



WBL Update

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

SUMMER 2007

There's more to learning than earnings

Parenting behaviours and children's development from infancy to early childhood

By Leslie Gutman

Interacting with young children and taking them to the park or to visit family and friends has a greater impact on their later development than toys. This is the central finding of a WBL study that investigated the way parents interacted with their children and assessed its effect on development from 6 months to 42 months old. It found that toys, books, and other interesting objects stimulated children when they were very young but the effects did not last. However, children whose mothers played with them, read to them and took them on outings such as to the shops and park, were found to have better social skills 12 months later. They were also better at activities such as using a pencil, knife and fork or tying shoelaces. "Toys and books have their place and do help children develop but what is important is having the parents interact with the child," the study concludes. "To have parents read to their children is much more important than having a hundred books."

Similar to previous studies, the report also found that mothers with higher education and more family income interacted more with their children and took their children on more outings. More importantly, the effect of mother-child interactions and outings on children's development was more pronounced for children of lower educated mothers. The report noted that "a good level of education is therefore not only important for the individual, but also for their family and may have effects across generations". For policymakers, targeting mothers on the basis of their educational attainment, rather than merely income or work status, might be most effective.

This report is No. 22 in the Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report Series, published in June 2007.

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New WBL co-directors

- **Ruth Lupton, a recently-appointed co-director of the WBL, describes her research interests and work with the Centre**

My work has mainly been in the field of urban studies. I am interested in changing patterns of residential segregation by social class and ethnicity, and particularly in the dynamics of low income areas. Currently I am working on two major projects - an evaluation of the government's Mixed Communities Initiative and an ESRC-funded project on school composition. I am also Director of the Institute of Education's new London Education Research Unit and Deputy Director of the Centre for Critical Education Policy Studies.

I am attracted to the WBL because of its focus on contexts for learning and on wider influences and wider outcomes, and because of its commitment to mixed methods research. Since joining the Centre, I have been working with Leon Feinstein, Tamjid Mujtaba and Annik Sorhaindo on the Smith Institute project on social housing, with Peter Stevens on his work on young people's social capital, and with Natalie Heath developing proposals to study the transition of one South London community from a social housing estate to a mixed

income neighbourhood. I am looking forward to developing a larger programme of work around the links between housing, community, residential mobility and a variety of social and economic outcomes, and to making links between my work on school context and composition and the WBL's work on learning pathways and outcomes for children from different social backgrounds. And to having a larger presence around the Centre - maybe even a desk, when we move into the new faculty!

John Vorhaus is the other recently-appointed co-director of the WBL.

John is Associate Director of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy at the IoE. Previously a research manager at the Learning and Skills Development Agency, he has taught philosophy at the Universities of Bristol and London. His ongoing research concerns the teaching and learning needs, and status, of people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities.

Discussion

Valuing the non-market and social benefits of education

● Robert Haveman and Barbara Wolfe discuss why moving beyond market-based effects of education is essential for a full evaluation of the impact of schooling on social wellbeing.

Evidence from the United States and from many other OECD countries has shown that investments in higher education yield a positive private return to the owner of the human capital. Orley Ashenfelter, of Princeton University, and his colleagues Colm Harmon and Hessel Oosterbeek reviewed a large number of studies and concluded that investments in higher education in the US yielded 6 to 9 per cent market returns. This compares favourably with returns on most private and public investments.

But the total gain from education is only partially reflected in estimates of labour market returns because they do not include the "non-market" benefits of schooling. Consider, for example, the benefits to children of having better educated parents. Moreover, the entire society may gain from what economists refer to as the "public good" aspects of schooling - the gains that all citizens experience because they live in a better-educated society. We believe these effects are large, perhaps as large as the market-based effects of education on which the traditional economic studies concentrate.

Take the hypothetical example of a young woman at, say, age 16, the earliest school-leaving age in most developed countries. She already possesses some skills. She uses this human capital to produce goods and services of value to herself and to others, in the process consuming resources. The difference between what she produces and what she consumes represents her net contribution to society, which may be positive or negative. Would it be worthwhile to society to invest in an additional year of schooling for her? The answer turns on whether her net contribution to society increases or decreases.

