Beyond Current Horizons

technology, children, schools and families

Social class and education: changes and challenges

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Introduction

This report will present scenarios relating to social class and education over the next 40 years. In order to do so, the first half of the report will establish the knowledge we have about social class and education in Britain and will report on the most recent research on the topic. The second section seeks to extrapolate scenarios from current trends.

The report begins by outlining a model of the social class, education and labour market relationship. It will be used as a framework for reporting on the best theories and empirical evidence we have currently, and to extrapolate from this to the scenarios. The model comprises two related parts: the first concerns the changing nature of the classed family and its relationship to education. The second concerns the relationship between educational achievement and the labour market. One of the fallacies associated with the relationship between educational achievement and social mobility is that there is a clear relationship between them, in that if students achieve in education they can expect to be upwardly mobile. Goldthorpe and Jackson (2007) have noted that several leading politicians have made this error. There are two reasons why the relationship is not straightforward. Firstly, the positional competition theory for credentials, means that it may be extremely difficult for disadvantaged students to compensate for the advantage that professional middle class students retain through a range of strategies documented by Ball (2003). In other words, however well disadvantaged students improve in terms of educational achievement, it does not follow that this will lead to similar improvements in upward social mobility. Secondly, upward mobility depends not only on the performance of individuals but also occupational structure. If there is an expanding number of middle class jobs, as there was after the Second World War, then it is possible for working class students to be upwardly mobile. If, however, there is no change in the number of middle class positions in the occupational structure or indeed they are declining, then it follows that middle class students would have to be demoted for working class students to be promoted. This is not a particularly appealing prospect for politicians.

In the post war period politicians could see education as the route to upward social mobility because the occupational structure created the demand for able working class students. However, if these conditions no longer remain it is likely that the positional competition for credentials will intensify.

Keywords: competition, occupations, education, class

The Family, Social Class, Income and Educational Achievement[1]

Typically, in class analyses, the underlying variables that link the family, income and education are those of power and culture. Power in this respect has three dimensions: power over others, the degree of autonomy that it confers at work, and the power that accrues at home through disposable income and wealth. Culture refers to the kinds of processes and practices within the home that enable children to achieve at school. When a degree of power and culture combine parents are given the confidence to influence their children's learning at school.

In the study of the intergenerational transmission of class advantage Esping-Andersen (2006) observes that social inheritance has been calculated according to educational, occupational or social class criteria in the field of sociology on the one hand and earnings or incomes in the field of economics on the other. However, previous research into the relationship between both sets of indicators have suggested the two to be highly correlated with each other (Wright, 1979; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) Therefore according to Esping Andersen:

"In reality the difference of focus matters very little since the main mobility variables, income or occupational destiny, are pretty much two sides of the same coin." (p399)

However, this conflation of key variables is problematic when it comes to explanations of how social class (dis)advantage is reproduced. It is therefore necessary to disentangle the two indicators of occupation and income, for three reasons. The first concerns the theoretical position outlined by Nash (see especially his 2006 paper). For Nash, it is family cultural resources, particularly reading, that are germane to future educational performance. Here social class is translated into a particular cultural orientation. The material basis in terms of income, although not dismissed, is downplayed. The second and perhaps clearest argument by Mayer (1997) is that it is the culture of parents in poverty and the nature of their parenting, rather than income, which explains the relationship between class and school performance. Finally, as we shall see, this debate is of particular importance with respect to policy interventions relating to increased upward mobility.

Key to these policy interventions is the income that the state provides both for low income working families and for non-working families. There has, therefore, been a

[1] The account given here needs to be understood on the basis of the notion of stylised 'facts'. The data are drawn from various studies and official statistics in which both the categories of eg social class may be understood differently, and, in relation to some of the official statistics, especially in relation to free school meals, there are problems which are referred to in the text. Note also Gorrard's (2008) account of statistics relating to wider participation. When various data sources provide similar analyses these can be taken as being more robust.

blurring of the boundaries between those in work and those unemployed which makes, despite the caveat entered above, explanations for educational inequality problematic.

The early 21st century (New Labour) government's strategy for reducing child poverty is largely focussed on raising the income of those in poorly paid work through, amongst other policies, working tax credits (WTC). These are given to families where one adult is in low paid work. In 2005, for example, a couple or lone parent with one dependent child under 11 and a gross annual income of up to about £13,500 would have been eligible for WTC, although those with higher incomes would also be eligible if they were paying for childcare, or were disabled, or working more than 30 hours per week, or if they had more children.

It is important therefore that both questions of income, power and culture are considered when discussing socially classed families. In what follows we present an account of the stylised facts associated with social class and inequality in educational achievement through approximately the first twenty years of education. Possible explanations for them are then explored. In turn this sets the framework for considering scenarios that include ideas about lifelong learning. The evidence relating to inequality is variable in terms of its warrant. In particular the dominant measure of disadvantage, Free School Meals, is an unreliable indicator and should be understood in that light for the reasons given below. Where possible we report analyses that have examined inequalities in terms of social class.

