

The Wider Benefits of Learning

Part 4: Learning and Community Vitality

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Foreword

For centuries, scholars searched for a miraculous substance that would make people happy, healthy, wealthy and able to enjoy life. A panacea that would help them deal successfully with life's difficulties, better understand themselves and the world, and ultimately gain wisdom they could transmit to future generations.

Today, science has found this magic formula. The trouble is that virtually no one knows that it exists, where and how to find it and what miraculous effects it has when properly used. At the same time, renowned researchers are proving its effectiveness in increasing numbers of international studies. It works on everyone, everywhere, from infancy to old age, in all of life's circumstances and spheres. It has an unending number of side effects – all of them positive and good for people. As for how much of it to apply, the only mistake we can make is not to use enough. That's because the more of this magic formula people use and the more often they use it, the better they feel, scientists have unanimously determined. And when people feel better, statisticians have recently proven in comparisons of countries throughout Europe, so do the regions and countries where they live with others.

In fact, everyone knows this miracle substance and many are already using it. However, in most cases it cannot sufficiently produce its effects. Most people totally misunderstand it because too often, it has been prescribed incorrectly and in the wrong

dose. The miracle substance that science has discovered is nothing other than learning. But not just learning in schools and educational institutions, much too often discussed only as it relates to finding employment or enhancing corporate and national competitiveness. The real magic formula is learning in all of life's phases and aspects – lifelong and “life-wide.”

It may seem inappropriate to speak of a miracle and science in the same breath. But the human brain and its ability to learn are among the greatest miracles in our known universe. And the miracle of learning and cognition within our brain a) is only barely understood by even the best and most advanced scientists, and b) these scientists themselves admit that the more they investigate, the more they discover ever greater miracles about the brain's complexity, capacity and plasticity. More insight into these interconnections can be found in the Bertelsmann Stiftung publication entitled “Warum Lernen Glücklich Macht” [Why Learning Makes You Happy]. In short, science still considers the fact that human beings learn and how they learn to be a kind of miracle.

Researchers throughout the world have begun to investigate the positive effects of lifelong learning on individuals and society. And the more interconnections and relationships between learning and life processes they study, the more multifaceted, surprising and unambiguous their results have been. They already agree on one conclusion: If we want to unleash the

miraculous effects of learning, we first have to understand learning in its diverse forms, possibilities and effects in a completely different way.

Educational research, generating much public interest, has shown how successful schooling, vocational training and university attendance affect income and job opportunities, and how closely education and skills development are related to a society's economic prosperity. On the other hand, the public has heard virtually nothing about the happiness that is derived from learning or the pleasure of curiosity and discovery, or from personal development and the ability to continually change oneself. Too little attention is paid to the connections between learning and gains in resilience, physical and mental health, participation in social life and social solidarity, all of which have also been scientifically investigated.

To survey the current status of research on the diverse effects of lifelong learning, the Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning at the Institute of Education of the University of London, at the request of Bertelsmann Stiftung, has prepared a comprehensive review of the literature on the social and personal benefits of learning. The scope of the published findings has persuaded the editor to present this survey thematically, in sections.

This fourth of five sections focuses on the close reciprocal effects between learning and community vitality.

The study on wider benefits of learning

Learning and well-being - a look at complex relationships

Although the term “learning” has already become central to the discussion of economic and social policy in Europe, most of these countries lack both clarity and understanding of the specific learning relationships involved. Learning is considered the key to success for individuals, organizations, regions and nations, leading to greater economic affluence for knowledge societies. But the complex phenomenon of learning is often reduced to formal education and its consequences for employability.

Similarly, scientific research into the interconnections in education has been essentially devoted to studying formal learning in school and other educational institutions. For years, data has been systematically collected on the performance of secondary and post-secondary students. The number of scientific studies and research papers in this area has risen dramatically. There have also been studies on the value of vocational training, continuing vocational training and – to a lesser extent – adult learning for the job market. But with the dominant focus on the economic consequences of formal learning processes, the holistic and social effects of learning have received comparatively little attention.

In fact, growing numbers of international scientists have begun to investigate the positive main and side effects of lifelong and lifewide learning beyond the economic impact on individuals and society: What are the effects of learning, for example, on the development of identity, self-consciousness, motivation and

resilience? On our ability to continually adjust to changing living conditions? How does learning affect our health, life expectancy and birth rate? Or, to take just one example, our ability to come to grips with an increasingly complicated healthcare system? What forms of learning result in greater well-being, greater life satisfaction and happiness? And what are the effects of learning processes on social cohesion and vitality – in neighborhoods and associations, municipalities, regions and whole societies? To what extent does learning influence personal willingness to integrate, be tolerant, show solidarity and become politically and socially engaged? And what factors can best improve the framework conditions and circumstances for every form of learning at every age?

Without exception, results of the studies by international scientists indicate that the key to future well-being, happiness, social cohesion and – as just one important positive consequence out of many – personal and national economic development in Europe lies exactly in the widely ignored effects of lifelong and life-wide learning processes. Until now, the conclusions of these studies and research have never been assembled, correlated and made available to a broader public. The following survey of the status of international research is intended to close that gap.

The study on wider benefits of learning

Intention of the study on wider benefits of learning

Within the framework of the European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) project, the Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning at the University of London's Institute of Education was asked to assemble all internationally available scientific studies on the effects of the various forms of lifelong and life-wide learning on individual and social development, evaluate them and summarize them in a comprehensive report. In fact, this survey of the state of research on the social and personal benefits of learning reflects the findings of more than 200 international studies and research projects on the effects of learning in all phases and areas of life. We decided to split up this voluminous collection of material into five complementary categories and publish them in the form of five individual studies. Each individual study examines a central connection between the various forms and stages of lifelong learning and an aspect relevant to personality or social development.

The individual studies are not intended to provide comprehensive and final answers on the effects of lifelong learning in the particular category. Instead, they show the current science as a work in progress - and it is hoped that they will stimulate further research efforts.

Overview of the five parts of the study

Part 1: Learning and identity

The first study covers the scientific discussion of the reciprocal relationship between lifelong learning processes and the development of human identity. Numerous studies show that the forms and quality of formal, non-formal and informal learning in various phases of our lives impact our self-confidence, self-esteem, resilience and the development of social skills, and look at how they do it. And in addition, they examine how – through the concepts of self that are affected by learning processes – these forms of learning then impact future learning behavior and internal attitudes toward learning later in life.

Part 2: Learning and health

The second study collects the relevant studies on the effects of learning on physical and mental health. Numerous studies have made clear the direct relationship between the duration and frequency of learning processes in various phases of life and mental and physical well-being, health behavior, life expectancy and numerous other physical and mental health aspects. Likewise, studies show how learning behavior affects our ability to find our way through an increasingly complex medical system.

The study on wider benefits of learning

Part 3: Learning, life satisfaction and happiness

The third study summarizes findings about the consequences of learning for the well-being, quality of life, happiness and optimism of people. It examines research on the effects of both learning in school as well as adult learning on a positive attitude toward life. Besides showing a positive correlation between learning and happiness, this part of the study makes it clear that the scope of research efforts lags far behind the importance of this crucial field of knowledge.

Part 4: Learning and community vitality

The fourth study looks at a broad spectrum of research results on the effects of formal, non-formal and informal learning processes on social cohesiveness and community vitality. Given the diverse and complex interconnections it examines, this individual study is divided into four sub-chapters. The first looks at the effects of lifelong learning on social inequality, income differences, social mobility – and the influence of learning sequences on social cooperation in a society. The second discusses the effects of learning on active citizenship, the possibilities of social participation and the integration of immigrants. Also considered is how participation in learning processes can be combined with aspects of interpersonal behavior such as trust, tolerance and inter-cultural sensitivity. The third sub-chapter deals with the concept of “social capital” and describes how learning contributes to developing individual and community social capital. The final section deals conceptually and statistically with the connections between learning and criminality and thus how specific learning processes and educational interventions affect criminal behavior.

