Life) is led by Martin Weale. The purpose of this project is to understand factors that influence the socio-economic experience of people of working age, and the influence of education and training undertaken prior to commencing work and while of prime and late working age. Key indicators of human capital (at both individual and industry levels) have been developed, together with a simulation model to explore how incentives to undergo education and training are influenced by economic myopia. Models are being used to assess the welfare gains from participation in lifelong learning in terms of their effects on future earnings and income uncertainty; comparing what emerges from this with the actual take-up of lifelong learning to indicate the nature of gaps in provision.

Project 3.2 (Adult Basic Skills, Workplace Learning and Lifecourse Transitions), led by Karen Evans, builds directly on the previous ESRC longitudinal research carried out by Wolf and Evans (2003 -2008) into the effects on individuals and organizations of engaging in workplace skills programmes. The new project is carrying out follow up research into:

- the trajectories of individuals selected 5 years ago to participate in literacy programmes
- the changing features of organisational engagements in workplace literacy programmes.
- the literacy content of jobs and the literacy

practices of the workers involved.

Expanding on Francis Green's recent analyses, we also intend to explore (ethnographically) the ways in which literacy skills and practices are linked to computer use and employee involvement strategies in selected organisations.

Public debate: "Learning through recession: competitiveness, cohesion and lifelong learning"

In March, LLAKES staged a 'Question Time' style debate at NIESR as part of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science. The debate, "Learning through recession: competitiveness, cohesion and lifelong learning", covered the impact of global recession on economic competitiveness and social cohesion in the UK. Claire Fox (Institute of Ideas and Radio 4's The Moral Maze) led the discussion and chaired the debate. The panel included Martin Weale, Director of NIESR, David Willetts MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills; Professor Andy Green, Director of LLAKES, and Professor Lorna Unwin, Deputy Director of LLAKES. A diverse range of views was presented that stimulated fresh ideas for policymaking and research. The audience's active participation was invaluable through questions to the panel.

Following the success of that event, LLAKES will hold a follow-up public debate as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science in March 2010 - **Who is being hardest hit in the recession, and how can social policy help?**

New research from LLAKES will be used to inform the debate. Danny Dorling, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Sheffield, will join the panel. Danny is an expert on the changing social, medical and political geographies of Britain, and his research has important insights on the implications of rising housing market and wealth inequalities and the polarization of health and life chances, for new social policies.

For further information about these events, including extracts from the 2009 debate, please visit our new website: www.llakes.org.

Education for Social Cohesion in Lebanon: LLAKES opens international conference in Beirut

Andy Green and Germ Janmaat, LLAKES

We had the great privilege of giving the opening keynote address on 'Public Education Systems and Social Cohesion' at a conference on 'Education for Social Cohesion in Lebanon' at the American University of Beirut in October. The conference was very well organised by the Centre for Lebanese Studies - based at St Anthony's College, Oxford - and included presentations from international experts on aspects of education and social cohesion in different national contexts, as well as from policy-makers and politicians in Lebanon. Finding ways to promote social cohesion through education in Lebanon is, of course, quite a challenge, not only because of the deep and long-lasting sectarian religious divides in the country, but also because most students are attending private religious schools which are not effectively under the control of the state. To open the conference with only limited knowledge of what has been tried in Lebanon already was inevitably particularly challenging, not to say risky. Our initial proposals - for a more pervasive and preferably secular public education system in the Lebanon - were based on our previous historical and empirical research from various national contexts which suggested the need for a robustly state-controlled and highly integrated public education system to have a significant impact on developing cohesive values in multi-ethnic states. The excellent subsequent presentations on the history of education policy and implementation in Lebanon convinced us of the limitations of this approach since all previous attempts to implement common and non-sectarian civics and history curricula - with national textbooks - have foundered on the rocks of sectarian conflict.

The conference generated many creative and imaginative proposals for policy solutions which could be implemented within the current constraints. Our own suggestions subsequent mostly ran in the direction of using teacher education and non-sectarian professional organisations (of teachers and head teachers) to strengthen commitments in the profession to fostering non-sectarian values and an overarching sense of Lebanese identity. We thank the organisers - and Dr Maha Shuayb in particular - for hosting such a well-focussed and stimulating event.

Impact of the recession: LLAKES presents evidence to HM Treasury

At a well-attended recent ESRC / HM Treasury seminar, LLAKES researchers Andy Green and Geoff Mason presented evidence on how the current recession is affecting economic and social outcomes in the UK.

With regard to workforce skills updating, recent LLAKES research in five very different service and manufacturing sectors suggests that, in many firms, the proportion of employees receiving training has declined in the last 12 months. There has also been a general shift away from off-the-job training to on-the-job training (particularly in those firms which have experienced the sharpest reductions in sales). This reduces the scope for workers to benefit from the wide range of learning opportunities offered by training courses held away from their workplaces.

There is also evidence of wider social impacts of recession. Although the overall rate of crime continues its ten-year downward trend, specific categories of economic crime (burglary and fraud) have seen significant rises since the recession began. Effects on health tend lag some years behind and are not yet visible in the data. However, there is evidence from recent surveys that income inequality is still going up and that trust in people and institutions continues to go down. Previous LLAKES research suggests that these are closely correlated.

LLAKES People News

Professor Alan Felstead (Cardiff University), Professor Francis Green (University of Kent), and Geoff Mason (NIESR) have been appointed as Visiting Professors at the Institute of Education, linked to the LLAKES Centre.

Dr Fumi Kitagawa has joined the LLAKES team as a Research Officer working under the direction of Professor Susan Robertson at the University of Bristol.

Ian Laurie was successful in being appointed to the LLAKES ESRC PhD Fellowship, and will work under the supervision of Professor Alison Fuller at the University of Southampton.

John Preston has been appointed to a professorship at the University of East London. Although John will continue to be involved in the work of LLAKES, Germ Janmaat has taken on his leadership role for Strand 1, and Bryony Hoskins is leading the project *Experiencing Inequality*.

We are delighted to announce that Tarek Mostafa, LLAKES Research Officer based at the Institute

of Education, has been awarded his PhD by the Université de la Méditerranée - Aix-Marseille II with Summa Cum Laude. Tarek's PhD is titled *The Anatomy of Inequality - an International Investigation on Stratification and Choice*.

Reviews and Comment

The recession and its long-term impact

Martin Weale, Director, National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)

The current recession is both sharp and unexpected. In April 2008, NIESR forecast that output would grow by 1.8% in 2009. At present output is expected to fall by 4.3%. The problems with our forecasting were widespread. Indeed it is fair to say that no-one who forecasts on a regular basis came remotely close to predicting what now seems the likely outcome. Many people, ourselves included, warned of what could go wrong and these warnings were typically about the effects of high levels of debt. But in April last year, the most popular view was that a trigger for a crisis would be a fall of the US dollar rather than the intensification of the banking crisis which had already made itself felt with the failure of Bear Sterns. In any case, it is always possible to produce a list of things which "could happen" and it is not always easy for policy-makers to know which of these possibilities they should be most concerned about.