The Early Years

Feinstein (2006) looked at the achievement scores in school tests of children of different SES backgrounds in order to chart the patterns of achievement over time from the ages of 22 months to 118 months. He used the Registrar General's six fold 1966 Classification of Occupations in using social economic status (SES), as indicated from parental occupation, as a proxy for social class.

He was interested in comparing the educational achievements of children at the top and bottom of the socio-economic scale. The results from this analysis were quite startling in showing a positive correlation between class and attainment. Even at 22 months, it was significant that the gap between the top and bottom SES groups was already 13 percentage points in the distribution of children from 0-100. However, what is perhaps more surprising is the shift in position in the distribution of attainment across the four points of comparison (22 months, 42 months, 60 months and 118 months) for two of the four subgroups. This is illustrated in Figure 1. As might be expected the high SES high attaining sub-group occupied the highest position in the overall distribution and maintained a position around the 70th percentile at 42 months, 60 months and 118 months. Similarly the low SES low attainment sub-group maintained a steady position as the lowest attaining of the groups with an average distribution at the 28th percentile. However, whilst these two groups remained fairly static in the distribution, the shift in positional attainment of the high SES low attaining and low SES high attaining was dramatic. Whereas the low SES high attaining sub-group started with an average attainment which put them at the 86th percentile at age 22 months, this had dropped significantly by 118 months (aged 10 years) so that their average position in the distribution was in fact lower than the middle point in the distribution, attaining only at the 47th% percentile. On the other hand the low attaining high SES group had risen significantly up the attainment distribution from the 27th percentile ages 22 months to reach a positional average at the 57th percentile aged 118 months (10 years), thus overtaking the high attaining low SES sub group by 10 percentage points.

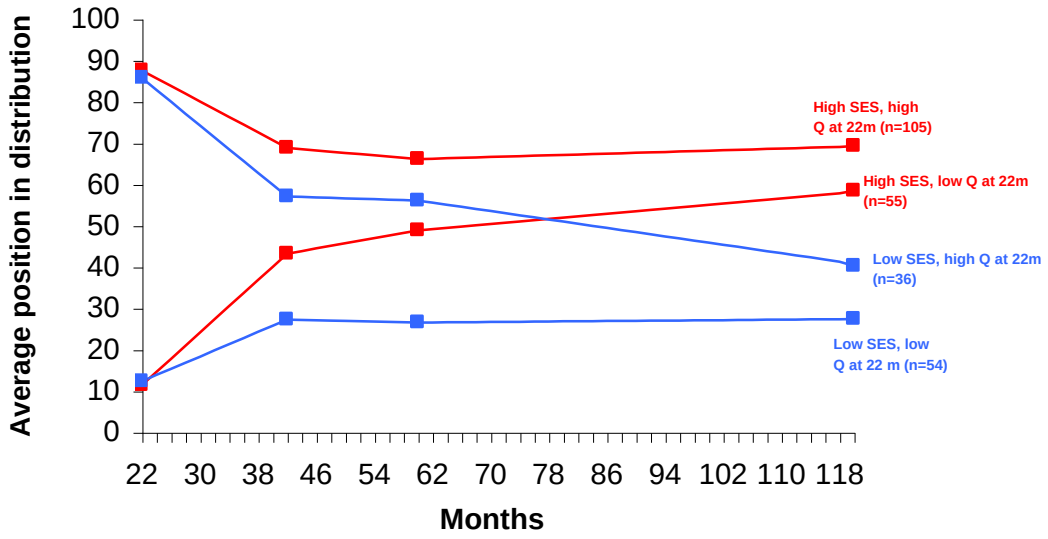

Figure 1.

These findings clearly illustrate that ability (at least in terms of the way it translates to national measures of child development) is not fixed but, to the contrary, malleable from a very early age. The implications of this can be inextricably tied to discussions upon the point in which interventions are best positioned so as to redress such social inequalities, an issue which leads Feinstein to speculate:

"policy that waits until children reach adulthood before it attempts to redress social class inequalities will be dealing with a bolted horse" (413)

The benefits of investing in early years education is backed up by recent research into the impact of skill deficiency correction. This suggests that any attempts later in life to redress skill-deficiencies will be ineffective without sufficient motivational or cognitive resources to underpin them. According to developmental psychologists this begins in early childhood with the period between the ages of nought to six being a key period for learning the basic skills associated with learning. (Danziger and Waldfogel, 2000; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997**).** However, as discussed in the scenarios early years interventions on their own are not likely to have a major impact.