Part 5: Learning spill-overs and interplays

The fifth and last study describes the numerous positive “side effects” of learning, which cannot be directly ascribed to the categories already listed but are of substantial importance for human well-being and the positive development of societies. Unlike the previous four categories of the accompanying study, which look at the more or less direct effects of learning processes on individual and social development aspects, this section looks at some more complex reciprocal effects of learning and living processes. Thus it illustrates how positive learning experiences impact people’s future learning behavior, followed by the complex relationships between learning and occupational prospects. In addition, it explores the multifaceted impacts of learning on family situations. These include, for example, the influence of the educational and learning level of parents on the development of their children or the effects of learning processes in which parents and children participate together. The influence of the learning behavior of adults on their children’s academic success and birth weight, family structure and size, marriage and divorce and parental behavior in early and later development phases of their children is also described. Finally, the study discusses the influence of the learning behavior of adults on their immediate neighborhood and accordingly how learning affects processes of sustainable development and the search for social justice.

This thematic structure of the survey of research results offers a better overview of the diverse aspects of the positive impacts of learning on people and societies. However, interdependencies between the various areas should not be ignored because in the final analysis, the individual and social effects of learning are never one-dimensional or limited to specific spheres of life.

The study on wider benefits of learning

Instead, every learning experience influences the whole person – and accordingly the society in which that person lives.

This survey of research results on the positive impacts of learning on people and society is another important component of the ELLI project as a whole, to continue to complete the picture of lifelong learning and its positive effects on people and societies. As a mirror of the status quo of research, it is intended to provoke new and different ways of thinking about the meaning and design of formal, non-formal and informal learning processes for both individuals and society.

Focus:

Learning and community vitality

Introduction and overview

The specific learning opportunities we have and how we use them mould not only our own life but also the society in which we live. That is because while we naturally learn for our own life – that life is not led in isolation. In every life situation and at every age, we are dependent on others. First on relatives, friends, colleagues at work, neighbors and acquaintances, people whose sympathy, help and support we can count on in most cases. But at the same time on people whom we may encounter only briefly or perhaps never, but who nevertheless, through their social behavior, influence and demands on themselves and others, inevitably raise or lower the quality of how we live together and the cohesion of our society.

The learning opportunities we receive and the learning behavior we engage in significantly impact the place we will find in society and how we will develop in it. And that means much more than our chances of finding a job or how much we will earn. Rather it impacts all aspects of our life in society, how we contribute and express ourselves and thus help generate cohesiveness in a functioning society.

This fourth part of the survey of current research examines the varied direct and indirect effects of learning on social cohesion from a scientific perspective. Because of the complex and multi-layered nature of the interconnections and reciprocal effects involved, the research results are presented in four sub-sections:

Learning and social inequality

The first sub-section describes the effects of learning on social inequality, in particular with respect to income disparities and social mobility.

The results of the ELLI-Index for Europe show that a country's learning climate in all learning dimensions turns out to be a mirror of its degree of social justice and cohesion. In those countries of Europe where educational opportunities are relatively evenly distributed and in which people learn gladly, with each other and repeatedly, there is an especially high level of social justice and cohesiveness. The wider the gap in educational opportunities, and the resulting educational level and lifelong readiness to learn are in a society, the worse off people are in terms of their opportunities for civic participation and the quality of their life in society.

Recently, the educational disadvantages experienced by people in many European industrial countries as they seek to become the knowledge societies of the future have become a central problem. International organizations like UNESCO, the EU COMMISSION, OECD, UNICEF and UN human rights observer Vernor Muñoz have long recognized this drawback and repeatedly criticize the educational injustices present in numerous European countries, especially Germany. The comparative study of social justice in the OECD as part of the Sustainable Governance Indicators project has pointed out that the equality of opportunity is rather weak in the German educational system (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2010).

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Scientists are unanimous in concluding that inequality of educational opportunities and the resulting differences in educational level and learning behavior have the strongest negative impact on social cohesion and participation in a society.

This becomes especially clear, as numerous studies indicate, with respect to the consequences for income distribution – which in turn have far-reaching and multilayered effects on health, life expectancy, satisfaction with life and the possibilities of civic and political participation.

One particularly interesting scientific observation: A growing gap in income distribution due to educational differences not only leads to worse living conditions for people with lower income but also to negative consequences for health, life expectancy and quality of civil society that affect everyone.

Also striking in this connection is the finding that the less money countries currently invest in the development of their human and social capital – i.e., in education – the greater the already existing differences in the educational level of their population. This can lead to a downward spiral with fatal social consequences – one that can only be stopped and reversed with difficulty and over a long time period.

Studies show that unequal opportunities for access to education in children and adolescents result in larger income differences among adults – which shows up not only in lower civic participation and less social cohesion for the affected generation, but also continues

to worsen the inequality of opportunity with respect to education, socio-economic status and social cohesiveness for the generations that follow. It is a vicious circle, which, as scientists have discovered, can only be broken when there is substantial political and social effort to even out the level of education in a society.

Accordingly, scientists consider a society's degree of permeability as seen in the social mobility of as many people as possible, no matter their origin, socio-economic class or family background, as the key factor in social cohesion.

More recent studies make it even clearer that in every society where there is a relationship between access to educational opportunities and the reproduction of social imbalances, spending more on education actually leads to a further increase in social inequality. According to the results of these studies, the constant call for higher investment in education is inadequate as long as the educational system is not restructured to promote equal opportunity for everyone.

Learning and social participation

The second sub-section looks at the effects of learning on active citizenship, opportunities for social participation and integration. In addition, participation in learning processes is related to factors in interpersonal relations such as trust, tolerance and intercultural sensitivity.

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Given the growing social inequality and ethnic heterogeneity of many OECD countries, integration and social participation of all citizens are serious problems that significantly reduce social cohesion and the quality of life in society.

In this context, a broad spectrum of scientific studies indicates that both social cohesion and the integration of migrants improve when people of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds learn together. Research results suggest which learning conditions and situations are most conducive for people to learn for their personal development, and as a consequence for greater participation and better cohesion in society.

Moreover, other study results indicate that the level of education and participation in various forms of lifelong learning have a significant influence on tolerance of and trust in others. Other studies show that common learning at every age essentially has the effect of making people devote themselves more actively to democratic life: They have more active voting behavior and are more political engaged, are more often involved in participatory structures and work harder for solidarity and social justice. Scientists have also observed that people who are ready to learn are much more active in their social context and in the life of society – e.g., in schools, their municipality or neighborhood, lobbying groups or charitable causes. And in this way, they not only strengthen community social structures and organizations but also reduce conflicts in and between communities.

Learning and social capital

The third sub-section describes the concept of social capital and shows how learning contributes to development and expansion of the social networks that actually make the various forms of social participation possible.

A further focus of research examines the effects of learning on the development of social capital. From the perspective of social capital theory, they focus on the relationships between and the networking of people within a society. Social capital means opportunities for participating in a network of social relationships, based on readiness for mutual trust, reciprocal support and cooperation.

From the perspective of the individual, social capital determines the access to resources of social and community life. Security and helpfulness, recognition and identity development, knowledge and connections to finding work and training opportunities are all dimensions of the personal effect of social capital. Seen from a comprehensive social perspective, social capital reduces the costs for everyone if assistance and support are provided in relationship networks and thus do not need to be externalized.

