



WBL Update

Newsletter from the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (WBL) at the Institute of Education

AUTUMN 2005

There's more to learning than earnings

● WBL MISSION

WBL investigates the benefits gained from learning across the lifecourse and examines the impact of these benefits in the context of broader social policy. We undertake rigorous research as a basis for dialogue with a range of government departments, the research community and practitioners.

● WBL VALUES

Scope: We look to deepen understanding of the complex ways in which learning impacts upon individual health and well-being, family dynamics and community cohesion. To do this we take an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on theory and methods in sociology, psychology, public health, economics and political sciences.

Our research examines the effects of formal educational participation and learning. We also look at experiences that occur in informal learning and other contexts such as out-of-school provision for young people, institutional care and interactions within families.

Validity: Our research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, which support and test each other.

Collaboration: WBL looks to develop national and international collaborations to enrich our research and advance theoretical knowledge.

Integrity: We recognise our responsibility to ensure that our research is rigorous and trustworthy.

Objectivity: WBL is an objective research centre funded by government departments and other agencies.

Accountability: We seek to ensure academic accountability through submitting research to peer-reviewed journals and presenting at academic conferences and seminars.

Investment: We support the professional development of WBL members. To achieve this we encourage and fund staff to attend training to enhance their skills and give careful consideration to career implications when making decisions about roles on research projects, publications, conferences and networking.

CONTENTS

The schools of the future

Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes

The wider benefits of learning, what role for government?

Forthcoming WBL research

The relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes

www.learningbenefits.net

WBL spring seminar 2006

New arrivals

Welcome



Welcome to the Autumn 2005 issue of **WBL Update**. This time the discussion piece is on the development of extended schools, written by Anne Longfield, the Chief Executive of 4Children. Anne is involved in the implementation of programmes and interventions to help achieve the broad-ranging objectives of the Every Child Matters framework. She was also involved in the

WBL debate, 'The wider benefits of learning, what role for government?', which we held earlier this year. Other speakers included Frank Coffield, Ursula Howard and John Bynner. My thanks to them and to everyone who contributed to the very interesting and informative discussion from which we drew some important lessons for WBL.

Other important news from WBL includes the forthcoming special edition of the journal, *London Review of Education*, on the wider benefits of learning, based on papers presented at the WBL conference last year. In April 2005, the WBL team expanded as we recruited three new researchers, and we have also recently taken on some research associates to work part-time on our projects (see page 5). We are also carrying out work on the highly topical issue of school dinners and child nutrition.

It is a very exciting time to be involved in education research, particularly in research that places learning within a broader lifecourse context, recognising it is an important aspect of the complexity of modern society.

Leon Feinstein, WBL Director

The schools of the future

● Anne Longfield, Chief Executive of 4Children, takes a look at the potential of extended schools

New research shows that 95% of secondary schools and 87% of primary schools already provide out-of-school activities. The extended school programme will lead to all primary and secondary schools being open from 8am to 6pm over the next 5 years. By 2010 schools will effectively be redefined in their role in providing learning, and more widely within the community. The school of the future will be a dynamic hub where learning is something that benefits everybody - beyond the classroom and beyond the formal school day. The impact it will have on children, young people and communities will be huge.

The provision of extended services has the capacity to support and enhance the core teaching and learning function of schools. There is growing evidence of improving standards by removing and reducing barriers to learning with increasing recognition that some children face barriers to learning that even the best teachers cannot deal with on their own. With strong evidence supporting the wider barriers to learning - from low family income to poor diet, lack of parental involvement and low expectations to health and special needs - the potential to bring services together around the needs of young people to remove these barriers is enormous. Closer working between schools and other children's professionals can pay dividends for school standards, as well as improving outcomes for children and young people more generally.

Extended schools will bring services together around the school to provide the support that children and families need. The delivery of the core extended services by or through schools will include out-of-school activities, childcare, health and parental support. The extended school will aim to ensure that children and young people are at the centre of a network of services

which can support both their learning and general welfare.

One of the key outcomes of out-of-school activities is the increased motivation of young people in learning - important for all but crucial for those who do not engage easily in formal learning. Where pupils require support from specialist services the "swift and easy referral" to such provision can ensure that young people are able to fully engage with lessons with the minimum of disruption.