The tricky part, of course, is how to account for the largely intangible gains that accrue to others on top of the largely tangible gains that flow to the young woman. Individual market productivity and

non-wage labour market remuneration represent the standard private market returns. They are only a part of the story, however. Indeed, these private labour market benefits may be dwarfed by the private non-market benefits along with benefits that accrue to third parties or to society as a whole.

Relationships between one partner's schooling and the other partner's earnings, children's cognitive and emotional development, and children's health encompass the direct effect on other family members when one member gets more education. There is evidence that the better counsel and assistance in acquiring skills provided by a better-educated spouse increase the earnings of the other spouse. By the same token, the educational level of children is clearly tied to the schooling of their parents. Children of high school graduates are themselves far more likely to be high school graduates than are children of parents without a high school diploma. And when parents are schooled beyond the high school level the effect is even greater. In addition to their future earnings, children's cognitive development and non-cognitive skills are positively linked to their parents' level of education.

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Nor is the effect confined to the family. Children in communities where adults have a higher level of education are more likely to complete high school, even after other factors are taken into account.

The education of parents, particularly mothers, is also positively linked to the health of their children. Infant mortality is lower, average birth weights are higher, and preventive measures such as vaccinations

are more likely to have been taken when parents are better educated. Moreover, the effect reaches to the next generation: the teenage daughters of more highly educated parents are less likely to give birth out of wedlock.

Schooling can also increase one's own wellbeing - and these effects are not fully captured in higher earnings. Because the rewards for labour market performance do not reflect these effects, they too are excluded (at least in part) from estimates of the returns to schooling. The relationship between schooling and better health may be due to a greater range of work choices (which makes it easier to avoid hazardous occupations), or to the freedom to live in safer, less polluted, neighbourhoods. Certainly, better-educated people tend to be better informed about health and nutrition, are less likely to run health risks, and have better information on where to secure good medical care. Those with more schooling are less likely to smoke. Or, if they do smoke, are likely to smoke less: on average an additional year of schooling reduces daily cigarette consumption by 1.6 for men and 1.1 for women. More educated individuals are also less likely to be heavy drinkers, and are more likely to exercise.

Economists have been reluctant to claim this causal link, arguing that better health and longer life expectancy may reflect a third factor that "causes" both longer school attendance and better health. But the absence of any obvious candidate for the third factor and the strength of the statistical relationships between schooling and these health-related behaviours strongly suggest that education, in fact, plays an important role. Some of these health benefits may be captured in higher earnings - people who are sick less, earn more - but the non-market private gains from this relationship are clear. If nothing else, good health reduces pain and suffering as well as anxiety in response to stressful life events. It also reduces expenditures for medical care. Consider,

too, that improved health has many external benefits, inhibiting the spread of contagious disease and increasing the happiness of relatives and friends.

There are other important benefits of education. More educated individuals are more efficient at acquiring information and thus making better choices. Better-educated people also tend to be more successful in planning family size. Better-educated people on average give more time and money to charity. People with more education are more likely to save, and to save more. Those with more education more readily adjust to the technological and social changes driving contemporary society. They are also more likely to make informed choices when voting, and to participate in organisations that make communities more cohesive. Higher education among community members is linked to lower levels of social dependence and lower rates of criminal activity, especially violent crime. People with more schooling are less likely to be recipients of welfare or disability-related benefits.

These family, community and societal effects of schooling are not captured in traditional estimates of the private economic returns to education. The question is how to measure such benefits?

Based on an individual's willingness to pay (or shadow prices), we have roughly calculated the marginal value for the social components of the effects of education, using estimates from the research

literature and basic relationships observed in a market economy. The numbers are large. For example, we estimate that parents place a value of at least \$500 per year on the cognitive advantages that accrue to their children if they themselves have an additional year of schooling. Improvements in the efficiency of consumer choices generate an average of at least \$300 per year in benefits, while the lifetime value of the improvement in one's own health equals several thousand dollars. Public goods are less amenable to measurement. But incremental schooling in a community has been credited with an annual gain of about \$170 per capita in reduced policing expenditures.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the gains from all of the family, community and social benefits identified would be at least equal to the annual earnings effect of more schooling estimated in the traditional studies - that is, \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year. If so, the full social rate of return to an additional year of schooling in the US would be in the region of 14-18 per cent.