Primary School

It will be clear from the above that by the time pupils enter primary school there are already marked class differences. This is borne out by the one recent study to include social class variables in looking at student progress in primary schools (Lauder, Kounali, Robinson and Goldstein, 2008). It shows significant differences by social class on baseline scores in reading and maths. The family's social class and income were found to have a significant impact on both Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) test performances in year 3, after adjusting for prior achievement and other factors. In addition, the economic indicators of home renting and receipt of working tax credit were found to have a significant impact on the reading test – but not on the maths test. The penalty for working class students when compared to those from professional backgrounds equates to almost a 0.6 standard deviation penalty in the QCA3 reading test once all other factors had been taken into account. The overall conclusion of this study was that social class has a pervasive and ongoing effect on student progress.

However, it should be noted that children from single parent families did not suffer a penalty. Single parenthood is often identified as an obvious characteristic of students who are not progressing well but the explanation for their achievement is to be found in their social and economic disadvantage, not the family structure.

In the following 'class' disadvantage is reported using the proxy of Free School Meals (FSMs). However, one of the problems with the discussion of class differences in primary education is that FSMs are an indicator of disadvantage in that they do not represent all those that are disadvantaged. Moreover there is considerable change in the eligibility of families with respect to FSMs (Kounali, Robinson, Goldstein and Lauder, 2008). It is therefore important to view the data presented as a rough proxy. The Hampshire study looked at pupil progress up to the end of year 3. For the period of schooling between Key Stage 2 and GCSEs the data on inequality relies heavily on the FSM measure.

At Key Stage 2, 11 year old pupils eligible for FSMs are twice as likely as non FSM children to fail to achieve the defined 'basic standard' (level 4) at Key Stage 2 in either literacy or numeracy. In English this amounts to just over 40% FSM boys in contrast to 20% non FSM. For girls the figures are 30% and 13%. In Maths the figures are, respectively, 38% and 19% for boys and 40% and 21% for girls. There are ethnic differences in these categories. For example, white pupils are more likely to fail to achieve the expected level at KS2 than those of Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African or Caribbean heritage.

These data suggests that as well as differences in achievement with respect to disadvantage there are other factors involved in pupil performance relating to gender and ethnicity.

Secondary School

Between KS2 and GCSEs there seems to be a considerable drop in the performance of pupils eligible for FSMs. A report from the Sutton Trust (2008) found that two thirds of the top performing FSM pupils at KS2 are not among the top performers taking GCSEs. They note, however, that there is a significant wastage of non FSM pupils where 42% of the top performing 20 per cent of pupils at KS2 are not among the top 20% at GCSE. These data need to be treated with some caution because it is assumed that the skills tested at 11 provide a platform for the skills tested at 16. Notwithstanding this point, these data will account for the 25% of boys and approximately 17% of girls who are FSM eligible who do not achieve five or more GCSEs. The comparator figures for non FSM eligible are 9% and 5%.

We should also see these data in the context of educational policy. The combination of high stakes testing and parental choice has lead many schools to take the option of buying out of school places for pre-16 students who have not done well within the exam system. In part this may explain why there appears to be wastage among pupils who have been FSM-eligible. To our knowledge there has been no systematic research undertaken on this issue but the practice appears widespread and is the 'logical' consequence of a market system in which schools are judged according to league tables. As indicated above the difficulty with these data are that FSM is not a good measure of disadvantage and, moreover, lumping all other students into the category of 'non-FSM' tells us very little about the crucial class differences within this group.

Fortunately, social class data is available for GCSEs from two sources: Raffe et al (2006) and Goldthorpe et al (2007). Raffe et al (2006) report that between 1986-1998/9 the percentage of students from professional and managerial backgrounds gaining 5 A-C

grade passes at GCSE increased in England from just under 50% to 70%. For working class students the figures were approximately 12% to 30%. Goldthorpe et al (2007) have a longer time frame with data from 1974-2001. For what they call the salariat class (roughly equivalent to the professional and managerial class) for students considered to have achieved sufficiently at GCSE to progress to A-level, the figures for this period are 51%-77%. For the working class the figures are 17% to 40%. However, for the working class, the increase was greatest in the period between 1974 and 1986 (16%), with only a 7% increase between 1986 and 2001.

Higher Education

It is clear from these data that there has been a significant improvement in the educational achievement of working class pupils. However, the gap between them and their professional and managerial counterparts has remained relatively constant: it has increased in the Raffe et al study by 2% and decreased by 5% in the Goldthorpe et al study. In a separate study, Goldthorpe (2007), following Boudon, has made the distinction between primary and secondary effects to explain class differences in achievement. Primary effects are those relating to family resources and early childhood socialisation, secondary effects relate to choices that are made later in a child's educational career. He has established that secondary effects are strong in explaining the relationship between GCSE success and the choices made by working class students not to pursue A-levels and hence take the opportunity of access to higher education. He concludes that secondary effects account for between a quarter and a half of the class differences in the choices made with respect to A level. A recent report by The Sutton Trust (2008) has also highlighted the attrition rates of high achieving pupils between school and university, estimating that some 60,000 high achieving pupils at ages 11,14, or 16 do not subsequently go to university. However, in contrast to the Goldthorpe (2007) study The Sutton Trust study focuses on exclusion on the basis of test achievement.