With the hindsight of a year, one can say that, so far, there have been two phases to the recession. The first was a period of mildly-falling output which was probably caused by the first phase of the credit crunch which started in 2007. Capital finance became more expensive than people had expected and credit was less readily available with the consequence that businesses found it sensible to cut back, somewhat, on investment plans and stock levels. The Office for National Statistics now estimates that output fell by 0.1% in the second quarter and 0.7% in the third quarter of last year, although their first estimate for output growth in the second quarter of last year was 0.2% and thus, a year ago, it was not obvious that a recession had started.

The second phase of the recession came following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. This was not something that anyone would sensibly have forecast. Until then, all the experience had been that advanced countries did not let large banks fail, but either nationalized them or persuaded other large banks to take them over. The shock of Lehman's collapse meant that banks became very reluctant to lend to each other because of the risks involved. They

also became more suspicious of their other customers and the outcome was a general desire to reduce lending levels. International trade became particularly difficult to finance because cross-border transactions were regarded as highly risky. In this phase, business borrowing costs rose even more sharply than they had earlier on in the crisis.

As with the earlier phase of the crunch, if businesses find credit is tight, the most obvious things to do are to reduce their stock levels and cut their investment plans. So there was much sharper downward pressure on stocks and the total volume of international trade fell by around 15%.

A simple example demonstrates the importance of stock movements to the economy. Suppose that businesses normally hold stocks equal to twelve weeks' output but, for some reason, they decide to reduce their stock levels to ten weeks as a result of financial pressures. This apparently modest reduction in stock levels is the equivalent of the loss of two weeks' output, or 4% on an annual basis. With the effect disproportionately focused on international trade, those countries with trade surpluses, like Germany and Japan, have been affected worse than average while deficit countries, like the UK and USA, have had the effects of slump damped somewhat. And, after taking account of the structure of the UK's economy, its performance has been worse than the international pattern would have suggested.

While stock reductions are likely to depress output in the short term, in the longer run the economic changes associated with the crisis are likely to mean that output and incomes will be permanently about 4-5% lower than one might have hoped before the crisis broke. This change is largely because business capital is likely to be more expensive than before with, as a consequence, the economy less well capitalized. But the financial sector is also likely to be smaller than it was before the crisis and the resulting redeployment of resources is likely to result in a loss in incomes.

This change, if it happens, has two consequences. First of all, either consumption has to jump down sharply to a point at which it can resume trend growth or, alternatively, a period of stagnation is needed as consumers adjust to their reduced circumstances. Secondly, businesses are likely to find that they have too much capital. They can either cut investment sharply to allow the capital stock to adjust fairly rapidly, or maintain higher but stagnant investment for a longer period. If consumers and businesses choose the first form of adjustment then the outcome will be a further downward lurch in the economy, followed by the resumption of steady but not spectacular growth. If they choose the second option, the economy is likely to stop contracting, but it will be a while before there are

signs of recovery. Economic forecasters have no way of knowing which of these is more likely; and obviously the outcome could be somewhere between the two.

With this background, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, despite continuing economic weakness, government policy has been very effective. Without support for the banks, the crisis would have been far worse. And the Government's fiscal policy has offset the contractionary forces described above.

However, the recession has led to a sharp contraction in tax revenues and government debt is likely to rise from under 40% of GDP before the crisis to around 100%. This should not in itself be a major problem; the economy has managed larger debt levels for much of recent history and there is no reason to see any risk of default. But the key fiscal point is that policy cannot be run on the assumption that there will never be a crisis again. This means that, once the recovery is underway, the government needs to run a surplus to bring debt levels down again. To achieve this in the face of tax revenues which are likely to be structurally much weaker than before the crisis, will require inspired political leadership and an understanding from the public that services cannot be provided unless people are prepared to pay for them.

A dangerous obsession? Rethinking national indices of lifelong learning and competitiveness

John Preston, LLAKES and University of East London, and Jordi Planas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Krugman's revenge?

Paul Krugman, the Nobel-Prize winning economist, has challenged the application of the notion of 'competitiveness' to nation states, arguing that it is incorrect to consider what is true for firms to be equally true for nation states. Businesses can become bankrupt and need a market to sell their products. Nations, on the other hand, can always be bailed out by the IMF, and for many countries a large proportion of their output is directly acquired by the state rather than being produced for private consumption or export. One could argue that given the state of the world economy, the IMF is becoming an increasingly likely lender of last resort for some countries and that various 'stimulus packages' are being used to compensate for dwindling export markets. This could be Krugman's revenge as competitiveness seems to be anachronistic in an era of diminished international trade. However, in a LLAKES Research Paper to be published this autumn, we argue that competitiveness remains a key facet of the way the world economy works. In European traditions of the 'national economy', and even in endogenous growth

theories, competitiveness has a national significance. This national tradition differs considerably from theories of market forms of 'competition' such as theories of the firm, (monopoly, oligopoly, monopolistic competition, perfect competition) or of SCP (structure-conduct-performance models) where analysis at the level of the firm is entirely appropriate. Although countries cannot become 'bankrupt', there are negative consequences of being bailed out by the IMF, as the British experience in 1976 shows. Furthermore, in countries such as the US, Chapter 11 bankruptcy for firms is limited in terms of its legal consequences. Moreover, nations develop policies for human capital formation, innovation and export promotion explicitly aimed at product and service market competitiveness. Far from being anachronistic, competitiveness might become increasingly important in a world recession as consumers haggle and barter down prices aided by increasingly powerful internet searches.