Robert Haveman is John Bascom Emeritus Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Barbara Wolfe is Professor of Economics and Population Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Director of the La Follette School of Public Affairs. Both are also members of faculty at the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

WBL new arrivals

**Emma Salter,
Research Officer**

Emma has an MA in Gender Analysis and Development from UEA and several years' experience of working with disadvantaged families and young people, predominantly in Scotland.

Her research interests include: issues affecting young people, in particular, the impact of school exclusion and young motherhood on educational futures; and the effects of domestic violence on young people in the short and longer term.

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**Nicole Andrews,
Acting WBL Administrator**

Nicole's work includes controlling administrative systems; maintaining records; acting as a central contact point; organising events; supporting the Communications team; and co-ordinating and minuting meetings.

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WBL autumn seminar 2007

● PUPILS' SENSE OF SCHOOL BELONGING: EXPLORING ITS MEANING AND RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATIONAL AND WIDER OUTCOMES IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

Presented by Peter Stevens.

Wednesday, October 31, 2007 from 12pm to 1pm, in room 101 at 55-59 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0NU. Contact the WBL on 020 7612 6291 to find out more.

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

Peter Stevens will be discussing a new study which explores how pupils define feeling part of or belonging to a school community. This study employs data from a mixed methods research project conducted in two inner-city secondary

schools. Pupils' perceptions are compared to how sense of school belonging is measured in the quantitative research literature. Furthermore, survey data collected from pupils in the participating schools are employed to explore how sense of school belonging relates to educational and wider outcomes. The conclusion discusses the usefulness of the concept "sense of school belonging" for educational research and current social policy thinking in a British educational context. Further information is available at www.learningbenefits.net/events/seminars.htm

Dr Peter Stevens is a WBL Research Officer.

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

Recently published

● Since the last issue of WBL Update, the Centre has published two more reports in the Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report Series and a discussion paper. All of these papers are available to download from: www.learningbenefits.net/publications/publications.htm

Determinants and pathways of progression to Level 2 qualifications: Evidence from the NCDS and BHPS

By Ricardo Sabates, Leon Feinstein and Eleni Skaliotis

This report describes the characteristics of people who return to learning to take Level 2 qualifications* and their pathways to progression. The research draws on two nationally representative longitudinal studies, the National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS).

Our results showed that adults who gained a Level 2 qualification were more likely than those who did not to have been engaged and relatively successful in a range of learning activities at earlier ages, including learning during childhood, staying in education during adolescence and undertaking courses leading and not leading to qualifications during adulthood. The factor that best predicts progression by age 33 and by age 42 is early school attainment. This means that for individuals who do relatively well at school there is a greater chance of achievement of qualifications

during adulthood, even when this qualification is not achieved by age 23.

We further found that socio-economic constraints in adulthood may be less of a barrier to progression than is often believed, and less influential than other factors. Of all the measures for socio-economic barriers at age 23, only employment status and socio-economic status are significantly associated with progression to Level 2. In addition, none of the socio-economic factors at age 33 analysed is significantly associated with progression between 33 and 42. Provision of learning therefore needs to take into account the existence of differing levels and sources of motivation, recognising that for some, there are significant attitudinal barriers.

Pathways to progression are extremely varied. While the majority of those who achieved Level 2 in adulthood did so by

obtaining lower-level qualifications prior to, or simultaneously with, Level 2, not all did so. In particular, it is notable that a large proportion of those achieving Level 2 from a base of no qualifications did so without obtaining any intermediate qualifications. Further, those with an existing Level 1 qualification** were more likely than their unqualified counterparts to obtain additional Level 1 qualifications prior to achieving Level 2.

This report is No. 21 in the WBL Research Report Series published in February 2007.