In societies with low social capital, the culture is one of social withdrawal, isolation or “going it alone,” in which neighborhood relationships, circles of friends and acquaintances or organizations no longer work in the direction of social cohesion and participation, and work relationships are characterized by intensive competition and absence of cooperation. In the wake of the loss of trust and willingness to cooperate in solving problems and conflicts, there is greater use of the force of law

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and the police to protect property and integrity. Individual, regional and social problems, which can really only be solved in a community, are increasingly either left to government regulation or remain untreated. Especially with respect to opportunities for successfully integrating immigrant groups, the development of individual social capital and opportunities for access to social capital within a society is of decisive importance.

Scientists see learning as a central and key factor in the development of individual and community social capital. In numerous studies, they have shown first, that the degree and extent of education and lifelong willingness to learn will have a decisive influence on how well people are able to develop, care for and expand social networks, and second, the extent to which social networks within a society open up to people and allow heterogeneity. All of which has decisive effects for the quality and vitality of community life.

They also show the central importance of lifelong learning for the ability of people to network. According to scientists, empathy, attachment and community spirit, sociability or the ability to use networks for mutual support are essentially determined by a person's learning experiences and learning behavior.

However, scientists also have illuminated the consequences of deficient social capital, as the result of inadequate education, a lack of educational opportunities or unwillingness to learn, expressed in various forms of social exclusion – excluding and dissociating people from a society.

Learning and criminality

The fourth sub-section examines, from several perspectives, how learning processes can impact the likelihood of criminal behavior.

Finally, as part of this section, the connections between education, lifelong learning and criminality are discussed based on scientific studies.

Numerous studies confirm the connection between a low level of education and readiness to engage in criminal activity and violence in young people and adults, as well as in regions where many people with low educational levels live.

In an attempt to quantify the influence of higher levels of education on criminality, American scientists have calculated for the USA that just a one-percent increase in the high school graduation rate would result in a decrease ranging from 34,000 to 68,000 crimes. A 10 percent increase in the graduation rate would reduce the number of convicted murderers by 14 to 27 percent – with a savings in social costs of \$0.9 to 1.9 billion annually.

But criminality and the number of crimes are not the only things that rise with a lower educational level of individuals and within societies: The likelihood of becoming a victim of crime also increases. For example, young people with reading and writing difficulties report in studies that they are much more likely to carry a weapon in order to be able to win fights or defend themselves at school.

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Generally, scientists emphasize that any direct causality between educational level and criminal behavior is hard to demonstrate since many social factors, such as the influence of family relationships or peer groups, future life and job prospects, play a significant role. But the existing scientific studies offer concrete suggestions that learning behavior and choices of learning opportunities combined with solid job prospects can play a decisive role in reducing the likelihood of criminality.

Moreover, numerous studies have examined the influence of specific educational and learning promotion measures on prisoners or young people in detention with respect to recidivism. It turns out that participation in educational measures first of all noticeably reduces the likelihood of renewed criminality, and second can substantially increase the chances that they will want to continue learning afterwards.

Research results in detail

1. Learning and social inequality

1.1 Educational inequality

Using measures of crime and social dislocation as proxies for social cohesion, a strong statistically negative relationship has been reported between educational inequality and social cohesion (Preston and Green 2003). In their review of evidence on the macro-social benefits of vocational education and training, and education and training more generally, the authors argue that the effect of educational inequality on social cohesion is indirect, with more than one pathway linking the two. The most important of these is income: much of the association between educational inequality and social cohesion appears to be mediated by income inequality, with educational inequality during childhood leading to income inequality in adulthood, which in turn results in lower levels of social cohesion.

A more equitable distribution of education, on the other hand, is associated with an increase in institutional trust and a decrease in social exclusion and spatial isolation, which could also be thought of as related to social cohesion. Preston and Green note the positional nature of education (an individual's education affects their position in a competitive hierarchy, and it is this that matters rather than their absolute level of education, since some will always have higher levels of education and will tend to reap greater benefits than others) and caution that simply raising education, skills and training levels is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for promoting macro-social benefits. However, improving the distribution of educational outcomes may be one way in which education and training can make some contribution to more general economic and social redistribution.

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However, Green et al. (2003) analyses, using aggregated data for 15 countries from the World Values Survey, International Adult Literacy Survey and Interpol crime statistics, found no significant relationship between mean levels of adult education in a society and social cohesion. At the same time, the authors reported a significant negative correlation between social cohesion and education inequality among adults of -0.765, excluding the outliers Germany and Norway (with the lowest and highest social cohesion scores, respectively).

1.2 Income inequality as a driver of social outcomes

As noted above, the wider benefits of learning concern not only the benefits for an individual that flow from their own participation in learning: the distributional aspect of learning is also important (Green et al. 2006). Marmot et al. (1978) were among the first to demonstrate the existence of a socio-economic gradient in health, whereby health disparities are not confined to extremes of rich and poor, but are observed at all levels of socio-economic status. The findings relating to income suggest that what matters for individual health is not only the absolute level of resources available to individuals but also their position in relation to others.

At the societal level, recent studies have shown that the degree of relative deprivation within a society is strongly associated with overall mortality and life expectancy (Daniels et al. 2000). Middle-income groups in relatively unequal societies have worse health than comparable or even poorer groups in more equal societies. This result holds even in countries that have universal health care systems, suggesting an impact of relative differences in income on individual health.

The exact nature of the processes linking social inequality with health inequality is not always readily apparent in research studies, in part due to methodological challenges, but links to education have been demonstrated. Using a psychosocial approach, Wilkinson (1996) argues that the income distribution in a country may directly affect an individual's perception of their social environment, which in turn affects their health. Based on qualitative evidence, Wilkinson argues that more egalitarian societies are characterized by high levels of social cohesion, because market orientation and individualism are restrained by a social morality. The public arena then becomes a source of supportive social networks rather than of stress and potential conflict, and the structural impact of hierarchical status relations is reduced.

In an alternative formulation of this model, inequality undermines civil society and political participation. This assertion is supported by evidence from the US showing that states with the highest income inequality are least likely to invest in human capital and to provide generous social safety nets (Kawachi et al. 1997). Kaplan et al. (1996) find a correlation for states of the US between inequality in the distribution of income and a large number of negative health outcomes and social indicators, such as mortality trends. The authors also find evidence that these differences link to relative investments in human and social capital: states with greater income inequalities tend to invest less in education. Under these conditions, income inequality may drive educational inequality, thus perpetuating a vicious circle.

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1.3 Education as a driver of social mobility

Education can impact inequality in very different ways (Green et al. 2003). As noted above, while relativities in income influence people's sense of who they are in the social hierarchy, which in turn can contribute to health inequalities through stress and low levels of wellbeing, a higher level of education for individuals can moderate the relationship between income inequality and wider outcomes: for example, by mitigating the effects of income inequality on the health of more educated people.

However, while in one context education might interact with social capital to promote social mobility, this might impact upon the mobility of others (see below for further discussion of learning and social capital). Ball (2003) cites studies across a number of countries, including the UK, USA and France, showing how the activities of middle-class parents have impeded working-class families' access to education, through their monopolizing of parent-teacher associations, and access to networks of 'hot knowledge' concerning desirable schools and universities. This has limited the potential for education to support social mobility and reduce inequality.

Furthermore, as Preston and Green's (2003) work referred to above indicates, government actions to reduce social inequalities through education cannot be treated exogenously (Atkinson 1997), particularly since the middle classes are more engaged in politics and more likely to exert pressure on government to act in their benefit (Nie et al. 1996). More recent evidence suggests that as long as the link between education and the reproduction of structural inequalities in society exists, any increase in education will be associated with an increase in social inequalities (Perkins et al. 2001).