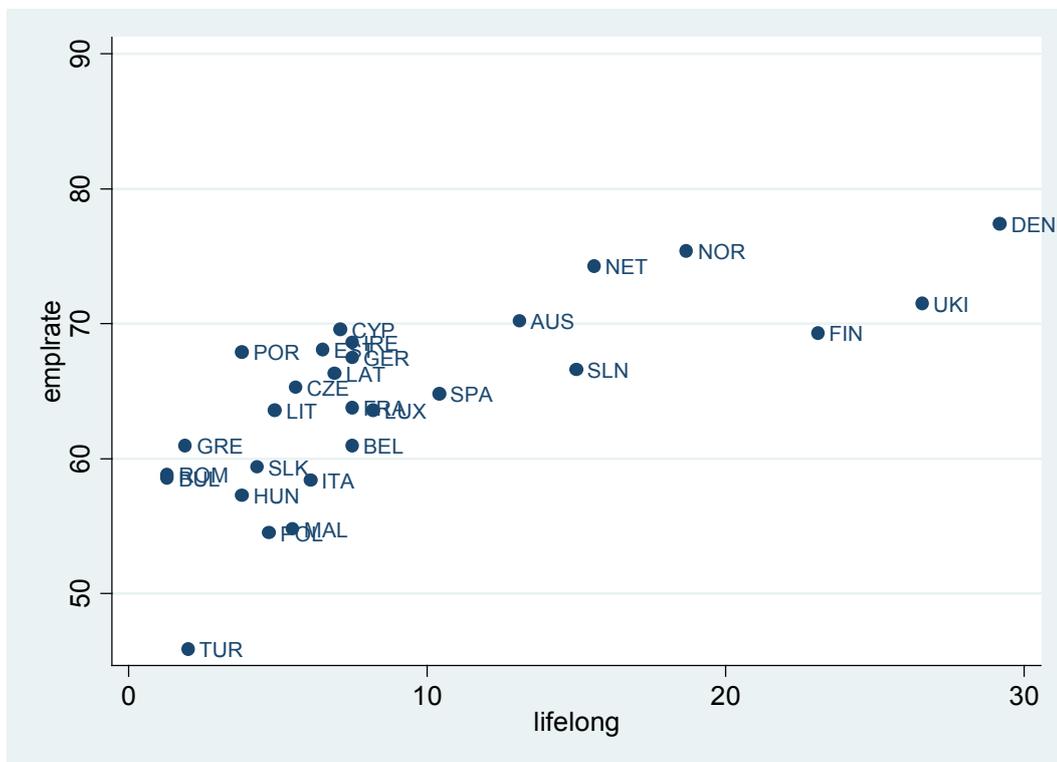
Although we consider competitiveness to be an important, national policy we are less sanguine concerning the ways in which competitiveness is currently measured, in particular the ways in which competitiveness indicators devised by international bodies include the concept of lifelong learning in their indices. Human capital conceptions have been very influential in including lifelong learning measures in competitiveness indicators. Therefore, indices concentrate on variables such as percentage of the labour force with a particular qualification, quantitative measures of intellectual capital such as patents, and figures on education expenditure. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report (WEF, 2008) includes indicators not only on enrolment in various levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary), but additionally on internet access and use in schools. The EU's European Competitiveness Report (EU, 2008) refers not only to the quantity of science and technology graduates, but also broadband access. Although we consider these indicators to be important, we are concerned at the omission of an historical and institutional dimension in considering lifelong learning as an indicator of competitiveness. In 'national' theories of competitiveness the historical development of skills profiles and of institutions of lifelong learning plays an important, if not central, role. Of course, historical and institutional factors are difficult to include in indices that are obsessed with quantification (recording numbers of learners, expenditure on learning, quantity of patent 'ideas') rather than taxonomical work (classifying institutional forms, histories of skill formation), but we have two suggestions for directions in which this work could proceed, as well as concrete proposals for the inclusion of existing statistics to supplement competitiveness indicators.

Lifelong learning and competitiveness: a complex relationship?

At first sight, there appear to be very close correlations between indicators of lifelong learning and indicators which have been traditionally associated with international competitiveness such as numbers of patents and labour productivity. Using data from EUROSTAT for 2007, there are significant correlations between lifelong learning (percentage of the adult population who have participated in further learning after initial education) and GDP per person (0.45), GDP per hour (0.46), the employment rate (0.72 – chart 1) and number of patents (0.55) (all correlations are significant at the 5% level). Although correlation does not imply causality, lifelong learning appears to be related to many of the attributes which economists consider to form competitiveness (see chart 1).

than that of its founder Gary Becker. For Becker, human capital was much wider than initial education incorporating training, on-the-job experience, health, and even social values, so any meaningful indicator of lifelong learning needs to take this wider set of personal characteristics into account. We take issue, therefore, with the ‘obsession’ with levels of lifelong learning as opposed to what we describe as the vectoral and institutional arrangements of lifelong learning. By vectoral we mean that different types of lifelong learning (education, training, experience) can be combined in different combinations to produce different outcomes. This means that a focus on levels of learning is misguided as it ignores the combinational properties of types of learning. By institutional arrangements we mean that different ways of organizing lifelong learning provide important qualitative differences between skill and knowledge which cannot be resolved by comparing levels of qualification. What this means is that research on indicators of competitiveness needs to be further

Chart 1: Lifelong learning and the employment rate



It is tempting to read off from these indicators that there is an association between lifelong learning and competitiveness and many studies progress beyond association to suggest that lifelong learning and competitiveness are causally related. Whilst not denying that lifelong learning is important in influencing competitiveness, we consider in our paper whether the current emphasis of competitiveness indicators on ‘quantitative’ and ‘skill based’ indicators of lifelong learning might not be misplaced. Ideologically, these indicators inform us that more and higher is better for competitiveness whilst narrowing the scope of human capital activity to a much narrower definition even

informed by the histories of skill formation in various countries. In our forthcoming paper, we provide some suggestions as to ways in which this could be achieved.

References

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Inequalities at a 'glance'

Magdalini Kolokitha, LLAKES, and John Preston, LLAKES and University of East London

The LLAKES project, 'Experiencing Inequality' (Strand 1), takes place in four countries (England, France, Germany and Denmark). It is exploring how 14-18 year old students in schools and colleges and higher education students perceive and experience inequalities and the impact this has on their civic engagement. We focus on both economic and cultural inequalities. To do this, the project is using both qualitative (interviews and focus groups) and quantitative (questionnaire surveys) methods. The overarching aim of the project is to identify how experiences of and attitudes to inequalities might have an impact on social cohesion. Here we present our initial approach on theory and analysis regarding the qualitative side of the project.

Recent research literature on inequalities has been embedded within a theoretical framework that eliminates the space for and the role of agency. We seek to interrupt and extend this analysis in two directions. Firstly, we want to ask what it means to 'experience' inequality in education, not just as localised phenomena, but also in terms of individuals' understanding of the education system. Secondly, we want to consider how experiences of inequality form the basis of not just practices, but also political projects which have macro-social consequences.

A specific macro-social consequence that we are interested in is the extent to which young people believe they are represented in political and civic spaces of their communities (Fraser, 2007). Is representation perceived as local, national and/or global? Are these perceptions/experiences of inequality seen to justify individuals' attitudes on representation? Through the data we collect, we will examine the way our research participants attempt to interrogate, justify, explain, criticise or accept experiences and/or perceptions of inequalities.