The equivalent of five GCSEs graded A-C.

** Anything below Level 2, i.e. (NVQ1): RSA Stage 1, CSE grades 2 to 5, other technical and business qualifications, GCSE grade D-G, Foundation GNVQ, Pitmans level 1, NVQ Level 1.

The role of youth clubs in integrated provision for young people: An assessment of a model of best practice

By Annik Sorhaindo and Leon Feinstein

Research suggests that a number of out-of-school contexts, such as youth clubs, can provide access to activities and opportunities for young people to develop personal and social skills. Current UK policy reflects the findings from this research in its aim to offer young people access to a wide range of contexts outside of school that offer structure and positive activities in safe and secure environments. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence as to what works in UK provision.

In autumn 2006, the 4Children charity commissioned a study by the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning into the experiences of young people attending integrated youth clubs.

Integrated provision means that a range of specialist services or activities are available and accessed by young people through one facility. Researchers assessed their access to support, guidance and positive activities and the perceived value of this type of provision to other stakeholders, such as youth workers, parents and community members.

The findings from this research suggest that the model of integrated provision has a positive role to play in contributing to the achievement of the government's goals for young people and successful youth work in general. From the information collected, it appears that clubs employing this model succeed at providing young people with

'someone to go, something to do and someone to talk to' and set the stage for achieving the five Every Child Matters goals. The core programme of the model of integrated provision reflects research that suggests that participation in structured out-of-school activities is associated with positive outcomes for young people. The results of this study indicate that the integrated model of provision could lead to similar outcomes for young people.

For further information on this research, contact Annik Sorhaindo at a.sorhaindo@ioe.ac.uk

[See also new discussion paper, page 6.](#)

WBL PhD study

Differences in educational achievements unpicked

Graham Hobbs, a Research Officer for the Centre for the Economics of Education, has recently completed his PhD. Graham's PhD is divided into two parts. The first part examines the effects of primary schools on children's educational achievement. More specifically, it states the assumptions needed to estimate causal school effects in non-experimental data and estimates primary school effects in four local education authorities in Avon. He finds that attending one of the top 20% of schools, compared to one of the bottom 20%, between ages 7 and 11 increases Key Stage 2 English and Maths achievement (age 11) by two-thirds of a standard deviation.

The second part investigates the causes of social class differences in educational achievement and assesses the extent to which middle-class children attend more effective schools than working-class children. In particular, it examines the effects of allocation of children to schools on social class differences in educational achievement in Avon. He finds that 7-8% of social class differences in Key Stage 2 achievement are explained by social class differences in the allocation of children to state schools between ages 7 and 11.

PhD Upgrades

Two students at the WBL who have recently achieved an upgrade from MPhil to PhD describe their work

Alex Dregan

Emotional and behavioural outcomes in adulthood for children with a public care history from the BCS70 cohort

My first upgrading paper provided an overview of the thesis. The paper started by introducing the historical and current public care context in the UK. Following the description of the thesis motivation, the specific research questions that have emerged from the literature review were presented. Next, the theoretical frameworks underlying the thesis were briefly introduced, namely, the ecological, transactional and systemic approaches to human development. Finally, the full structure of the thesis was described in order to provide the reader with a general overview. In this section the eight chapters that make up the thesis were briefly explored.

The second paper was based on a systematic review of the empirical evidence about the association between public care and developmental outcomes. In particular, the review focused on the emotional and behavioural outcomes of children with a history of public care. After a brief description of the conceptualisation of emotional and behavioural functioning, the main assumptions of the ecological, transactional and systems theories (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Sameroff, 1975) underlying the present

thesis were discussed. The research framework provided by these models was employed then to evaluate the evidence for the impact of the public care system, as a context for child development, on children's development. Findings from both cross-sectional and longitudinal designs are reviewed with the main focus being on the longitudinal multivariate evidence. Following the review, the methodological and theoretical limitations identified within existing literature are discussed. Finally, the ways in which the present thesis aims to answer these limitations were explained and the research question reiterated.