As regards Higher Education, Raffe et al (2006) found that in England there was some narrowing of inequalities with respect to A-level achievement and higher education participation.[2] Moreover, once disadvantaged students have achieved A-levels their chances of attending university are almost equivalent of that of non-FSM students (The Sutton Trust, 2008). In England, approximately 30% of entrants to full time university courses come from the families of lower supervisory and technical, semi-routine and routine workers (HESA, 2008) However, we need to look more closely at the issue of which universities students from different social class backgrounds attend. This is because as the university sector has grown so there has been greater differentiation in terms of reputation. In turn this has occasioned a debate about the relationship between the type of university attended and future life chances. Research by Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2007) suggests that multi-national companies with some exceptions tend to recruit only from what they consider to be the elite universities in any country. There is research which shows that the type of university attended has a significant impact on future earnings. Hussain, McNally, and Telhaj (2008) found that the wages of graduates from top ranked universities were twice as high as those from institutions ranked towards the bottom of university league tables.

Recent figures for the socio-economic profile of UK universities show that those from the upper end of the socio-economic scale dominate elite universities. For example, the university with the highest percentage of students from top socio-economic backgrounds (band 1, 2 and 3) was Oxford with 90.2% followed by Cambridge with 88.5%. These

[2] See also Gorard (2008).

are followed by some of the top ranked non Oxbridge universities including Bristol (85.7), Durham (85.2%) and Warwick (82.6%). In contrast those who attract the most working class students include the new universities such as Wolverhampton (51.3%), Bradford (49%), Sunderland (48%) and Greenwich (46.4%)[3] Not surprisingly there is a relationship between type of school attended and access to the elite universities. For example, in 2006/7, the University of Cambridge recruited 58% of its students from the state sector, Oxford 53%, Bristol 63%, and the London School of Economics 66%. In contrast, many of the 'new' universities recruited over 95% of their students from state schools: The Universities of East London and Greenwich, for example recruited some 95% of their students from state schools. Of course many of those from elite state schools may also come from privileged backgrounds. Power, Edwards, Whitty and Wigfall (2003) report that in 1998/99, 70% of students in seven of the top universities were drawn from professional and managerial backgrounds. Moreover, they also note that working class students who may be eligible to apply to Oxbridge by dint of their A-level scores did not do so: this is another example of a secondary effect at work in the HE sector.

These data suggest that as the higher education sector has expanded so it has also become more differentiated by social class. While it appears that there has been some improvement in access to the HE sector for working class students, it does not follow that educational achievement will be translated into upward social mobility. It may be that employers are getting better qualified workers to do sub-graduate work more effectively. To see whether this is the case we need to turn to the data on social mobility.

Educational Achievement and Social Mobility

We noted above that Esping-Andersen considered it legitimate to conflate the various ways of measuring social mobility. For some purposes that may be legitimate, however, if we want to understand the mechanisms which determine social class mobility then it is important to distinguish between the two ways in which social mobility has been measured either by occupational mobility or by earnings. The distinction is important because it points to different mechanisms and processes determining changes in the labour market. They may not be mutually exclusive processes. The question is: what happens when educational qualifications for all classes are rising?

With respect to changes in the occupational structure, Goldthorpe and Jackson (2007) compared the 1985 and 1970 longitudinal cohorts in terms of intergenerational mobility, and found that rates for both men and women have remained constant. They also found that there seemed to be less chance of long range mobility in either direction as, for example, between high grade professionals and managers and the unskilled. In their view the key to understanding these findings is that in the post war period more professional and managerial occupations were created, enabling an increase in upward social mobility, whereas that is no longer the case.

Turning to earnings, Blanden, Gregg and Machin (2005) start with the finding that there has been a significant increase in disadvantage in earnings between rich and poor males between boys born in 1958 and 1970. Given this decline in earning mobility they ask what role education has played? The number of poorer students staying on at school post-16 has increased. However, when they looked at degree completion at age 23, by parental income, educational inequality had risen in the period studied. The poorest

[3] These data are taken from HESA.

income groups increased their graduation rates between 1981 and the late 90s by 3% but graduates of the richest 20% increased theirs by 26%. In examining the role of income as opposed to educational attainment they found a small independent effect for income. However Ermisch and Francesconi, found a significant added effect for income for wealthy parents on their children's educational attainment and subsequent income when compared to the effect of average income on children's earnings (2002).

An overview of social mobility in contrasting countries suggests that it has either remained constant or declined in Britain and the United States, with education not being able to overcome disadvantage. This is in contrast to the Nordic countries where education has been able to interrupt the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage.