It can be argued that, in recent years, the celebration of difference has been politically silent at the level of experiencing inequalities. The move from multiculturalism, as the recognition of different cultures, to integration and assimilation has moved the loci of difference from groups and communities to individuals. This can be seen in the way policymakers have used recent events such as 9/11 to develop a rhetoric of individualisation. This rhetoric is having an impact on issues of citizenship and social cohesion particularly in relation to attitudes to 'diverse/mixed' societies.

Thus, individuals who are not integrated or assimilated

are seen, in Bauman's (1998), term as 'the stranger'. We attribute to this concept of the stranger, economic and cultural features. It isn't that 'the stranger', as Bauman suggests, does not live among us, but rather in the societal periphery. This stranger is differentiated by its values, its race, its ethnic origin, its social class, its sexuality and its gender. The stranger can be found anywhere around us, in any social group, in any social field. The stranger, however, is not part of a particular group, or in a particular social context acting within a particular social practice. The stranger at some point can be any of us while, at the same time, being dislocated.

In researching how individuals subjectively interpret inequalities, there are potentially many forms of misrecognition that could occur between researcher and subject and even within the subjects' own 'accounts of themselves'. Rather than attempt to flee the scenes of these misrecognitions, we wish to dwell on them and to examine the productive ways in which subjects use misrecognitions not only of others but also of the self. Some individuals can be said to have 'intersectional' positions, which derive by combinational effects such as someone who is of mixed-race or liminal positions, which refers to subjects on the threshold of 'becoming' members of a particular ordinal classification expressed for example through class mobility. In particular, intersectional and liminal subject positions can be employed to examine the complexities of how individuals perceive inequalities. Understanding accounts of inequalities as always partial or tangential allows a movement beyond narratives where the researcher recovers 'real' inequalities from the subjects.

Intersectionality and liminalities certainly have the potential to disrupt unmediated accounts as they give the potential for divergences. However '... intersectionality is liable to produce a multiplicity of 'new' subject positions whilst still according strength to the concept of positionality' (Preston, 2007: 194). Intersectionality/liminality (meshed/between subject positions) tells us little concerning how inequalities are perceived beyond ordinal conceptions of subjecthood and the agents position in society.

For Both Johnson (2003) and Skeggs (2004), while discussing race and class respectively, the subject is constructed and seen as either black and white or working and middle class. We wish to explore the intermediate positions that a person can be associated with, such as positions of mixed race or positions of class mobility and how these intersectional/liminal positions are perceived by the social world. Moreover, we wish to offer the possibility to agents that hold such positions to discuss and reflect not only on the way the social world see them but also on the way in which they perceive their identity. In such a way we hope to explore hidden inequalities, particularly those that are not located within the fix stratification of our social

world. Furthermore, we hope to identify the power relations that promote and re-enforce positive and negative perceptions of race, ethnicity, class, gender and religion and consider ways in which education may interrupt them.

For the investigation of intersectional/liminal positions and the exploration of agents' perceptions of their position we shall use Du Bois' (1994) concept of double consciousness. Double consciousness considers the nature of the African American experience under white supremacy: - 'It is a peculiar sensation this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (Du Bois, 1994: 2). This experience of being '...born with a veil, but gifted with a second sight' (Du Bois, 1994: 2) has been redefined in various ways in contemporary social science. Firstly, as a particular kind of standpoint position where people of colour have a particular perceptual and cognitive knowledge of their own circumstances. Secondly, double consciousness is used as a way of reading contemporary cultural positioning and political reaction of those in the African diaspora.

In a similar way Skegg's (2004) 'Class, Self, Culture' moves beyond the idea of class as an objective category to 'a shift in attention from an analysis that assumes that the meaning of things is a property of the object itself (i.e. the working class are pathological) rather than the response to, or the relationship to the object (i.e. how they are being defined through the responses and power of others).' We want to use Skegg's analysis in a way which might be thought to be heretical to the original formulation and (in turn) extend the analysis of how individuals might subjectively perceive inequalities. In the case of Skegg's work, we wish to consider those who might be liminal in terms of class position. For example, those working class individuals who might be attempting to become middle class, the middle class individuals who are losing their jobs or the lower middle classes. Although such an experience can not be directly compared to a Du Boisian 'double (class) consciousness' there are parallels to be made.

Both Du Bois' 'double consciousness' as a result of black minoritisation/white supremacy and Skegg's conception of 'misrecognition/appropriation' as the cultural dynamic between the middle and working class make use of binary conceptions of race and class respectively. Conceptions of liminality in terms of class / race whilst not neutralising the conceptual power of these theories (we are absolutely not denying the continued importance of class and race in structuring social inequalities) call for a further elaboration.

This project will report its findings on the space that agents have to make changes at their school, college,

university or local community, on whether they perceive their social surroundings as fair or unfair and on the different types of barriers or support they have experienced. Finally, we aim to problematise the just world hypothesis (Lerner 1980, Duru Bellet and Keifer 2008) according to which people have the tendency to justify attitudes towards others and what happens to themselves by charging the responsibility to the individual or to the individuals' actions. For example, having bankers rewarded with large bonuses is justified through the spectrum that they have worked harder and homelessness is justified through laziness on the part of the person. People believing in the just world hypothesis generally have a positive approach on social institutions and structures which as consequence may promote institutionalised inequalities. In our case, we hope to explore particularly the inequalities located within the education institutions.

By examining different countries with different levels of inequalities in their society and different education systems we would expect to be able to see patterns of national differences.

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Can citizenship be taught in the classroom? Learning citizenship through meaning-making activities inside and outside school

Bryony Hoskins and Germ Janmaat, LLAKES, and Ernesto Villalba, European Commission Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning

In this article, we examine how young people develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to become active citizens in democracies. We use the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) CIVED 1999 study of 14-years-old students in schools in 28 countries. This study questions young people about their knowledge and skills in relation to the concept of democracy and asks them about their attitudes and values in regard to democracy, citizenship, identity and social cohesion. We focus on the original and, as yet, untested hypothesis presented by Torney-Purta et al. (2001) that knowledge and skills are developed through learning as social participation in different communities of practice. The 'Communities of Practice' concept comes from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) and provides a framework for analysing learning which is developed through relationships, interactions and conflicts that occur in the process of reproducing and adapting communities (for critiques of the concept, see Hughes et al, 2008). The community forms the basis of where meaning is actively negotiated between different actors. Meaning is the product of past interactions, is temporal in nature, and develops through participation and reification (Wenger 1998). Thus the emphasis of this model is on social participation in the communities and the collaborative development of meaning as opposed to instruction and the transference of knowledge. Wenger (1998) groups the above aspects of this social theory of learning into four dimensions: meaning making = learning as experience; practice = learning as doing; community = learning as belonging; and identity = learning as becoming.