By 2010 schools will effectively be redefined in their role in providing learning

The benefits will also be felt by families - providing information and support for parents, including childcare support, allowing parents to work and increase family income. Services will also increase parents' ability to support their children's learning. The opening up of school facilities to the community will increase the opportunity for family engagement with learning opportunities which can improve the economic and general well-being of families. More broadly, the vision of an extended school at the hub of a community can be an important component in either maintaining or regenerating communities.

New opportunities will undoubtedly benefit children and young people of all ages. But it is for older children where some of the most radical changes could occur. Consistent evidence shows that young people believe that there are too few opportunities and services for them in their community. The development of extended services and activities around school has the potential to revolutionise the volume of provision - enabling all young people to have access to support near to their home. However, for many young people

the school can be an unappealing place to spend their leisure time - due to its association with rules and formality. To maximise the potential of extended schools for young people, the offer has to be different. For older children and young people the extended school must become a truly inspirational place to be.

There are some fantastic examples of extended schools which demonstrate their potential to young people. 4Children's Make Space model is one of these operating before and after school and during the school holidays. In these centres the school has worked in partnership with young people, listening and responding to their needs. There will often be a central 'hub' or 'chill out' area in the school - much like a youth club - open every day and a central and important meeting space and base. Specialist activities will take place alongside support for young people and referral to specialist services, from health to career advice, relationship advice to advice on sexual health, will be provided. Trusted adult workers are a key feature and central to the quality of the experience for young people.

Over the next 5 years, the potential is there for all schools to redefine themselves in this way. The programme of regeneration and rebuilding of school infrastructures will further enhance this change, building in new space for wider activities with children and families. Public policy makers have looked at the evidence and are convinced that an integrated approach to services is the way that children and young people will benefit most. Far from undermining the work of schools, their importance is likely to increase. However the first calls on how we define schools are being made. As part of this reconfiguration of services for children maybe we need to consider changing the way we refer to schools. Maybe schools of the future should be called children's centres?

● Discussion provides a forum for people outside WBL to voice their ideas and opinions. If you would like to contribute to the Spring 2006 discussion piece, please contact Jessica Henniker-Major at j.henniker-major@ioe.ac.uk

Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes

- The contexts in which adolescents spend their out-of-school time are important aspects of their pathways into adulthood and carry strong signals about future life chances.

This work was undertaken by WBL for the government's Strategy Unit as part of the development of an evidence base to inform government thinking on provision for young people. It examines the kinds of background and personal characteristics that predict participation. The research looks at which children are taking part in different types of age 16 leisure contexts and then considers the apparent implications of these contexts on later outcomes, measured in the same cohort at age 30.

The research is based on a preliminary analysis of the relevant data, so conclusions from the study are tentative. However, a clear finding is that the contexts in which adolescents spend their out-of-school time are important aspects of their pathways into adulthood and carry strong signals about future life chances. The report

concludes that the provision offered in these contexts is an important and hitherto under-valued and under-resourced component of the infrastructure for young people.

Structured activities at around age 16 can make a big difference to the life paths of adolescents. Yet the contexts in which young people congregate bring risks as well as opportunities. Peer group effects mean that there are unlikely to be positive long-term effects for children if no structure is provided but successful mediation of these risks can bring lasting benefits. However, it is the young people who need targeted provision and support that are most likely to be found in unstructured settings. These are precisely the settings where adult facilitation and investment is needed. Some young people will choose to engage in risky contexts and activities and will not

choose to engage in safe spaces. Yet it is the engagement of such young people in structured activities that may provide the biggest returns. From a perspective of equality of opportunity, the big policy challenge is to develop leisure settings in which young people who are most at risk of adult social exclusion will engage, while at the same time building in the elements of curriculum and structure that this analysis has identified as supportive of subsequent social inclusion.

This research is published online as a Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report by Leon Feinstein, John Bynner and Kathryn Duckworth. The full report is available at www.learningbenefits.net/publications/resrepintos/resrep15intro.htm

The wider benefits of learning, what role for government?



