



Report to CYP&FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 13th November 2017

Report of: Policy and Improvement Officer

Subject: Social Market Foundation “Commission on Inequality in Education”

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Summary:

The Committee requested a briefing paper on this publication at its meeting on the 11th September 2017, with a remit to focus specifically on recommendations 1 and 6 in section 3 of this paper. For completeness, this briefing has covered all of the recommendations and it therefore provides a summary of the full publication, providing a brief analysis of the process it went through to gather this evidence.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to note the information provided and provide views and comment.

Background Papers:

- The Social Market Foundation “Commission on Inequality in Education” July 2017
- The Social Mobility Commission “Time for Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility” June 2017.

Category of Report: OPEN

The Commission on Inequality in Education

1. Background

The Social Market Foundation's main activity is to commission and publish original papers by independent academic and other experts on key topics in the economic and social fields, with a view to stimulating public discussion on the performance of markets and the social framework within which they operate.

The commission was convened in January 2016 by Nick Clegg. The other members are Rebecca Allen of Education Datalab, Suella Fernandes MP, Sam Freedman of Teach First and Stephen Kinnock MP. To produce this report, the commission reviewed the evidence on inequality in education, produced new analysis of issues where further focus was needed and consulted with stakeholders across the education system.

The Commission reported that:

“Rather than reviewing the configuration or funding of the education system, the commission has focused on the role of teachers and families. We find compelling evidence of the impact they can have on outcomes; and the differences across local areas and socio-economic circumstances both in access to teachers and the engagement of families are stark.”

2. The key findings of the report

- The performance gap between the richest and the poorest has remained persistently large between the mid-1980s and the mid-2000s, with no significant improvement.
- GCSE performance at age 16 across England reveals marked disparities between regions, with over 60% of pupils in London achieving 5 good GCSEs (including English and Maths) compared to 55% in the West and East Midlands.
- Comparing the performance of 11-year olds born in 2000 with those born in 1970 reveals that the geographic area a child comes from has become a more powerful predictive factor for those born in 2000 compared to 1970.
- While Asian students born in 1970 performed poorly, Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi-heritage children born in 1999/2000 were the best performers. White students have fallen from outperformers to under-performers on average.
- At age 11, Yorkshire & Humberside and the West Midlands have disproportionately high numbers of low-scoring pupils. By contrast, the North West and London have disproportionately high numbers of high-scoring pupils.

- The Chinese, Indian, Black African and Other Asian groups have disproportionately high numbers of high scoring pupils. The Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and other Black groups have disproportionately high numbers of low scoring pupils.
- Schools with more affluent children have 12% of teachers with more than ten years of experience while the poorest have just 7%.
- Pupils in schools serving areas of higher deprivation are much more likely to have teachers without an academic degree in a relevant subject.
- A secondary school teacher in the highest deprivation quintile school is, other things being equal, 70% more likely to leave than one at neighbouring school in the lower deprivation quintile
- In verbal reasoning tests for 11-year-olds, the median score for children with someone attending parents' evening is 3 points higher than for those without.
- On average, not reading to a child at age 5 decreases their age 11 test score by 1.5 points.
- Children that had someone at home making sure their homework was completed before undertaking other activities (such as watching TV) had scores that were 1.93 points higher than those that did not.
- Those who have a regular bedtime have a score 1.13 points higher than those that do not.

3. The recommendations made by the Commission

1. Schools in disadvantaged areas should have access to a fund for providing incentives to teachers that make housing more affordable. This should be run as a trial and the findings used to inform whether such schemes can be expanded in the future.
2. It should become a condition of gaining the headship qualification that a teacher has been in middle leadership in a school in a disadvantaged area. This would encourage experienced and aspiring teachers and school leaders to spend time in disadvantaged schools.
3. The Government should compel schools to publish data on training provision and turnover rates for early-career teachers in different schools and across multi-academy trusts. This should be produced in a standardised form so as to promote comparability and shine a light on retention and development problems.
4. The Government should plan and launch a programme of after-school "family literacy" classes in primary schools with above-average proportions of children eligible for Free School Meals. Funding for these classes should be ring-fenced within the Skills Funding Agency budget.