There are clearly considerable challenges in operationalising the communities of practice concepts within a large, quantitative study of school students' knowledge and attitudes as it evolved out of anthropological (highly qualitative) research on apprenticeships (Felstead et al 2007). However, due to the richness of the IEA CIVED data, we have found variables that measure some of the constructs developed within the communities of practice literature. One example would be meaning-making which can be measured through items that include the discussion of politics and current affairs with friends, teachers or parents. Another example is practice, which can be measured through participation in social activities such as volunteering and student councils. Therefore, in this

research, we analyse the effects of learning that can be categorised as either meaning-making or practice, on attitudes towards participation and knowledge and skills about democracy. This is contrasted with the effect of learning through school instruction which is measured through hours spent in history and citizenship lessons. Due to the nested nature of this data, we use multilevel analysis for this research.

The countries that we have chosen to study represent five regions with different social, political, historical and education traditions within the European Union:

- Nordic: Finland
- Anglo-Saxon: England
- Continental Europe: Germany
- Southern Europe: Italy
- East Europe: Poland

Research Results

In this section we examine the results of the effects the community of practice variables on civic knowledge and skills. Table 1 provides the results of the multilevel analysis.

Meaning making

Table 1 shows that three of the meaning making variables are positively related to cognition. These relations are all significant at the .001 level and apply, with few exceptions, in all five countries. The meaning-making variable, Talking with Parents and Friends about Politics, has a positive and significant effect on the cognitive results on civic knowledge and skills across all countries considered (see table 1). It has the highest impact in Finland with a coefficient of 3.203***. The variable, Classroom Climate, which measures how open classes are for debate and different opinions, is positive and significant in all countries except Finland. The variable, Reading Newspapers and Watching TV News about Politics and Social Affairs, is significant and positive in all countries except Italy. The variable, Talking with Teachers about Politics, has a significant negative effect in England, Finland and Poland and a significant positive effect in Italy.

Table 1 Standardised coefficients from the multilevel model on civic knowledge and skills

Key

* = 0.05 level of significance
 ** = 0.01 level of significance
 *** = 0.001 level of significance

Cognition	England	Germany	Finland	Italy	Poland
Control variables					
Gender	0.701*	1.9***	0.288	0.433	1.084***
Expected education	2.186***	1.997***	7.017***	2.368***	5.881***
Language spoken home	1.611***	0.954**	0.107	1.209***	0.156
Books at home	3.039***	0.826*	1.515**	0.854**	0.735*
Mean of books	3.004***	6.159***	1.598	3.994***	1.782**
Mean of Language	-2.159*	0.649	2.061*	2.463***	2.473
CoP - Meaning Making					
Talking parents/friends	1.054***	1.51***	3.203***	1.5***	1.428***
Class climate	1.71***	1.657***	-0.349	0.936***	0.892***
Media	1.5***	1.285***	1.463**	0.422	0.787***
Talking with teachers	-1.138***	-0.472	-2.092***	0.539*	-0.872***
CoP – Practice					
School council	1.6***	0.376	0.219	0.142	1.202***
Volunteering	0.142	-0.068	-0.697***	-0.609	0.503
Charity collecting money	0.023	0.271	-1.611	0.154	-1.588***
Religious organisation	-0.552	0.159	-0.018	-0.13	-0.312
Drama	0.046	-0.22	0.296	-0.498	0.111
Formal Education					
Hours of History	-0.44	-1.673	1.225	0.105	-0.767
Hours of Social Science	-0.937	-1.193	-1.173	-0.038	0.223

Practice

The practice variables show a less uniform pattern of relations across the five countries and are generally not as strongly correlated with cognition as the meaning making variables. School Councils are positive and significant in two countries (England 1.6*** and Poland 1.202***) at the 0.001 level of significance. The variable, Collecting Money for Charity, has a significant negative effect in Poland (-1.588***) and Volunteering has a negative effect in Germany -0.697***. The variable, Participation in an Event run by a Religious Organisation and Participating Drama and Arts, has no significant results for any of the countries considered.

School instruction

The number of hours spent participating in history and social studies lessons has no significant positive results in any of the countries examined for the cognitive performances on democracy.

Results: Participatory attitudes

In this section we examine the results of the effects the Community of Practice variables on Participatory Attitudes. Table 2 provides the results for the multilevel analysis.

Meaning making

The performance of the meaning-making variables for participatory attitudes is even more impressive than for cognition (see Table 2). All four variables show positive and strongly significant ($p < .001$) links with Participatory Attitudes in all five countries (except for classroom climate in Finland). Talking with Parents and Friends has the largest effect (around the coefficient of 5) across all these countries (see table 2).

Table 2 Standardised coefficients from the multilevel model on Participatory Attitudes**Key**

* = 0.05 level of significance

** = 0.01 level of significance

***= 0.001 level of significance

Parta	England	Germany	Finland	Italy	Poland
Control variables					
Gender	-0.596*	0.526	-0.983*	0.078	-0.524*
Expected education	0.960**	0.295	0.861	1.368***	0.766*
Language spoken home	-0.841	1.294***	-0.449	0.155	-1.030
Books at home	0.483	0.714	0.347	0.643*	0.200
Mean of books	0.686	1.109	-0.024	-0.773	-0.651
Mean of Language	0.351	-1.462*	0.915	-0.209	-0.002
CoP - Meaning Making					
Talking parents/friends	5.792***	5.539***	5.782***	5.668***	4.89***
Class climate	1.312***	0.865*	0.586	1.596***	2.356***
Media	4.250***	3.429***	2.824***	3.548***	3.599***
Talking with teachers	2.817***	1.733***	2.375***	1.752***	1.375***
CoP - Practice					
School council	1.588***	1.848***	1.674***	1.1289***	0.585*
Volunteering	0.704**	1.179***	0.109	1.1483***	1.109**
Charity collecting money	0.754**	1.026**	0.624	0.381	0.937*
Religious organisation	-0.124	0.294	1.100*	0.171	0.390
Drama	1.283***	0.495	0.9054*	1.003***	0.941**
Formal Education					
Hours of History	-0.651*	-0.781	-0.503	0.436	-1.862
Hours of Social Science	-0.038	0.382	0.709	-0.116	1.147

Practice

In term of the Practice variable, School Councils have a positive and significant effect for all countries. There are more cross country differences for the remaining practice variables. Volunteering has a positive impact in all countries except Finland. Collecting Money for a Social Cause has a positive and significant effects for all countries except Finland and Italy. Participation in an Event Organised by a Religious Group only has a significant and positive effect in Finland. Drama has a positive and significant effect in all countries except Germany.