Schooling can, however, help to overcome the influence of family background. Iannelli and Paterson (2005) and Paterson and Iannelli (2006) investigated whether increased participation in education in Scotland was beneficial in reducing social inequalities in terms of occupations, in particular exploring the transition from a selective system of secondary schooling to a comprehensive system. Using data from the 2001 Scottish Households Survey the authors found that increases in participation in education and in the proportion of individuals achieving university degrees facilitated upward mobility for individuals in lower social classes. However, education did not reduce the gap between social classes in the chances of entering a top-level occupation.

Research has also focused on the impact of education on reducing educational inequalities between people from different social classes. Croxford (2001) found that the introduction of the comprehensive system in Scotland reduced social inequalities in educational attainment. Raffe et al.'s (2006) work also suggests that social class inequalities in educational attainment for those aged 16 to 18 narrowed in England over the late 1980s and 1990s, although in Scotland they remained unchanged. The authors used the Youth Cohort Study for England and Wales and the Scottish School Leavers Survey for Scotland to investigate whether the increase in participation in education in these countries was accompanied by reductions in educational inequalities between classes.

Bynner et al. (2001) found that individuals who increased their literacy and numeracy levels improved their chances in the labor market, moving up the occupational status scale and resisting unemployment. However, the overall role of education in driving social mobility depends on many factors, including labor market

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considerations, technological change, within-firm organization, social positioning, cultural capital, and government policies. It has proven problematic to isolate the impact of education from these wider factors (Sabates et al. 2007b).

2. Learning and social participation

2.1 Citizenship among young people

Citizenship among school students has been found to be promoted by involvement in the local community. For example, one study found that taking part in a community-based physical education program for high school students was associated with a greater sense of empathy and community (Ennis 1999).

Citizenship was also investigated by Kerr et al.'s (2004) report on a longitudinal survey combined with case studies on citizenship education in the UK. Citizenship was found to be promoted by schools when: the school ethos and value systems in the school supported the goals of citizenship education; the active involvement of students as a community was supported through a range of structures such as school and class councils and peer mentoring; there were opportunities for students to learn about and experience citizenship education in a range of contexts; links were made between students of different ages; and students were involved in the local community. Large schools with a positive, participatory ethos, which had previous links with the community and encouraged active participation in class by students, also promoted citizenship.

The influence of level of education

The level education an individual has completed is thought to be one of the most important predictors of active citizenship,

in the form of various kinds of political and social engagement. However, Nie et al. (1996) argue that it is relative rather than absolute levels of education that are key determinants of civic participation.

Nonetheless, several studies point to the relationship: for example, Verba et al. (1995) found that the level of education increases political participation, controlling for other factors. There is also evidence that the amount of time and money devoted to charity is positively associated with the amount of education completed. For example, one study found that college graduates volunteered nearly twice as many hours and donated 50 percent more of their income than high school graduates (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1988).

Bynner and Egerton (2001) found that in the 1958 and the 1970 British cohorts, graduates were twice as likely as those with A-level (upper secondary) qualifications to be a member of a voluntary organization, and about three times more likely than those without A-levels. They also found that individuals who completed higher education were more likely to vote and to be less cynical about politics than those without A-levels, although there was no difference between graduates and those with A-levels. Feinstein and Hammond (2004) similarly found that having higher levels of education was associated with increased political engagement and higher voting behavior, increased membership of organizations and decreased political cynicism, as well as a higher level of concern for the environment and a broader outlook.

Also regarding membership of organizations, Schuller et al. (2001) found a strong correlation between levels of education and membership of political and charity organizations,

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environmental or women's groups and residents' and parent-teacher associations, for those in the UK 1958 cohort. Meanwhile, Parsons and Bynner (2008) found that for adults in the 1970 cohort, having low (entry level) literacy and numeracy skills was associated with lack of social and political participation.

The influence of participation in adult learning

Various kinds of adult learning are associated with civic engagement. Feinstein and Hammond (2004) found that for adults in the 1958 British cohort, adult education had positive effects on political cynicism, political interest, number of memberships of organizations and voting behavior. Vocational and work-related education and training, as well as leisure courses (such as sports or arts and crafts), were all associated with these outcomes, with work-related courses being associated with the broadest range of benefits.

Adults who improved their literacy and numeracy skills were also found to be more likely to vote and to express interest in politics, and were more liberal and less discriminatory in their attitudes. These effects persisted after controlling for earlier family circumstances and educational achievement (Bynner et al. 2001).

Preston and Feinstein's (2004) investigation of individuals' changing attitudes (those aged 33 to 42 in the 1958 British cohort) also found that vocational courses were associated with increased environmental concern for men. For both men and women, work-related adult education was associated with positive willingness to work.

Preston (2003) examined the relationship between adult learning and civic participation in the UK using 120 biographical

interviews of adults who were enrolled in learning in a range of situations, from formal learning to incidental learning. He found a complex interaction between learning and civic participation, mediated not only by gender, class and ethnicity, but also by aspirations and individual relationships. His main conclusion was that learning and personal characteristics had to be in the right configuration for education to have an impact on civic participation. Adult learning acted as a resource and a setting for individuals to change their social networks, and this produced new forms of civic participation.

Field's (2005a) study of social attitudes survey data also demonstrated a close association between participation in adult learning and engagement in a variety of social and civic activities, although it does not conclusively show causation in one direction or the other. In the author's work on Northern Ireland, relatively high levels of social capital (compared with the rest of the UK) were paired with relatively low levels of participation in formal adult education.

Qualitative research suggests that this might be because dense networks of close ties offer a less formal means of exchanging information, skills and ideas than does participation in formal learning (Field and Spence 2000). Quantitative evidence indicates that those with the most positive attitudes to various kinds of civic engagement have the most positive attitudes to lifelong learning, but those with strong negative attitudes to such engagement still have much more positive attitudes to learning than those who think that civic engagement is unimportant (Field 2005a). The attitudinal differences between the engaged, the hostile and the indifferent were most marked concerning engagement in church-related activity, and least marked concerning involvement in community groups.

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Community-based learning, in particular, has been found to contribute to the promotion of active citizenship in terms of voting, volunteering, participating in organisations as well as in public life and activism; youth work can enable young people to influence and improve civic life (Merton 2004). Furthermore, there are examples of youth work widening the social and recreational opportunities available to young people, and mediating between different groups of young people, and between young people and local adults, leading to impacts on social cohesion.

There is also evidence to show that large numbers of citizens are engaged in community and charity work outside of politics (The POWER Inquiry 2006). These new forms of engagement may require more support in terms of learning for citizenship, compared with engagement in more formal types of organization—political parties and trade unions for example—which traditionally provided their own forms of induction and learning processes for their members.

2.2 Lifelong learning, migrants and social cohesion

Social cohesion and citizenship can be promoted when individuals from varied social groups and backgrounds learn together, since engaging in collective experiences of learning and development can bring opportunities to extend social networks and develop tolerance and respect.

McNair (2009) argues that lifelong learning can be positive for social cohesion if it: provides people with the skills and capabilities they need to make a full contribution to the economy and society; brings communities together for shared learning across boundaries of age, ethnicity and religion; helps vulnerable groups and communities to overcome their disadvantages; and

increases the range of cultural and interest groups in which people can form new shared identities.

McNair recommends four principles for ensuring that lifelong learning supports social cohesion and ensures that migrants integrate rapidly into their new homes. These are:

- a) Welcome newcomers promptly, making the most their motivation to learn and the opportunity to build links into their new communities.
- b) Prioritize integration, through educational strategies that encourage people to learn together wherever possible rather than in segregated groups. Learning together is a powerful way of building trust, provided that staff is skilled in facilitating dialogue and ensuring that all participants feel included and welcome.
- c) Encourage contribution, from the experience, knowledge, networks and talents that migrants bring. Education can help people to develop these assets and use them within the new community, which fosters a sense of belonging and encourages others to see migrants as contributors rather than dependants.
- d) Focus on the future. Education services have a role in encouraging discussion and debate within communities, providing all members with space to explore visions of the future, using their diverse pasts as a resource. This involves helping people to understand and explore issues, and to develop the skills to challenge and respond to the views of others.