Given that the balance of research findings suggest that there have been small but important improvements in the educational achievement of working class students, how can the social mobility results be explained? In order to do so we need to understand more about recent changes in the labour market. If we look first at earnings, it is quite possible that for many they will be lower than in previous generations despite being classified as in the same occupation. There is strong evidence of polarisation of income within occupations such that there has been something of a decoupling between wages and occupations as previously understood. We can see this most clearly in understanding the way professions have been restructured to enable a small group of 'winners' at the top of the profession (Mouzio and Ackroyd, 2005). Changes in the professions provide a clear example at the top end of the income parade but it is also the case that for a range of reasons many low skill high earning jobs no longer exist, leading to the polarisation of the income parade. This brings us to the question of the occupational structure.

Where the occupational structure is static or the number of jobs in each occupation is declining yet educational qualifications are rising, this suggests over qualification with many graduates working for lower wages because the jobs previously within the occupational structure are no longer there. Brynin (2002) has suggested that many graduates are now employed in non-graduate work because they perform better than non-graduates in, for example, the flexibility of the work they undertake while not being asked to engage in what may be considered distinctively graduate work requiring initiative and the opportunity to make key decisions.

One of the more recent structural changes in inequality relate to families in poverty. In part this is to do with changes in family structure and in part with changes in the labour market. In the next section we focus on the issues associated with poverty and educational achievement because at least on one of the scenarios we present we can expect greater levels of poverty and child poverty in the future, notwithstanding Bradshaw's (2000) optimism.

Social Class, Family Structure, and Poverty.

Approximately 25% of children are classified as living in poverty in the UK. And while there has been a considerable effort made by New Labour to reduce child poverty it is still very high by international standards. Moreover, there is a strong association between poverty and educational performance, as the study by Feinstein (2006) shows.

These powerful data patterns raise the question of why the proportion of pupils in poverty is so high in the UK. It has been well established that child poverty is not so much a function of family structure, eg single parent families but of such families in relation to labour market participation (Bradbury, Jenkins and Micklewright, 2001;

Bluestone and Rose, 1997). It is significant that there is substantially less child poverty in the Nordic countries because high quality ECE is provided alongside job opportunities, with a high proportion created by the state for single parents. In turn this has led to greater opportunities for upward social mobility than in Britain (Moss, 1990; Esping-Andersen, 2006). Ultimately this raises the question of what contributions to society are to be recognised in terms of status and financial reward. This issue turns attention to the particular form of market individualism that underlies some of the fundamental changes in education. In the Nordic countries redistribution through taxation is used as a way of ensuring a collective responsibility for the raising of the next generation. In a study comparing national attitudes towards the statutory parental leave scheme in Sweden and company Career Break schemes in the UK. Moss (1990) interviewed a personnel manager in a large multinational company who articulated this concept of inter-dependency most succinctly in expressing her support for paid parental leave which he felt best encapsulated the collective national attitude towards the state's provision of ECE;

"Sweden needs children, a next generation. I have no children, but if I want to get old comfortably, I need other people to have children." (Moss, 1990, p160).

From this discussion we can see the issue of child poverty at two levels. The first concerns the issue of individualism. This can be seen as influencing both the nature of family structures and the state's social and economic responses to these changes, which in turn have an influence on families. With respect to family structure, Carnoy (2000) has charted the changing nature of family structures across eight countries. Whilst significant differences remain in living arrangements within the respective countries, findings show that the traditional family is on the decline. Households headed by single parents had increased across the board, albeit at varying rates. Compared to the rest of Europe, Britain had one of the highest high rates of lone parenthood and divorce as well as the highest rate of teenage births in Western Europe, 90% of which are outside marriage (Bradshaw, 2000). The literature shows lone families to be amongst the poorest social groups in Britain; specifically women from working class are the group most likely to become lone parents. (Rowlingson and McKay, 1998; Kilkey and Bradshaw, 2001).

The state's response to lone parent households is to encourage, typically mothers, back into the labour market by providing early childhood care and education. However, in the British context, as opposed to the Nordic, there are at least two problems with this policy, all of which bear on the debate over the influence of poverty on educational achievement. Firstly, the standard of early childhood care is variable. For example, a recent Oftsed report noted that in deprived areas 47% of child care was not good enough. Secondly, the nature of the flexible labour market in Britain means that those entering work with few qualifications are unlikely to be provided with further training or the opportunity for education. Most training is undertaken at the higher skill end of the market (Brown, Green and Lauder, 2001). In turn this means that those lone parents are unlikely to escape poverty for long. Here it should be noted that some 54% of children in poverty live in families where at least one person is in paid employment (Toynbee and Walker, 2008).

The differences in the state's approach to single headed households in the Nordic countries and Britain casts some light on the debate about the relationship of poverty to educational achievement. Earlier we noted that there had been a debate about the relationship in which Mayer (1997) had concluded that the fundamental problem lay with poor parenting that did not establish the routines and motivations for children to succeed at school. In contrast Nash (2006) has argued that it is to do with the processes and practices relating to reading in the early years within the framework of access to wider resources, including income. Given the greater role that education plays in intergenerational mobility in the Nordic countries, one inference to be drawn is that

where the parent(s) have a rewarding job and there is good early childhood education, then families can break out of poverty. The reason for this may not be hard to find: it is not just the extra financial resources, although they are important (Ridge, 2002) but also the hope that improving family circumstances can create a view of a future in which educational and other forms of achievement seem possible. This can be compared with the account of deprivation and educational disaffection in Rotherham that Charlesworth (2000) provides.