School instruction

There are no significant positive results for more hours of history or social studies in all 5 countries and in England (-0.651*) there is a significant negative impact for history at the 0.05 level.

Conclusion

For both the cognitive and participatory attitudes, meaning-making activities, which are not necessarily categorised by the student as learning activities, and that are happening both inside and outside schools are having significant positive cross country effects. In terms of practice, it is school councils that appear to be the most effective for participatory attitudes. However, there are cross-country differences in the effectiveness of different forms of practice inside and outside of school.

It is clear from our findings that by increasing the hours of school instruction on history or civic education and social science do not have a positive effect in any of the countries on either of our measures on learning active citizenship. This result suggests that simply by adding more hours of class-based teaching is not a useful strategy for civic education. In addition, we can summarise that learning which is not situated, but is taking place in an abstract classroom context and does not involve social participation either through meaning-making or practice has no positive impacts

on knowledge and skills for democracy or participatory attitudes.

In terms of the theory of communities of practice, the results show that the variables identified from using this approach under the categories of meaning making and practice seem to play a role in the learning of active citizenship. The identification of the meaning making variables is perhaps the strongest contribution of using the communities of practice literature as it has helped us to identify the common thread between those aspects with the highest learning impact (talking with parents and peers about politics, media consumption on politics and an open classroom climate for discussion). In this case, the commonality of the meaning-making variable is the individual's search for understanding through self directed discussion, reading and listening to political debates within her/his communities which she/he lives. Thus the communities of practice lens can be considered useful for researching the learning of active citizenship.

Finally, we conclude that for learning citizenship, it is the less formal approaches and the more student-directed learning in and outside school that works best for the students concerned. The challenge for teachers is how to motivate students to engage in their own meaning-making activities on citizenship inside and outside the school context.

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Higher education and the financial crisis: what does the future look like?

Susan Robertson, LLAKES

They say a year is a long time in politics. This last year has been a particularly long one, not only in political and policy circles, but for whole nations and their institutions. The sub-prime mortgage collapse quickly turned into a fiscal meltdown and is now a full-blown global recession. 'Hunkering down', weathering the effects, and practicing 'recession-style prudence and risk management' is now the new game in town.

So how are universities doing in this highly uncertain, fiscally-brutal environment? Clearly there are many kinds of stories which can and are being told — from departments closing to new ventures being advanced.

One story being put forward is by Moody's – one of the two big global rating agencies whose pronouncements on the creditworthiness of nations and institutions makes them particularly powerful and worth noting.

In June, Moody's released a Special Comment report on higher education called *Global Recession and Universities: Funding Strains to Keep Up with Rising Demand* which makes for particularly interesting reading. The lead author of the report is Roger Goodman, Vice President-Senior Credit Officer, Moody's Investors Service, New York.

Essentially their argument is that (particularly public):

"...universities are proving to be appealing investments for government stimulus efforts due to the sector's stabilising, countercyclical nature in the short term as well as its potential to stimulate long term economic growth."

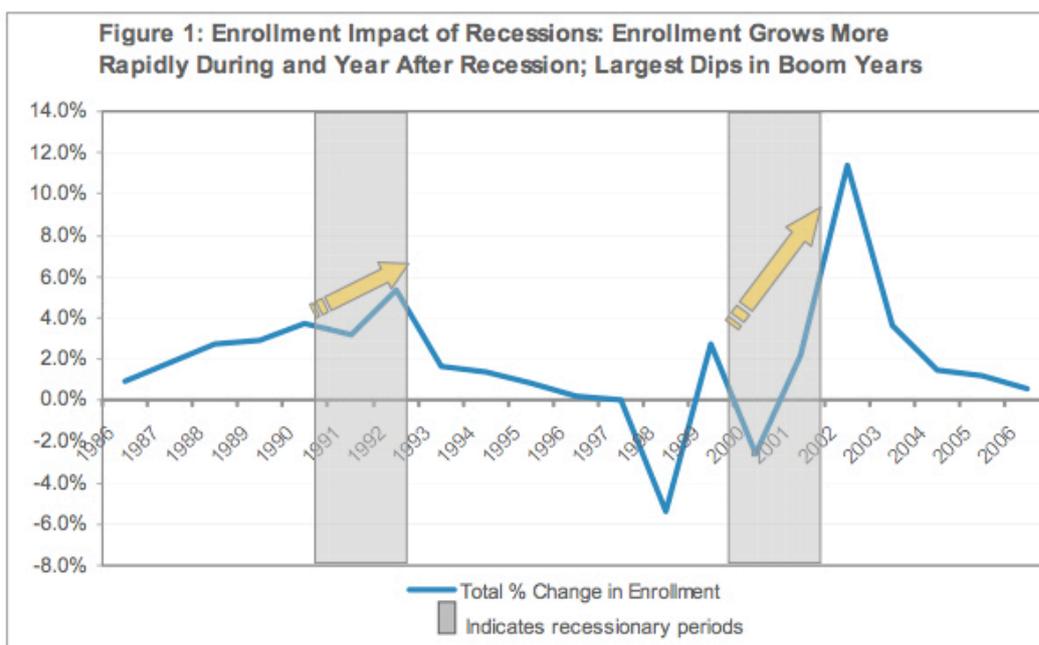
"...Most universities demonstrate countercyclical ability to increase student enrollments during recessions, receive relatively strong support from sponsoring governments, and offer long term potential for increasing revenue diversity."

Moody's offer a useful graphic on the enrollment impact of recessions (see Fig 1 below).

In other words, as the economy nose-dives, individuals are more likely to consider investing in more education as a means of waiting out the recession, and positioning themselves for the labour market when it revives. For Moody's this all means a possible 'tail-wind' for universities as student demand increases — particularly those who have an access oriented agenda.

Moody's Report outlines 5 key ideas:

1. While universities will experience some stress, they will be more sheltered than other sectors.



Footnote: OECD Education at a Glance Data, available at <http://stats.oecd.org>; Percentage Change in Total Enrollment for Canada, France, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States. Group chosen as only countries with complete data going back to 1985 in OECD countries.

2. Public university 'credit quality' will be steadier than that of private universities

3. Private universities can achieve a high rating if they are able to show evidence of sustained demand, financial strength and liquidity is clear

4. Universities are likely to seek more alternative sources of funding to offset the pressure on government balance sheets and limitations on public funding growth

5. Despite efforts at diversifying, the public sector will continue to play a central role.

There are several issues worth noting here. The first is that individuals have been encouraged to invest in a graduate education, very often at considerable personal expense (loans and so on) with the promise of future earnings that outpace non-graduate earnings. If wages are depressed across the public and the private sectors because governments and firms are having to manage the consequences of bailing out the banks, then a graduate education might not be as appealing as it once was.