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Some evidence on the benefits of community-based learning emerged from the evaluation of the (then) UK Home Office's program to promote Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC). This indicated that community-based learning could contribute to the promotion of active citizenship in the following dimensions: the citizen as voter and as volunteer; the citizen as an active participant in existing structures for participation, including participation in service planning and delivery; and the citizen as an activist, promoting social solidarity and social justice (Mayo and Rooke 2008).

ALAC's outcomes included evidence that learners had progressed in terms of education, training and improved employability, and that participants had gone on to become more active in their communities and in public life (as, for example, school governors, local representatives or members of users' forums and organizers within the charity and community sector). Local organizations had been strengthened, and conflicts within and between communities, including conflicts between newer arrivals and longer established communities, were being addressed.

Schuller et al.'s (2002) qualitative work (consisting of 140 interviews) found that participation in specific adult learning courses, such as information technology, languages, creative arts, physical education and family and health related courses was associated with significant gains in terms of mental health, human capital development, social capital development and, related to the latter, community building. Some courses, such as English for non-English speaking immigrants and other group-taught courses, helped to develop shared communication skills and cultural frames of reference, boosting benefits for the group in terms of social cohesion. Learning that was characterized by

low pressure and high guidance, support and encouragement had benefits on the individual level, especially in terms of identity capital.

However, some negative relationships were found between learning and aspects of social life, namely the activation of networks that seemed to inhibit individuals, decreases in trust and the break-up of some relationships. It seemed that the way in which people were taught, as well as what they were taught, informed the benefits they developed.

Attitudes to others

Attitudes to others are an important aspect of social cohesion. For example, social scientists place great emphasis on the importance of trust in improving social interaction and fostering community involvement. A more trusting and engaged society is often used to justify public subsidies to schooling (e.g. Hanushek 2002), but these traits offer private returns too. Arrow (1974) notes that in the face of transaction costs, trust underlies almost every economic transaction. Its individual importance arises in situations when trust promotes reciprocity. Laboratory experiments and ethnographic studies suggest that a willingness to engage and work with or help others often leads to others being nicer and more cooperative in return (Fehr and Gächter 2000; Uslaner 2000).

Level of education has been found to be the most significant predictor of an individual's propensity to trust others: having both more years of education and higher levels of qualifications are associated with higher levels of trust: for example, individuals with similar family backgrounds but more schooling are more likely to agree that, generally speaking, most people can be trusted. (Helliwell and Putnam 1999; Green et al. 2003).

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Several studies suggest that high quality schooling also fosters trust, while informal learning can have a role too: young adults have acted as ‘learning champions’ to create links and build trust within their communities. When informal learning practitioners and learners learn together, this can also be an effective way of developing relationships, building trust and breaking down barriers (McNeil and Dixon 2005).

Bynner and Egerton (2001) found relatively high levels of interpersonal trust among those who participated in higher education in their quantitative analyses of nationally representative British cohort data; however, although the data were longitudinal and the statistical models included many controls, there were no measures of trust before participation in higher education.

At country level, evidence suggests a regular and positive association between participation in adult learning and general levels of interpersonal trust. Field (2005b) combined the findings of the World Values Survey with data on adult learning, finding that the Scandinavian nations scored highly on both levels of trust and on adult participation in learning, while the post-communist nations were ranked low on both scales. The southern European nations fell just below the median on both scales (particularly trust), while the north-central European states (and Ireland) came just above the median.

Having more years of education and higher levels of qualifications is also associated with having higher levels of tolerance. For example, Verkuyten and Slooter (2007) examined tolerant judgments of Muslims’ political rights and dissenting beliefs and practices by ethnic Dutch adolescents (12–18 years), and found that level of education had a positive effect on tolerance. Learning other than formal education also appears to make a

difference to tolerance levels. Young people report that youth work, for example, leads to a better understanding of people who are different from themselves (Merton 2004).

According to study of the European Commission (2004), while just 14 percent of those who left school at the earliest opportunity rated tolerance as one of their three most important personal values, this figure rose to 25 percent of those educated to age 20 or more. With regard to ‘Respect for other cultures’ 15 percent of early school-leavers (aged 15 or less) ranked it high, while the percentage rose steadily to 22 of those educated to age 20 or beyond.

For the statement ‘Immigrants contribute a lot to our country’, a greater proportion of those whose education stopped at age 15 (56 percent) disagreed with it than those whose education continued until age 20 or beyond (41 percent). Young people (47 percent) tended to have a more negative opinion than older people—seven percentage points less than the 55 percent of the 55+ age group. On the other side, on the statement ‘Immigrants are a threat to our way of life’, 50 percent of those who left school at age 15 agreed with the statement as opposed to 31 percent of those who had studied until age 20 or beyond.

Concerning attitudes to the environment, 60 percent of respondents chose the environment option over economic growth. Educational levels again gave rise to diverging results, with 68 percent of those who had left school aged 15 in favor, in contrast to 75 percent who had studied until age 20 or later.

The influence of participation in adult learning

Various kinds of adult learning have been found to be related to attitudes. People who improved their literacy and numeracy

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skills, for example, were found to be more liberal and less discriminatory in their attitudes than similar people who did not take part in such learning (Bynner et al. 2001).

Preston and Feinstein (2004) found that, for adults in the 1958 British cohort, adult learning had more influence on those attitudes where a more 'open minded' perspective may be taken, such as racism or authoritarianism, than on more general points of ideology, such as collectivism, free markets or traditional family values. The authors found that for men, vocational adult education reduced racism and taking leisure courses reduced authoritarianism, whereas work and leisure-related adult education were effective in reducing racism for women. Feinstein and Hammond (2004), using the same data, found that adult learning had positive effects on race tolerance and authoritarian attitudes. Effect sizes were small, but given that there is little change in attitudes in mid-adulthood, finding an effect can be interpreted as a substantial finding.

The learning that was examined in the latter study encompassed courses leading to qualifications, courses not leading to qualifications, work-based learning and leisure courses. There were benefits for all four types of courses, with the possible exception of vocational courses leading to accreditation. Academic courses appeared to be particularly important in relation to changing social and political attitudes, but leisure and work-related training courses had effects on a much broader range of outcomes (including change in race tolerance, change in authoritarianism, increase political interest, increase membership and increased voting) than either vocational or academic courses leading to accreditation.

Again using the 1958 British cohort, Preston et al. (2005) found evidence that adult education might be important in sustaining non-extremist views, but did not appear to be associated with a transformation away from extremist positions.

Intercultural sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity was examined by Holm and Tirri (2009). The authors studied Finnish 12 to 16-year-old secondary school students with a questionnaire based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993). This consists of six stages, of which three are ethnocentric and three ethnorelative. The results showed that academically gifted students estimated their intercultural sensitivity higher than the students with average ability. Girls also assessed their intercultural sensitivity higher than boys.

3. Learning and social capital

One of the key influences of education may relate to access to particular types of social networks or changes of the social networks in which individuals take part, as well as to the ways in which they develop and maintain such networks. Schlossberg et al. (1995) suggest that social networks and the ability to draw upon social resources can contribute to resilience, and better mental and physical health outcomes. This can usefully be conceptualized in terms of social capital.

3.1 Social capital

Social capital can be defined as consisting of "social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals" (Schuller et al. 2000: 1), and is often thought of as taking three major forms. Bonding social capital

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coalesces around a shared identity, and tends to reinforce the confidence and homogeneity of a particular group. Bridging social capital refers to 'horizontal' social networks that extend beyond the homogeneous group, involving people of various ethnic, cultural, and socio-demographic backgrounds. Linking social capital is characterized by 'vertical connections with individuals and institutions with power and authority.