Underlying this question is that of the reciprocal relationship between the nature of the labour market and family structure. Carnoy (2000) argues that the flexible labour market enables men and women greater opportunity to combine work and child-rearing. In this sense it can be seen to increase family choice in boosting collaborative family earning potential, although this comes at a price. However, the negative impact of the flexible work market includes the demand that workers must work harder and for longer in jobs that are highly insecure. Furthermore the level of 'choice' the family is able to assert over work is rendered problematic by the lowered value of workers' time. A study by Bluestone and Rose (1997) showed that in the late 1970s and 1980s the average wages of men fell. However the financial impact of this upon families was cushioned by the proportion of full-time wives and mothers who moved to full time employment, resulting in a marginal rise in family income.

Social Class, Family Structure, and Mobility

One of the consequences of family break up and the flexible labour market is that poor families are highly mobile. This is the case in Britain and the United States (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; GOA, 1994; Lauder et al, 1994). It has also been established that the consequence is that as the children of mobile families move schools so they suffer penalties (Goldstein, Burgess and McConnell, 2007; Pribesh and Downey, 1999). However, very little research has concerned the experience of mobility from the specific perspective of children from low-income families. But a recent ongoing study of the experiences of low-income pupils between the ages of 10 and 14 has shown that pupils whose lives have been turbulent do not fully integrate into school life (Brown, 2008). Rather these children can be seen to suffer isolation in either the formal or informal spheres of school, and in some cases across both. This can be understood in relation to the difficulty in assimilating into the culture of the receiving school, resulting in an inability to bridge successfully between the home and school life (Putnam, 2000). Turbulent pupils can be seen to experience anxiety in relation to forming lasting social friendships and lack trust in relation to peers and teachers. This can also have knock on effects in terms of progress in formal learning outcomes. Under these circumstances, the provision of ECE is unlikely to be an adequate response. The research suggests that family mobility is often associated with trauma such as divorce or separation and that these may have a lasting effect on children (Manski et al., 1992; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Wadsworth et al., 1990) and emotional well-being (Amato and Keith, 1991; Aro and Palosaari, 1992; McLeod, 1991). With a growing divorce rate in Britain and elsewhere it is interesting that less attention has been given to the effect that divorce may have upon intergenerational family roles particularly in relation to turbulent families. For example, for one low income child in the Brown (2008) study, a grandmother acting as school governor had a far greater input into the child's educational development and schooling experience than either of her parents. This prompts consideration of intergeneration family members as co-educators of children. It has been established that single mothers rely on the continued financial, emotional and child care support of their own parents which can have a valuable cushioning effect upon financial and material hardship (Seaman and Sweeting, 2004). This latter study

highlights the changing nature of intergenerational roles such that older generations may continue to occupy a fundamental position of caregiver and financial provider even when their children are adults and have children of their own. However, the role of grandparents as the co-educators of grandchildren has hardly been considered (Mitchel, 2008).

Social Class and the Education Market

One of the key policy instruments for seeking to raise educational achievement, especially amongst working class children, has been the introduction of the educational market in ECE, primary and secondary education, while tertiary education not only has the market for educational provision but also charges fees on the basis that some of the returns to tertiary education will be captured by the individual, especially in the University sector. At one level, the introduction of market mechanisms can be seen as an expression of market individualism (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough and Halsey, 2006), in that parents are nominally provided with choice with respect to their children's education. In turn this is meant to raise educational standards as schools strive to attract parents by performing well in league tables determined by test performance. There is a wide literature on the effects of markets on the various educational sectors. Here we confine ourselves to four broad points. Firstly, as Le Grand (1997) has noted policy may change behaviour and attitudes such that even if parents were not seeking advantage for their children through the educational system, market policies may turn them into market players. Secondly, while market theory with respect to education may predict a rise in educational achievement, critics will note that it is a mechanism by which the already privileged gain further advantage because they have the knowledge and power to exercise choice in the way that their working class counterparts cannot. Thirdly, reviews of research into the effects of marketisation in education show that competition and choice are associated with small improvements in academic achievement (Levin and Bellfield, 2006; Nash and Harker, 2006) but that it is also leads to greater inequalities in outcomes. Finally, and perhaps related to this last point research shows that the most disadvantaged have the least choice of school (Lauder, Hughes et al, 1999; Burgess, 2006).

The issue of educational markets is germane to the question of scenarios because all three major political parties in Britain assume that choice can raise educational standards provided parents are offered the appropriate kind of school. There is no evidence that this is the case.