Second, aside from the stark black and white categorizing of 'public' and 'private' in this report (for instance, is the University of Sydney, or the University of Wisconsin-Madison, public or private given that both receive around 14-18% of their core budget from government funding?), Moody's also offers us something of a paradox.

To weather the storm, public universities are going to have to become more 'private' in order to augment meagre government budgets. However, the more private a once public university is, the greater the risk. Is this not a classic case of catch-22?

Book Review

Sadaf Rizvi, LLAKES

The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

352pp. Allen Lane. £20.00

978-1846140396

This recently published book has gained much attention from policy makers and research analysts working in the fields of education, social equality, health and economic competitiveness around the globe. With comparisons between the UK, US and Scandinavian countries, the main argument emphasized in the book is that income inequality is the root cause of most social problems, including obesity, drug use, teenage pregnancies, high crime rates, low life expectancy, poor educational performance, violence, and high rates of physical and mental ill-health. The book argues that

more equal countries, like Sweden and Japan, tend to have less social problems and hence have happier societies. More specifically, the authors argue that, above a certain level of development, it is not wealth or poverty that determines health, mortality or other social outcomes in a country, but how the wealth is distributed. These arguments are based on numerous indicators from many international data sets on health and income distribution. If the findings trigger policy makers to think anew about causes and effects in relation to inequality, this would certainly mean the book has made a very positive contribution.

The authors - with their backgrounds in epidemiological research – present a series of scatter plots showing the extent to which social outcomes in a range of more than 20 developed countries correlate with inequality. The analysis is largely cross-sectional, and therefore cannot prove causality, but the consistency with which inequality correlates with a wide range of undesirable social outcomes across many countries is striking. The authors argue that it is not only the poor who suffer due to the effects of inequality, but also the larger population, as inequality results in stress across the whole of society, leading to anxiety and depression, eventually giving rise to mental and physical health problems. Moreover, the rich live with insecurity and fear from the poor, while those living with low incomes suffer status anxiety and experience bitterness and shame, seeking comfort in food and drugs. Societies with relatively equal incomes, on the other hand, enjoy higher level of trust and low levels of stress.

Although the book starts with a pessimistic tone, towards the end it offers some optimistic approaches for transforming 'sick' societies into more healthy and egalitarian ones. The authors offer a critique of the dominant neo-liberal attitudes to inequality, stating that present politics suffers due to a loss of the concept of an equal society. They attribute the widening of income gaps to the failure of governments to fight deprivation, for which government itself should be accountable. They suggest that rather than waiting for governments to transform their policies or re-establish an ideal vision of an 'equal' society, we, as an aware public, should start to improve our institutions to improvise our lives. The authors believe that a moral society is strived for by the larger public, rather than one with high individual economic gains. They propose policies, amongst others, to eliminate low wages, increase spending on education, raise top tax rates, and to limit maximum pay. However, they warn that achieving these goals would be a lot more complicated than anticipated.

What the book argues seems to be a matter of common sense. The strength of the book, however, lies in its objective comparisons, qualitative social research and empirical evidence from around the world. This is what turns some general human insights into publicly demonstrable facts.

One question, however, arises at the outset: 'can social inequality alone be regarded as the sole cause of all these problems?'. Julian Le Grand (2009) argues that there can be a range of other factors that contribute to all the above problems, as well as to social inequality, such as information and regulatory failures in the financial market, excessive heterogeneity in societies offering multiple challenges, cultural factors such as those promoting social solidarity or the reverse of it in different countries, and so on. I would argue that the relationship between social outcomes and inequality as discussed by these authors is much more complex and problematic. Given the diverse nature of societies on both sides of the Atlantic, it is hard to make a generalised statement to explain a phenomenon as complicated as 'inequality'. Nevertheless, a variety of factors provide a causal explanation as well as solutions to address the emerging challenges of inequality. The statistics presented in the book are only cross-sectional, and therefore do not provide a causal explanation. The qualitative argument, for example, about the mediating effects of stress on social outcomes is very plausible, but to many statisticians, the statistics will not clinch the argument about causality.

It has been observed that the current economic recession is leading to a fall in inequality (Le Grand 2009). If Le Grand is right in his contention, it will be interesting to see whether social problems reduce as a result. Wilkinson and Pickett's book makes an important contribution and deserves to be subject to rigorous debate.

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Italian Higher Apprenticeships: a transferable initiative?

Lorna Unwin, LLAKES

Apprenticeship continues to form an important part of the vocational education and training (VET) systems of many countries. As a model of learning and as an institutional part of government-supported VET structures, apprenticeship also continues to evolve. In October, 2008, I was invited to be part of a European Union Peer Review of the Italian Higher Apprenticeship initiative. Peer Reviews are part of the EU's Mutual Learning process which enables governments to showcase new initiatives and gain feedback from experts from other EU countries (for more information, see www.mutual-learning-employment.net/HigherApprenticeships.html). The Peer Review team in Italy was comprised of representatives from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, as well as the United Kingdom.

The review was held in Turin as the Piemonte Region, along with nine other Italian regions in the north of Italy, has been piloting the Higher Apprenticeship initiative since 2006. The initiative is funded by the Ministry of Labour and the European Social Fund and has involved around 1,000 apprentices across 350 companies. It was introduced in the context of concerns about youth unemployment in general and the struggle that graduates face when they leave university (usually in their late 20s) to gain entry to the labour market. A key aim, therefore, is to try and bring employers and universities closer together through involving employers in part of the delivery of university degree programmes. The Higher Apprentices are employed for two years as part of their Bachelor's or Master's programme and spend part of their time training on-the-job with their employing company. There are similarities here with the aims and design of Foundation Degrees in England.

In Piemonte, some 230 young people have been employed as Higher Apprentices in around 100 (mainly large) companies. Just over half these apprentices are employed in the services sector (in ICT, administration and finance), a third are in the metals and steel sector (especially the automotive industry), and the remainder are in the health and social care sector. The initiative is part of a wider reform of Italy's apprenticeship system, which started in 2003. The regulation of the training aspects of the Higher Apprenticeship has been delegated to Regional Councils in agreement with the social partners, universities and training institutions. Members of the Peer Review team visited the Polytechnic of Turin which has joined forces with General Motors Powertrain, Bosch and Fiat to run a Higher Apprenticeship.

The initiative was regarded as innovative by the Peer Review team because it was attempting to apply the characteristics of apprenticeship as a model of learning to degree courses from which employers were keen to employ graduates. This required many team members to think about apprenticeship in a different way, as in most countries apprenticeship is seen as a pathway that is completely separate from higher education. In a forthcoming research paper (to be co-published by LLAKES and SKOPE), Professor Alison Fuller and I will examine the relationship between higher education and apprenticeship in the UK.