It is commonly suggested that those of lower socio-economic status (SES), and with less education, tend to possess greater bonding social capital: they can use their social networks as a protective factor, but their lower levels of bridging and linking capital mean that their access to resources not available in more local environments is limited. Higher SES individuals are thought to have higher levels of access to bridging and linking social capital, allowing them to tap into a wide range of productive resources.

Putnam (1993) suggests that education and learning in the wider sense can be valuable sources of social capital since, for example, societal cohesion and citizenship can be promoted when individuals from wide ranging socio-economic backgrounds are enrolled in the public education system. Learning experiences can provide: opportunities to extend and deepen social networks; opportunities to practice participation and reciprocity—including participating responsibly in society—thus contributing to improved social capital; opportunities to develop shared norms and the values of tolerance, understanding, and respect; and a forum for community-based activity. They can also affect individual behaviors and attitudes that influence communities.

Peer groups are an example of how learning can influence social capital. Learning influences the peer group memberships of

individuals directly, by affecting the nature and range of social interactions and networks they experience in the learning environment; it also acts indirectly, by affecting the occupations individuals can take up. Thus, learning can provide wider benefits for the individual through impacts on access to social networks, but can also lead to possible tensions in bonding networks, by challenging individuals' ties to the communities in which they have grown up.

The literature on schooling and social capital suggests that strong networks and educational achievement are mutually reinforcing (Field et al. 2000). Researchers into school attainment and social capital have concluded that shared norms and stable social networks tend to promote both the cognitive and social development of young people, to the extent that social capital may at least partly compensate for other environmental influences such as ethnicity and socio-economic deprivation.

The important role of schools in developing social capital can work through different channels. For example, Stevens et al. (2007) found that a feeling of safety, acceptance and support, and being treated fairly by staff and students all helped to build a sense of school belonging. Focusing on two inner-city schools in London, they characterized sense of school belonging as a form of social capital, along with young people's attitudes to diversity and their access to support networks.

The authors found that young people's social capital was related to healthy socio-psychological resources. The extent of networks and relationships influenced young people's socio-psychological resources, such as self-esteem, self-control, self efficacy and self-concept of ability. All of these, particularly self-concept of ability, are positively related to educational achievement.

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Social capital and socio-psychological resources were unevenly distributed: in the two multicultural schools, white boys from lower socio-economic status backgrounds had lower levels of social capital while white girls had lower levels of socio-psychological resources.

School composition was important. In the highly culturally diverse schools in this study most students held positive attitudes to ethnic diversity, but much more negative views of small minority groups within the schools, such as gay students. School ethos could also make a difference to students' access to support. The school characterized by a 'strict' ethos appeared to direct more academic support to students, while the school with a more liberal ethos seemed to facilitate students' self-referral or informal access to socio-emotional support.

Neighborhood context and family support were other important influences. Strong family ties were linked to more positive orientations to school and less stress for young people. Young people who live in inner-city areas are more likely to experience violence, crime and inter-ethnic conflicts over space in their neighborhood. This can lead some to develop negative views of other ethnic groups and engage in behavior that is valued on the street but unacceptable in school. Other research shows that close, supportive ties with family can protect young people from negative neighborhood influences.

Youth work can also have a positive impact on communities: widening the social and recreational opportunities available to young people (for example, young people report that participation leads to making new friends); and mediating between different groups of young people, and between young people and local adults (Merton 2004). By working with young people in schools

or hospitals for example, youth workers are able to help young people to make better use of those services; and in some cases, enable the services themselves to become more responsive, and hence more effective, in meeting young people's needs and aspirations.

3.2 Social networks

A greater sense of connection with others and a broader outlook has been cited as an outcome of learning by a range of studies, which consider both level of education achieved, and participation in adult education. These include: a review of evidence by Emler and Frazer (1999), which associated these outcomes with more years of education and higher levels of attainment; an evaluation of attendance at a summer university for older learners in the UK (Jarvis and Walker 1997); Schuller et al.'s (2004) qualitative study of participation in a variety of adult learning courses; and a study of participation in a variety of courses as part of a program for people with mental health difficulties living in England (McGivney 1997).

McGivney (1997) also found the building of empathy for others and a sense of community to be an outcome of learning. This is echoed by other work, including: a qualitative study of participation in college based courses amongst users of mental health services (Wertheimer, 1997); qualitative studies of US high schools (Angell, 1998) and of a community-based physical education program for US high school students (Ennis et al. 1999); and quantitative analyses of nationally representative British cohort data on participation in higher education (Bynner and Egerton, 2001).

Meeting people and forming supportive relationships were cited as outcomes of learning by a third set of studies. These include

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an evaluation of mentoring programs on a health education course for people aged 55 and over living in the Netherlands (Kocken and Voorham, 1998), and qualitative work by Hammond (2004), and Dench and Regan (2000).

Schuller et al. (2002) identified the sheer fact of meeting people from other social groups and backgrounds as one of the mechanisms through which tolerance and positive learning about social values takes place. Others were the role models provided by teachers and other students; and subject content that provides better understanding of others. Social networks were strengthened through individuals' entry into new networks; the extension of existing networks; and the restoration of networks that had in some way lapsed or declined.

This study also found that different competences emerged as a result of learning promoting civic activity. These were 'metacompetences', which signify a holistic understanding of the place of civic engagement; generic skills that could be put to good civic use; and basic competences necessary for anyone to fulfill minimum citizenship requirements.

A survey of over 600 adult literacy and numeracy learners in Scotland over time (Tett and Maclachlan 2007) showed behavioral changes in the learners that were consistent with social networks, including: increases in the proportion going out regularly (this was statistically significant for women and older people); greater clarity about future intentions towards community involvement; and increases in the proportion who could identify someone they could turn to for help. The learners were particularly likely to have extended their 'bridging' networks, through contacts with staff and fellow students.

A qualitative study of a large number of civil service employees (Marmot et al. 1991) found that participants in lower status jobs (who tended to have relatively low levels of education) had poorer social relations than those in higher status jobs (with higher levels of education). Participants in lower status jobs were more likely to report visiting relatives once a month or more, while those in higher status jobs visited friends more often; fewer people in lower status jobs were involved in hobbies; and fewer men in lower status jobs had a confidante or someone from whom they received practical support: more reported negative reactions from persons close to them (patterns were less clear for women).

Meanwhile, quantitative studies provide evidence for a relationship between forming supportive relationships and participation in higher education (Bynner and Egerton 2001), and years of schooling, having a college degree, or attending a prestigious university (Ross and Mirowsky 1999). A review of literature on culture, the arts and sport found that taking part in arts-related learning, such as visiting galleries, contributed to the acquisition of social competencies such as tolerance, interaction, cooperation and conflict resolution (Ruiz 2004).

3.3 Social exclusion

Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept. The evidence we present here focuses on four areas in particular: firstly, the relationship between social exclusion and level of reading skills; secondly, the relationship between participation in youth club activities and later social exclusion; thirdly the relationship between poor skills and occupational disadvantage, and fourthly, the relationship between education and housing.

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Reading skills and social exclusion

Poor reading skills are an important element of social exclusion, with early risk factors operating to confound the process. Parsons and Bynner (2001) explored the relationship between reading test results at age 10 from the British Cohort Study and measures of social exclusion at ages 16 and 30. They identified poor readers (those in the bottom 20 percent of performance), and risk and protective factors associated with poor reading and social exclusion. This allowed them to make two comparisons, between poor readers with a high number of risk factors and those with a low number of risk factors, and between poor readers and good readers.