5. Schools should take a new approach to contracts between teachers and parents, which should be signed by both parties as equals who both have responsibilities. Teachers should commit to setting high quality homework that demonstrably improves the child's educational development and to supporting parents in helping their children; parents should commit to ensuring that this homework is completed and given due care, and to having regular contact with the school to discuss progress. Contracts should be signed in the early weeks of first attending school and renewed annually with each year's teachers as the child progresses through the school.
6. New benchmarks for independent schools to meet in order to retain their charitable status should include their provision of out-of-school activities to the children of parents who live locally. In addition, independent schools that are registered as charities should publish information on the value of any support ('public benefit') they provide to the local community, whether this takes the form of teaching support, making sports facilities available or running extracurricular activities for children from the state-maintained sector in the local area. This should be published alongside an estimate of the monetary value of the tax reliefs that the school enjoys due to charitable status.

4. Analysis

The evidence supporting these recommendations is presented in full detail in the report. As they outline, they focus on the analysis of statistical data that isn't usually done therefore resulting in findings that shed new light on a well known issue – that children from poorer backgrounds perform less well in education terms.

Their analysis of the relationship between income and the ability of children shows that a disproportionately high number – 14% of high scoring pupils - come from the richest 10% of households. Meanwhile 17% of low scoring pupils come from the poorest 10% of families.

The report also presents findings on the relationship between ethnic background and education, demonstrating that several ethnic minorities out-perform the average, but many lag behind.

Their analysis suggests that being in the top income decile rather than the bottom income decile increases a child's expected score by about 0.9 – for example, it takes the expected score from being average to being high ability. This is after taking into account other effects such as region and ethnicity. Doubling family income adds around 0.3 to the expected score. In other words, parental income was the most significant predictor of the results for children born in 2000: having relatively high-paid parents is the biggest boost to results.

For this reason the Commission identifies the following:

“The scale of the inequalities identified above and their persistence over time are the motivation for the commission's work. The two factors to which we give the highest importance are family income and place. Family income has

retained a large role in a child's prospects, with little evidence of that role diminishing over time. The region in which a child grows up has appears to have grown over time. These two features of inequality interact. Differences in income in our country have a very strong regional and local dimension."

The Commission explains their decision to prioritise the role of teachers for two reasons:

- high quality teaching matters
- the distribution of teachers across the country may help to understand why young people living in poorer areas are doing less well in education than others.

The Commission explains this as follows:

"Rather than assuming that young people with these backgrounds have lower aspirations or lower ability, or that they need special help or a different curriculum to help them, we test the hypothesis that it is inequality in their access to teachers which leads to the inequality in their attainment. Fix that, and we will create a better future for them."

Their analysis demonstrates that schools serving lower income communities are more likely to have teachers that do not have a formal teaching qualification; if their teachers are qualified then their qualifications are new; their teachers have less experience of teaching; are more likely to be without a degree in the subject they are teaching; and teacher turnover is higher too.

Finally the Commission turns its attention to the issue of parental engagement, determining that it has the greatest impact when it occurs early. Their analysis shows that indicators of parental engagement e.g. attending parents' evenings, are positively correlated with higher verbal reasoning scores at age 11.

5. Social Mobility

The Social Mobility Commission also published a report in June 2017 which provided an assessment of policies on Social Mobility between 1997 and 2017. This was the focus of the South Yorkshire Futures Launch event which picked out 10 graphs to illustrate these points. The cross over between these issues and the findings of the Social Market Foundation publication is striking, with five of these graphs/findings delivering the same messages:

- 5.1 Child development equality has flatlined
- 5.2 If your parents are not highly educated, you receive less child development time
- 5.3 There is still a big gap between rich and poor children at school
- 5.5 Good school leadership is linked to location and deprivation

6. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the information provided. It should be noted that the work of the commissions are targeted predominantly at national policy level. There is no programme of work being undertaken locally to tackle this specifically, nevertheless there are indicators that the analysis is feeding into the work of professionals locally, for example the work by the South Yorkshire Futures Project.