LLAKES Research Programme

Strand 1: Models of Lifelong Learning and the Knowledge Society

(Leader: Germ Janmaat; with Roger Dale, Andy Green, Sue Hallam, Bryony Hoskins, Magdalini Kolokitha, Tom Leney, Walter McMahon, Tarek Mostafa, Moses Oketch, John Preston, Hugh Starkey and French CNRS partners)

Strand One uses mixed-method comparative analysis to investigate the effects of different models of lifelong learning on economic competitiveness and social cohesion across OECD countries. The research will identify the characteristics of lifelong learning systems and analyse how these interact with labour markets and welfare systems to generate the national patterns of skills and income distribution which underpin different regimes of competitiveness and social cohesion.

Project 1.1: Equality and Inequality in Lifelong Learning

(Leader: Andy Green)

Project 1.2: Analysis of Macro-Social Data on Educational Inequality, Income Inequality, Social Cohesion and Competitiveness

(Leader: Andy Green)

Project 1.3: Experiencing Inequality

(Leader: Bryony Hoskins)

Project 1.4: School Ethnic Mix and Social Attitudes

(Leader: Germ Janmaat)

Project 1.5: Europe, Higher Education and Regionalism

(Leader: Roger Dale)

Strand 2: Regenerating City-Regions: Learning Environments, Knowledge Transfer and Innovative Pedagogy

(Leader: Lorna Unwin, with Kate Bishop, Alison Fuller, David Guile, Fumi Kitagawa, Geoff Mason, Sadaf Rizvi and Susan Robertson)

Strand Two focuses on regeneration, learning, communities and economic sectors in city-regions in the UK. It does this through investigating various geographical, educational and economic sites which provide research 'windows' onto the complex relationships involved in skills generation, innovation and transfer. Activity at the FE/HE interface is a major area of inquiry.

Project 2.1: Cultural Quarters: Small Businesses, Self-Employment, and Innovation

(Leader: David Guile)

Project 2.2: Retail Parks: Worker Identity, Aesthetic Labour and the Youth Labour Market

(Leader: Alison Fuller)

Project 2.3: Innovation, Knowledge Transfer, and the Role of Higher Education

(Leader: Geoff Mason)

Project 2.4. Industrial Competitiveness, Social Inclusion and the Upskilling of Older Workers

(Leader: Geoff Mason)

Project 2.5: The Higher and Further Education Marketplace

(Leader: Susan Robertson)

Strand 3: Life Chances and Learning Throughout the Life Course

(Leader: Karen Evans, with Helen Cheng, Natasha Kersh, James Mitchell, Rebecca Riley, Ingrid Schoon, Justin van de Ven, Edmund Waite and Martin Weale)

Strand Three focuses on the micro level using longitudinal data to analyse the ways in which lifelong learning affects the individual life course and how people manage risk.

Project 3.1: Education-Employment Transitions

(Leader: Ingrid Schoon)

Project 3.2: Adult Basic Skills, Workplace Learning and Life Course Transitions

(Leader: Karen Evans)

Project 3.3: Economic Experience in Working Life

(Leader: Martin Weale)

LLAKES Research Papers

These are the details of the LLAKES Research Papers published to date; several more are in the pipeline. To download full versions of these papers, and to keep up-to-date with new LLAKES Research Papers, please visit www.llakes.org.

Regimes of Social Cohesion

Andy Green, Germ Janmaat and Christine Han

This paper explores the different meanings of social cohesion in historical and contemporary societies and identifies some different 'regimes of social cohesion', and their characteristics, that can be found in western and east Asian societies. It adopts a mixed-method and interdisciplinary approach, drawing on the literatures in comparative historical sociology and comparative political economy, and using both qualitative, logical comparative methods, and quantitative statistical analysis.

Questioning the Simplistic Link between Qualifications and Labour Market Entry: New Forms of Expertise and Learning in the Creative and Cultural Sector

David Guile

The paper questions the link that policymakers assume exists between qualifications and access to employment in the creative and cultural (C&C) sector. It: (i) identifies how labour market conditions in the C&C sector undermine this assumption and how the UK's policy formation process inhibits education and training (E&T) actors from countering these labour market conditions; and (ii) demonstrates how non-government agencies – 'intermediary organisations' – are creating new spaces to assist aspiring entrants to develop the requisite forms of 'vocational practice', 'social capital' and 'moebius-strip' (i.e. entrepreneurial) expertise to enter and succeed in the sector. It concludes by identifying a number of: (i) new principles for the governance of the national E&T sector; (ii) pedagogic strategies to facilitate 'horizontal' transitions into and within the C&C sector; and (iii) skill formation issues for all E&T stakeholders to address.

The Anatomy of Inequalities in Achievements: An International Investigation of the Effects of Stratification

Tarek Mostafa

This paper studies the mechanisms of stratification and inequalities in achievements. The main objective is to determine how stratification leads to unequal educational outcomes and how inequalities are channelled through student characteristics, school characteristics and peer effects. On the one hand, a descriptive analysis is used to shed light on the education systems of the five selected countries and to provide insight into the functioning of stratification. The countries are Japan, the UK, Italy, Germany and Finland, and the used dataset is PISA 2003. On the other hand, a multilevel econometric model is elaborated in order to quantify the effects of student, school and peer characteristics on performance scores. The results on the regressions are then interpreted according to the institutional context of each country. Moreover, in the last section, policy implications, based on the regression results, are derived.

Forthcoming LLAKES Events

Tuesday 24 November 2009

Dr Bryony Hoskins (Institute of Education) and Professor John Preston (University of East London)

Public Seminar: A just world? The impact of young peoples' perceptions of social inequalities in education on the learning of active citizenship

15.00-17.00, Committee Room 1, Institute of Education

Thursday 3 December 2009

Andy Westwood, Department of Communities and Local Government; OECD Forum on Social Innovations

Public Seminar: New industry, new jobs

14.30-16.30, Clarke Hall, Institute of Education

Tuesday 15 December 2009

Dr David Guile

Public Seminar: Re-thinking lifelong learning and the knowledge economy

15.00-17.00, Clarke Hall, Institute of Education

Thursday 18 March 2010

Public Debate: Who is being hit the hardest in the recession and how can social policy help?

National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Westminster

This event will be part of the 2010 ESRC Festival of Social Science.

If you wish to attend or to receive further information about these seminars, please contact Yvette Ankrah: Y.Ankrah@ioe.ac.uk.

To receive further information about LLAKES, please contact Jeremy Tayler: J.Tayler@ioe.ac.uk.

Detailed information is also available at www.llakes.org.