Having examined the situation with respect to social class and education, looked at some of the underlying assumptions with respect to educational policy and key aspects of educational policy we now turn to the scenarios.
In the following we provide three scenarios: (1) Extrapolating the Incremental Approach of New Labour (2) The Broken Promise of Education and Jobs in the Global Economy and (3) The Global Economy and the Interventionist State. In the first we extrapolate from current policy; the second challenges some of the fundamental assumptions underlying the first, while the third considers how social class inequalities may be reduced under feasible global labour market conditions.

(1) The Incremental Approach of New Labour

This scenario assumes that by incremental policy measures social class inequalities in education and with respect to social mobility will be reduced. Crucial to this scenario is the expectation that the expansion of global economic activity will increase the demand for educated labour. In this it follows the Prime Minister's view when he announced the beginning of a 'global skills race' in which 'Asian rivals' would not only compete on low skilled manufacturing but in high-tech products and services. As a result he claimed 'we need to push ahead faster with our reforms to extend educational opportunities to all' because the rise of China and India would 'herald[s] a worldwide opportunity revolution bringing new chances of upward mobility for millions. And Britain with its centuries old record of innovation, enterprise and international reach, can be one of its greatest winners.' This view suggests that the key to greater upward social mobility for working class students will be through education. By the same token, those with lower educational qualifications will need to re-educate and re-train for more cognitively demanding work.

How, then, is this to be achieved?

The first goal, following the analysis by Feinstein and Nash above and an analysis of longitudinal studies (see eg Lynch, 2007) on the benefits of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is to *remove children from poverty by small incremental measures*.

These include:

Improving the availability and quality of childcare and ECE.

There are two reasons for this: to encourage women into the labour market, taking account of the increased possibility of family break up and recombination, and because ECE is seen as central for children to escape poverty. Here it should be noted that there is considerable work still to be done to improve child care facilities and to improve ECE. It should be emphasised that the flexible labour market will remain and that mothers, in particular, will seek employment within it, typically in low skilled work. In this sense ECE is intended to carry the weight of disadvantage that poverty confers.

- *Additional state support for low income parents*.

In addition more poor parents will be taken out of poverty, again by small measures. For example, a recent report by Barnados and Deloitte (2008) suggests that child poverty can be addressed by the redistribution of resources by revising existing expenditure on tax credits so as to concentrate resources upon to families lower down the income distribution. This means that the family and baby elements of Child Tax Credit are reduced as income increases, thus saving £1.35 billion annually. Losers from this package would be concentrated around higher earning families including those with dual income earners and smaller families. The winners would be the lowest income families including non-working families and those with more children. However, their gain would be at the expense of those slightly higher up the income parade.

- overcoming the digital divide by providing a PC free to every child.

Recently (at the Labour Party Conference, 2008) the Prime Minister outlined plans to overcome what is seen as a digital divide between families who have computers and access to the web and the 17 million it is estimated that do not, by funding a million families to gain access to the web so that students can enhance their education.

This policy can be seen as part of a fundamental change in the way education is delivered and in which basic skills now extend to computer literacy (Trilling and Hood, 2001). The role of ICT has been recognised as an integral part of the educational endeavour in a 'knowledge' age recognised in the English e-Strategy (Department for

Education and Skills, 2005). It has been argued that the introduction of ICT requires a re-conceptualisation of the sites of learning that incorporates the school and home as joint learning environments. This has led to what has been called 'schome' "not school – not home – schome – the education system for the Knowledge Age" (Craft, Chappel and Twinning, p236) which entails integrating home and school in education through mixed forms of 'delivery'.

- Greater Expenditure on Careers Advice.

Since a considerable factor in class inequality is the secondary effects in relation to working class students' decision-making, there will be more expenditure on careers advisory services. It should be noted that Goldthorpe (2007) argues that this is likely to be a cheaper and more effective means of increasing equality of educational achievement than the extensive provision of ECE.

- The expansion of higher education to take up to 50% of an age cohort.

Given the expectation that developments in the global economy will increase the demand for graduate labour it follows that improved educational achievement will lead to improved life chances (greater social mobility). The intensity of positional competition will decline because the demand for graduates will mean that all will have the opportunity of gaining a good middle class job.

-Greater Provision for Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning contributes to this mobility as people change career paths at crucial times of their lives in order to remain upwardly mobile. Given that we can expect older workers to remain in work for much longer than is now the case careers will be extended and consequently this will require greater provision for lifelong learning. However, the evidence shows that most re-training now occurs at the higher skill end because much of the work in a flexible labour market is unskilled, requiring minimum training. Hence in economic terms participation in lifelong learning will be limited.

(2) The Broken Promise of Education and Jobs in the Global Economy

Central to this scenario is the opposing view to that articulated by the Prime Minister. The middle class will come under increasing pressure as professional jobs are offshored to China and India (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2007). Moreover the corporate strategy for creating an elite of the 'talented' while much other 'knowledge' work is made more routine means that the middle class, in terms of graduates, will be divided between the fortunate few and the majority who will not see their life chances improve. Indeed people's life chances may be in decline as what were once seen as middle class occupations decline in the number of jobs on offer and polarise in terms of income. (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2009).