Results were analyzed separately for boys and girls. At age 16, 79 percent of male, high-risk, poor readers wanted to leave school at age 16, compared with 60 percent of low-risk poor readers and 41 percent of all boys. Boys who were high-risk poor readers were less likely than low-risk poor readers, and less likely than all boys taken together, to have parents who had been to their school to discuss their progress. They were also much more likely to think they would be in manual occupation at age 21. Similar patterns were found for girls aged 16.

Only early school leavers were included in the analysis at age 30. Key findings for males at this age were that: 26 percent of high-risk poor readers had experienced continuous unemployment for more than one year, compared with 15 percent of low-risk readers and 12 percent of all men; high-risk poor readers in full-time work earned less per hour, on average, than low-risk poor readers and all men; and 19 percent of high-risk poor readers agreed with the statement, 'Whatever I do has no real effect on what happens in my life,' compared with 11 percent of low-risk poor readers and 10 percent of all men. The overall findings concerning women

suggested that compared with men, social exclusion tended to be more strongly related to poor reading itself, regardless of their experience of social exclusion risk in childhood.

Adults with the poorest grasp of literacy or numeracy, particularly literacy, tend to be relatively disadvantaged in home life in childhood, both economically and in terms of education levels and educational support offered by parents; were less likely to have had formal pre-school educational experiences; were most likely to have been disillusioned with school; and were most likely to have left full-time education at the earliest opportunity with no qualifications (Parsons and Bynner 2008).

This study found that more families of those with the poorest grasp of literacy were the most likely of all to have experienced these forms of disadvantage. Far fewer parents of cohort members with the poorest skills had enjoyed any extended education or gained any qualifications (76 per cent of mothers and 71 per cent of fathers of those with low [entry 2] literacy skills had no qualifications, in comparison with 50 per cent of mothers and 42 per cent of fathers of cohort members with level 1 or higher literacy).

A lack of reading skills has been associated with the experience of multiple other disadvantages. For example, Hobcraft (1998) found that the odds of becoming a young parent—either a father before the age of 22 or a teenage mother—were more than three times higher for children who attained the lowest reading and mathematics test scores than children with the highest test scores. Analysis of data from the International Adult Literacy Survey shows that receipt of welfare benefits, health, community participation and criminal activity are all linked with literacy skills and educational achievement (Williams 1999, in Hagston 2002).

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Youth club participation and social exclusion

Feinstein (2003) undertook analysis of the impact of sports and community centers, youth clubs, uniformed youth clubs (such as Scouts) and church-based activities. Using the 1970 British Cohort Study the research examined the effects of these leisure contexts at age 16 on later outcomes measured in the same cohort at age 30, including a wide range of measures of adult social exclusion.

Control variables were used in an attempt to deal with the selection bias problem that follows from the fact that participation in the age 16 contexts is not random but is systematically related to the adult outcomes. That is, the young people who attend church-based or uniformed activities will not be representative of the general population and one cannot assume that if such young people have a low level of adult social exclusion, this is due to their participation in the activities.

Those who attended youth clubs had worse adult outcomes for many of the measures of adult social exclusion, even conditioning on the full set of controls. Thus, for similar levels of age 16 behavior, success and aspiration, and age 10 cognitive skill, amongst other factors, those who attended youth clubs were less likely to achieve educationally and more likely to be criminal offenders than those who did not. The reverse was true for the other types of participation in youth activities at age 16.

When we consider results for those sub-samples who at age 16 were at particular risk of adult social exclusion because of their behaviors, this pattern remained. For example, for adolescents whose self-report at 16 of criminal or anti-social behavior was in the highest quartile of the sample, those who attended youth clubs were 2 percentage points more likely to have been found

guilty in court more than once by age 30 than those who did not attend, even within this risk group. Feinstein suggests that this is because peer group effects mean that the young people may be very influential on each other and so there are unlikely to be positive long-term effects of the youth club provision if no structure or facilitation is provided.

The research concludes that the contexts in which adolescents spend their out-of-school or leisure time are clearly important aspects of their pathway from childhood to adulthood and should be considered so from a policy perspective. Provision of structured activities at this age can make a big difference to the life paths of adolescents. However, the contexts in which at-risk young people congregate bring risks as well as opportunities. Successful mediation of these risks can bring long-term benefits, however, where such provision is part of a real engagement of the young people in activities with some objective.

Poor skills and occupational disadvantage

Parsons and Bynner (2008) found that in the British 1970 cohort, large numbers of men and women with the poorest skills first entered the workforce at 16, but spent the least amount of time in full-time or part-time employment over the following 18 years. Men with entry level skills spent more time unemployed or sick, and women in a full-time home-care role.

Whether in their first job at age 16 or at age 34, men and women with entry level skills in work had very different occupational profiles from men and women with a better grasp of the basic skills. They were far more likely to be in labor intensive, low-skilled jobs, often in the less secure, unregulated parts of the labor market (16 percent of men and 20 percent of women with entry 2 literacy compared with just 5 percent of men and 3

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percent of women with level 1 or higher literacy). Even when the impact of further education and qualifications were minimized by restricting comparisons between skills groups to those who had left full-time education at age 16, these differences did not disappear.

Housing

Feinstein et al. (2008b) used the British birth cohorts from 1946, 1958 and 1970 to compare adult outcomes for those who experienced social housing at various stages of life, relative to those in the private rented sector and in owner-occupation. They caution that these are broad groups, with important differences within groups as well as between them.

They found a strong relationship between residence in social housing and multiple forms of disadvantage and deprivation. For the 1970 cohort, those in social housing at age 30 had odds of having experienced a lot of time 'not in employment, education or training' that were around 11 times higher than those for the rest of the cohort. They had odds ratios over nine times higher of being in workless households, being without degree-level qualifications, and being single parents. They also had odds over two times higher of depression, mental health problems and low self-efficacy and of being dissatisfied with life.

Parsons and Bynner's (2008) work in the UK found a relationship between low basic skills and poor experiences of housing. They reported that 22 percent of men with low (entry level) literacy skills lived with their parents at age 34, compared with 9 percent of men with better skills. For women with low skills the figure was also 9 percent. Unsurprisingly, men with entry level skills had moved home least since age 16, and they were the least likely to have ever moved for reasons to do with work.

Both men and women with entry level skills were also the most likely to live in disadvantaged housing conditions—rented and/or overcrowded accommodation—at age 34. There was a relationship between women's skill levels and homelessness: 20 percent of women with low literacy and 10 percent with low numeracy skills had experienced homelessness. For women with better skills, the figure was 6 percent.

4. Learning and criminality

A conceptual framework for thinking about how education impacts on crime is suggested by Schuller (2009). This would consider, first, the extent to which raising general levels of education can be expected to have an effect on crime and anti-social behavior, and the way these are handled.

Secondly, different types of learning and achievement would be considered: vocational, academic, accredited, unaccredited and so on, at different levels. The subjects or area of study might be significant: for example, drama, ethics or sociology might have differing impacts on an individual's social outlook and behavior. Enhancing access to the most effective types of learning must therefore be part of any strategy to tackle crime.

Thirdly, specific interventions aimed at reducing or preventing offending behavior would be examined. These may be designed for those who have already engaged in criminal activity, or for at-risk groups.

Schuller argues that achieving some learning gains tends to lead to further learning. Research following up prisoners after release shows that for those who had received training while in prison,

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especially those who received at least 30 hours basic skills training, levels of literacy and numeracy improved later (Chitty 2008 in Schuller 2009). However, there was no strong direct link between this and getting a job; of those who did get a job, this was not associated with achieving level 1 skills (the most basic school-leaving level), but more often due to connections through family or friends. Self-reported offending was also less common among those who achieved level 1, but not at a statistically significant level.

The reference to family and friends underlines the importance of social capital, according to Schuller: merely providing education and training alone may not be enough to impact on crime, as other factors are also involved. However, learning undertaken by offenders can also impact positively on their relations with family and friends, and help them keep the kind of company that might prevent them from re-offending.