The panel engaged in lively debate. From left to right: Leon Feinstein, Frank Coffield, John Bynner, Ursula Howard and Anne Longfield

On 8 June 2005 WBL hosted the debate, **The wider benefits of learning, what role for government?** for members of the WBL Advisory Forum. Leon Feinstein (Director, WBL), Frank Coffield (Professor of Education, Institute of Education), John Bynner (Professor of Social Sciences in Education, Institute of Education), Ursula Howard (Director, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Institute of Education) and Anne Longfield (Chief Executive, 4Children) made up the panel. In a wide-ranging debate speakers from the panel and

the floor made a number of important contributions to the thinking and plans of WBL as we move into our new research programme. Four particular suggestions are summarised here but this is a small selection from the wider debate.

- The importance of developing reports and other publications that synthesise the research and enable it to be presented to a broader audience.
- The need for WBL's research and communications to consider the

challenges presented by the current funding climate and by policy targets for providers of adult learning.

- The importance of continuing to maintain a cross-cutting focus in WBL's work and the need to work across government departments while maintaining our academic independence and focus.
- The value of WBL's work within the wider DfES agenda relating to the Every Child Matters framework, and the importance of research engagement with the problems of volume and scale in policy implementation.

For WBL, the discussion was extremely informative and we will try to absorb the lessons in the next stages of our research. We hope to have another meeting before too long to revisit these points and enable members of our Advisory Forum to monitor our progress, make further comments and engage in wider debates on the benefits of learning.

Forthcoming WBL research

● Are those who flourished at school healthier adults? What role for adult education?

Cathie Hammond and Leon Feinstein

This research concerns the separate associations of secondary school success and adult learning with health and well-being in adulthood. School success is considered, not just in terms of examinations, but more generally in terms of the notion of flourishing, i.e. functioning well intellectually, psychologically and socially.

Our most important findings are firstly that part of the reason for inequalities in adult health and well-being is the difference between those who did and did not flourish at secondary school. Secondly, we find that both attainment and engagement at secondary school matter for adult health and well-being. Beyond any impact of qualifications, those who were more engaged at school had better adult health and well-being than those who were less engaged.

● Does education have an impact on parenting?

Ricardo Sabates and Leon Feinstein

This research focuses on the impact of women staying on in education on aspects of parenting. The research integrates literature from developmental psychology and economics to describe the theoretical foundations for the relationship between education and parenting and its importance for improving children's educational attainment. Within this context, the main aim is to provide a rigorous estimate of the effects of education on parenting.

We take advantage of the 1947 education reform as a quasi-experiment, finding that the association of staying-on rates with increased parental engagement is not the result of causal effects of extra education but rather is due to underlying related differences between those who stay on in education and those who do not. This finding illustrates the importance of education as a marker of social status but does not show that education and learning are not related to parenting, as much depends on the nature of the learning undertaken in terms of pedagogy and curriculum as well as on historical, social and cultural contexts.

● How important is maternal education? Effects on parenting and children's attainment

Kathryn Duckworth and Leon Feinstein

In this research we use longitudinal data spanning three generations to estimate the effects of mothers' education on different aspects of children's development, both in terms of the cognitive attainment and socio-emotional development of the child and also in terms of effects on parenting.

Our results suggest that there is some small effect of mother's 'staying on' in school on these outcomes, but only for younger mothers and for sons. Much of the apparent association of the level of mothers' education and child outcomes is caused by differences between mothers that precede the staying on decision, rather than by actual causal effects of staying on in school. The results highlight the importance of continuities in parenting across generations.

The relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes

On Wednesday 12 October WBL held a round table discussion with academics, policy makers and other interested parties to discuss the findings of a review of the literature across the disciplines of medicine, public health, psychology and sociology, and current policy on the relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes.

The round table, chaired by the WBL Director, Leon Feinstein, showcased the findings of the review as well as research from Pauline Emmett from the Unit of Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology at the University of Bristol, and Kathryn Bullen and Michelle Lee from the Department of Psychology at the University of Wales, Swansea.

Following presentation of the review findings by Annik Sorhaindo (WBL Research Officer), Kate Bullen and Michelle Lee presented their research on glucose and cognition and children's understanding of health education messages on diet. Dr Emmett presented her work on the quality of food eaten in schools: school dinners vs. packed lunches.

The second half of the round table was policy focused. Colin Noble, Acting Head of the National Healthy School Standard at the Health Development Agency and Pip O'Bryne, Chair of 4Children, led the discussion.