This being the case we are likely to see:

Greater child poverty and a consequent reduction in progress in terms of working class educational achievement

This is because with the continuing polarisation of incomes and the reluctance of either major political party to increase the marginal rates of tax for the wealthy, there will be less public expenditure on the policies outlined in Scenario 1. In effect many of those with degrees will be 'bumped' down in the labour market, doing the work of non-

graduates, while the semi and unskilled will either be in low paid, insecure work, or unemployed.

- Accelerated family break up

In turn there is evidence that under these circumstances there will be increased family break up and hence greater student geographic mobility.

- The 'magic bullet' of technology in the guise of ICT will not address increasing inequalities

David Noble (1999) has argued that technology is seen in the West as the '*deus ex machina'* that will solve the fundamental social problems that modernisation has created. However, research suggests that it is only under very specific conditions that IT can be used to aid education (Cuban, 2000). Growing inequalities and declining educational expenditure do not enable schools to capitalise on these opportunities.

-greater elitism in relation to university participation

Within the middle class there will be an intensification of positional competition to get into the élite universities in order to become a high earner. As an indication of this form of thinking Chris Woodhead has recently spoken of the enthusiasm with which politicians and top universities have embraced university-administered selection exams which are now administered by one in seven universities. Furthermore, designed to address the devalued status of A-level grades, the 'Pre-U' has been developed by the University of Cambridge International Examinations board, as an alternative to A-levels so as to

"stiffen the rigour of individual subjects and replacing modularity, in which candidates are assessed on units of work through the course, with a traditional final examination." (Sunday Times University Guide, 21.09.08, p7)

This in turn will lead to greater selectivity with new exams introduced in order for the élite universities to pick the 'brightest and best'. On current form that will mean recruiting from private schools. In effect educational selection will be increasingly determined by parentocracy (Brown, 1997) ie the wishes and wealth of the parents rather than the abilities and motivations of the child. This will extend through the educational market mechanisms to all parts of the educational system.

- A decline in funding and participation in lifelong learning.

Since there will be an increase in routinised skilled labour (being literate, numerate and computer literate) and semi and unskilled work, there will be little requirement for extensive periods of re-training. Rees et al (2006) have shown that a commitment to lifelong education is historically conditioned rather than driven by the motivations assumed by human capital theory. Under these conditions, workers will be reluctant to engage in retraining.

(3): The Global Economy and the Interventionist State

In this scenario the state rebalances the economy to generate high end manufacturing in renewables, etc. This creates the possibility of more high skills jobs, leading to greater upward mobility. This enables a high proportion of high earning taxpayers to fund state expenditure. It also creates the possibility that the values underlying education may

change. In particular, as in the Nordic countries, there is a greater sense of collectivism as opposed to individualism. This means that the society will extend the concepts of worth and reward beyond the current labour market to funding careers, typically but not exclusively for women in caregiving. There will in effect be a citizen's wage which guarantees income in return for active participation in society (Brown and Lauder, 2001).

- Child poverty is eradicated by a combination of high quality ECE and labour market policies for women.

As in the Nordic countries the raising of children is seen as a societal responsibility. And with the increased funds ECE provision is universal and of high quality.

- Unskilled work attracts higher wages

This is because with an expanding middle class, unskilled work such as domestic labour is in short supply, therefore wages are raised (Krugman, 1999)

- The digital divide is overcome because young children receive an education which makes them highly literate and able to use IT in productive educational ways.

The combination of changes in the labour market and government policy enables working class children to have a start in life that enables them to achieve highly in education, reducing the class gaps.

- the integration of learning for all ages through home and formal education - schome.

Because of the sense of hope and progress that is generated by this more collectivist state, working class parents are more empowered to work with their children on their education.

Sufficient national income is generated and redistributed to enable lifelong learning

Students of all ages to pursue courses which are not necessarily for vocational purposes but to develop notions of autonomy and citizenship.

- higher education is expanded to meet demand

The sector is increasingly less stratified by class or reputation. A good higher education is the guarantee to a good middle class job.

Under this scenario improved educational achievement will lead to improved life chances (greater social mobility).

Conclusion

It remains for us to identify which scenario is most likely to come closest to reality in 40 years time. We think scenario 1 is highly unlikely, the premises on which it is based are flawed in the light of current experience. This leaves scenarios 2 and 3. Of these, 3 seems the most unlikely because it is based on the idea that a new hi tech industrial sector can be created when competitor countries are far ahead of us (eg Germany) and skills sets necessary to develop green technologies, even those related to nuclear power

have atrophied. This, rather pessimistically, leaves scenario 2. Given the entrenched vested interests in favour of the wealthy and the strong thread of individualism which seems to be a defining feature of British social life, it is hard to envisage the kinds of fundamental changes implied by Scenario 3.

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