The methodology chapter introduced the methodological limitations identified within the literature review papers. The chapter moved on then to provide a general description about the thesis's methodology by offering an outline of the five studies that made up the analytical part of the thesis. The intended scope of the outline was to remind the reader about the aims of each study. Next, I have introduced the hypotheses, detailed the sampling procedures and described the public care and comparison groups. Following a description of the measurements and confounders employed in the study, I explained the procedure and the statistical analyses used. The chapter provided, however, a general description of the thesis's methodology, as each analytical chapter will elaborate further on its methodology.

For more information, contact Alex Dregan at adregan@ioe.ac.uk

Kathryn Duckworth

Foundations for success. The developing multi-dimensional abilities of the child

Within the contexts of increases in education spending, education reform, policy initiatives such as a pre-school national curriculum, and a renewed focus on national literacy and numeracy standards, how do children's abilities develop before school and through their primary years, and what are the most important early skills for their subsequent academic success?

My PhD thesis presents four studies which combine developmental, ecological and economic considerations to explore the development of children's learning throughout the early years and identify important influences in predicting educational success. Using data from three different longitudinal samples surveyed from birth, initially I explore the intergenerational transmission of educational success. In later chapters, I examine the particular contributions of children's cognitive and non-cognitive capabilities at school entry to predicting their subsequent achievement (both in childhood and adulthood).

For more information, contact Kathryn Duckworth at k.duckworth@ioe.ac.uk

Post Doctoral Research

Natalie Heath's discusses her study on the effects of school choice

I started as a WBL Post Doctoral Research Fellow in October 2006 and began working on papers from my PhD research which was a qualitative study concerned with the effects of school choice as experienced by teachers and students. I concentrated on two locales: one in the Midlands with low levels of active parental choice and one in the East of England which had high levels of choice. In November I successfully completed my viva.

I have developed a paper concerned with the very different ways in which choice was experienced in the two areas, particularly by students, identifying two distinct versions of choice, veiled and overt, and the potential policy implications of these. A second paper is concerned with the ways in which teachers in the sample schools used discourses of ability, how this was experienced by students, and differences in the way ability was used across locales. The papers are currently under review.

The research fellowship was intended to explore aspects of capital, so I have been considering the ways in which conceptions of capital relate to one another and the ways in which social capital have been

used in educational research. I am writing a discussion paper on this for WBL. I have also been working with Ruth Lupton on an evaluation for the Department of Communities and Local Government of the Mixed Communities Initiative. The initiative aims to create greater social and economic mix, and a greater mix of housing tenures in areas being regenerated. Working on this has identified lots of issues concerning the relationships between housing, regeneration, schooling and learning more widely, also the potential role of schools in regeneration. This is an area of research I am keen to develop.

As always, a year goes by far too quickly. The fellowship has given me the opportunity to work on papers, begin to develop funding proposals and gain wider research experience. The space within WBL for quantitative analysis to be considered alongside qualitative approaches and the willingness to see potential for mixed methods engagement have been particularly refreshing.

For further information, contact Natalie Heath at n.heath@ioe.ac.uk

Discussion Papers

Two further discussion papers were published online very recently. Here we present a brief outline, with further details to follow in the next issue.

Young people's health risk-taking: A brief review of evidence on attitudes, at-risk populations and successful interventions

In April 2007, the Department of Health funded the WBL to collate reviews of evidence and reports of academic research about some of the underlying causes of risk-taking behaviour among adolescents, and to identify young people most susceptible to engaging in unhealthy activities.

The resulting report provides a brief summary of current knowledge about young people and risk. It also offers some suggestions for the direction of policy in relation to youth and health in order to

ensure that the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Ten Year Youth Strategy takes into account the health needs of young people.

Leisure contexts in adolescence and their associations with adult outcomes: a more complete picture (2007)

This report examines youth club attendance, in particular the implications of attendance in combination with other forms of leisure and of attending structured versus unstructured clubs. The overall purpose of this analysis is to better understand how youth clubs and other forms of leisure can encourage positive later-life outcomes in young people.

● WBL MISSION

WBL investigates the benefits gained from learning across the life course 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 wellbeing, 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.