The main outcome of the event was the importance of establishing healthy eating habits in children early in life and the challenges of designing and implementing policies that engage parents and enable schools and communities to provide healthy food for children.

WBL plans to further explore these issues by analysing longitudinal data; the findings of which will be presented in March 2006.

To find out more about this project, please contact Annik Sorhaindo at a.sorhaindo@ioe.ac.uk.

www.learningbenefits.net

In September 2005, WBL launched its new website, www.learningbenefits.net. The new site includes information on current WBL research, publications, news, events, information for practitioners and links to related organisations and datasets. You can now register online to join the WBL mailing list and receive email alerts about research reports as they are published, forthcoming events and news (www.learningbenefits.net/contactWBL/register.htm). If you have any feedback regarding the usability or layout of the new site, please email info@learningbenefits.net with the subject line "website feedback".

WBL spring seminar 2006

● **THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON YOUTH ASPIRATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN SRI LANKA**

Presented by Professor Angela Little, Institute of Education and Dr Ricardo Sabates, WBL.

2pm to 4pm, 8 March 2006 in room 639, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1.

To register your attendance, please email info@learningbenefits.net

● **Abstract**

This research explores the proposition that globalisation leads to a widening of inequalities between rich and poor. Specifically it addresses changes in the aspirations of youth from different socio-economic groups for education and occupation over time in Sri Lanka.

Individual interviews were conducted in Sinhala and Tamil among youth

educated before economic globalisation, operationalised as the period prior to the policies of economic liberalisation (i.e. before 1977) and youth educated after (post 1977). The parents of contemporary youth form the sample of youth from the pre-liberalisation period, through reflections on their aspiration 'when a youth'.

The research is part of a larger study of shifts in aspirations among young people in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and China. The field evidence in Sri Lanka was collected by a team at the University of Colombo, led by Professor Siri Hettige and Nishara Fernando. Dr Ricardo Sabates has offered statistical support for the analysis.

● **Biographies**

Angela W. Little is Professor of Education (with reference to developing countries) at the Institute of Education, University of London. She has conducted research on aspects of education in Sri Lanka over the past 30 years.

Dr Ricardo Sabates is a Senior Research Officer at WBL. Whilst working for the Centre, he has been involved in projects looking at the effects of education on health, family and social outcomes. Particular investigations have focused on the effects of education on the uptake of preventative health care using cervical cancer as an example of preventative health care activity; evaluating externalities of the Educational Maintenance Allowance Programme on crime reduction at an area level; and estimating the causality of education on parenting style. He was also involved in research on the effects of adult learning on social cohesion from a cross country perspective.

This seminar is free of charge.

To receive emails about forthcoming events, please register to join the WBL mailing list at www.learningbenefits.net/contactWBL/register.htm

New arrivals



● **T. Marion Anderson, Research Officer**

Research interests include economics of education; intergenerational transmission of education; benefits of education in developing countries.

email: t.anderson@ioe.ac.uk

tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6663



● **Annik Sorhaindo, Research Officer**

Research interests include psychosocial benefits of learning on health; sexual and reproductive health; sex education in the UK; gender equity; race and ethnicity; mixing methods.

email: a.sorhaindo@ioe.ac.uk

tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6644



● **Dr Peter Stevens, Senior Research Officer**

Research interests include sociology of education; race and ethnic relations; social inequality; research methods; internationally comparative research.

email: p.stevens@ioe.ac.uk

tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6764

● **Natalie Heath, Research Associate**

Research interests include school choice; social inclusion and educational inequality; race and ethnicity; early years education.

PhD title: *Choice markets and comprehensive schools: a qualitative study of teacher and student experience*

email: natalie_heath99@hotmail.com

● **William Su, Research Associate**

Research interests include education and international development; human, financial and social capital for education.

PhD title: *The effects of human, financial and social capital on educational outcomes*

email: williamsu@hotmail.com

● **Tina Manfield, Research Associate**

Research interests include mature student participation; emotional intelligence; qualitative research methods.

PhD title: *Who needs emotional intelligence? Researching adult students' feelings and emotions whilst learning in a formal setting studying computing technology*

email: tina.goodwin@lineone.net

If you would like this newsletter in a larger font size, please contact Jessica Henniker-Major at j.henniker-major@ioe.ac.uk