4.1 The influence of literacy and numeracy on crime

A study by Davis et al. (1999) in the US investigated the relationship between poor literacy and violent behavior among nearly 400 adolescents participating in a summer sports and literacy program in a low-income neighborhood. Participants with below-grade reading skills (two grades or more) had higher rates of self-reported violent behaviors compared with those reading at grade level. When gender, race, and age were controlled for, adolescents reading below grade level were significantly more likely to report carrying weapons, to have been in a physical fight at school, and to have been in a physical fight resulting in injuries requiring treatment. In addition, young people reading below grade level were significantly more likely to be threatened at school with a weapon.

Participants in the 1958 and 1970 UK cohort studies were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning contact with and questioning by police, and experiences of being arrested, charged and found guilty of an offence. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of times such experiences had occurred during their lifetime. The results were analyzed against the literacy and numeracy skills of a 10 percent sample of participants whose skills were assessed at an earlier time (Parsons 2002). The British Cohort Study data provided a wide range of demographic, family background and socio-economic information. Using multiple regressions, this was analyzed together with literacy and numeracy to determine the relative contribution of factors to self-reported offending.

4.2 The influence of level of education on crime

Causality is hard to ascertain when studying the effects of education on crime. Statistics for England, for example, indicate that crime rates are lower in areas where people have higher levels of education. However, these are also areas where per capita income is higher and a higher proportion of families belong to the highest socio-economic status groups (Home Office 2003).

Nonetheless, evidence exists to support the association between increases in education and decreases in crime. Lochner and Moretti (2001) estimate that in the US, a one percentage point increase in the rate of high school graduation would lead to a reduction in crime of 34,000-68,000 offences, while a 10 percentage point rise in the graduation rate would cut the murder (arrest) rate by 14 to 27 percent—with a social benefit of \$0.9 billion to \$1.9 billion per annum. In the UK, Hansen (2003) showed that as individuals grew older, there were larger reductions in crime for those with higher levels of education than for those with lower levels of education.

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Sabates (2008) found consistent evidence that an increase in participation in post-compulsory education in England was associated with reductions in crime. The author investigated whether providing income support to young people living in low-income households who were enrolled in an educational program reduced crime rates. Results showed that the provision of income and education was associated with decreases in conviction rates for burglary, and to some extent with lower conviction rates for thefts. However, the association could also have been influenced by other government anti-crime initiatives operating in the same areas.

Feinstein and Sabates (2005) also found that where the provision of income (for young people enrolled in education) was introduced alongside a separate initiative to reduce burglary, there was a much greater crime reduction than for areas that introduced either the income support or the anti-crime initiative alone (the anti-crime initiative included measures such as increased provision of leisure facilities and drug referral programs as well as provision not related to learning).

Feinstein (2002) calculated that the benefit in terms of reduced crime, through the effect on wages of a one-point increase in the proportion of the working age area population with academic level 2 (school-leaving) or equivalent qualifications, would lie between £10 million and £320 million. If one extra percentage point of those in the area population with who had level 2 qualifications reached level 3 (upper secondary) or equivalent, while those progressed from level 2 were replaced by those who had previously had no qualifications, the benefit was predicted to lie between £80 million and £500 million. Assuming linearity, a five-point increase would have effects of between £400 million and £2,500 million.

He also estimated that if the effects of wages on property crime were applied to other forms of crime, in particular violent crime, the benefits would increase by a factor of 2.7. For example, if the proportion of the working-age population with no qualifications was reduced by one percentage point and those people achieved level 3 or equivalent qualifications, the saving in reduced crime would be £665 million per year.

Reviews of educational interventions

Hull et al. (2000) investigated the records of a sample of 3000 people who had been released from prison. Of those who had participated in prison education programs, 20 percent were re-incarcerated, compared with 49 percent of those who had not been in education programs. A similar study by Steurer et al. (2001) based on prison records from Ohio, Minnesota, and Maryland found a 21 percent re-incarceration rate for education participants and a 31 percent rate for non-participants.

Schuller (2009) reviewed educational interventions with offenders in the UK and, on the basis of six studies covering 7,623 individuals, concluded that offenders receiving educational or vocational interventions while in prison are 15 per cent less likely to re-offend after release than comparable offenders receiving only prison sentences. He calculated that the cost of such an intervention is £27,109 per offender per year, representing an eventual saving to the taxpayer of £67,226 if reduced victim costs are taken into account.

However, he cautions that not all analysis of costs and benefits can be quantified in this way, and that evidence around educational interventions for offenders vary considerably. As well as basic skills, some programs concentrate on the arts as a route to self-expression and an expanded communicative

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range, on the basis that this can transform behavior. While studies of such programs suggest that they enhance self-esteem, confidence and transferable skills, these observations tend to be superficial and over-generalized.

Matrix Knowledge Group (2009) estimated the efficiency of in-prison educational and vocational interventions in comparison with prisons without such interventions, measuring efficiency by comparing the cost of the intervention with the avoided cost of crime associated with the intervention. The results suggested that in-prison educational and vocational interventions reduced offending compared with prison alone, and represented a good use of public resources. The net benefit to the public sector associated with the interventions ranged from £2,000 to £28,000 per offender. When victim costs were included, the net benefit ranged from £10,500 to £97,000 per offender.

Other reviews have focused on the impacts of programs without considering costs. An appraisal of three UK interventions found that the types of programs significantly associated with reduced likelihood of re-offending were contact with a probation officer, attending a prison job club and attending a victim awareness course (May et al. 2008). Notably, exposure to other interventions, including general education, offending behavior programs and drugs programs, was associated with reduced re-offending only in the absence of difficulties in finding employment.

However, other reviews, such as Elliott-Marshall et al.'s (2005) UK study of alternative approaches to integrating offenders into the community, identify more positive returns from education in terms of reduced reconvictions. The authors stress, however, the limitations of the evidence as regards determining impact,

and note that there were problems in implementing many of the interventions that were not based on traditional education.

Wilson et al. (2000) reviewed 33 independent US experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of educational and vocational training programs. They found consistently lower recidivism rates among participants, but caution that many of the studies were weak methodologically, generally lacking randomized controls. They argue for the incorporation of 'theoretical links between the program and future criminal development' in future work.

Evidence from specific educational interventions

Porporino and Robinson (1992) offer a convincing evaluation of a basic skills intervention with prisoners diagnosed as having a literacy problem. Their study tested the Canadian program's effect on recidivism, and included qualitative investigation of the prisoners' own accounts of how the intervention affected them. A sample of 1,736 offenders underwent a literacy assessment and participated in basic skills courses. They were then monitored over two years following their release.

Thirty percent of those who completed the program returned to prison, compared with 36 percent who started the program but did not complete it, and 42 percent of those who withdrew from it at the beginning. The largest reductions in recidivism were for young offenders and for violent offenders, followed by longer-sentence offenders. These results were sustained for offenders under both full parole and mandatory supervision regimes, with the latter group showing the strongest effects. The qualitative interviews indicated that participants had been able to use their new skills in various areas of their lives, including searching for jobs, family life and leisure life.

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The provision of employment opportunities for people leaving prison is one of the most effective means of reducing recidivism and reducing crime. Poor literacy and numeracy make it less likely that people leaving prison will find employment; however, there are many other factors which compound the difficulties ex-prisoners face, including the attitude of employers.

The Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) in the US was a preventative program, designed to improve educational achievement, as well as to increase the likelihood that young people would complete high school and enter a further education and training program. The program enrolled young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those with a high probability of drop out from high school, and supplied them with a tutor and supplementary activities in educational and community projects. Financial incentives were also designed to encourage high school graduation.

Two years after the program completion, randomly-assigned participants were 34 percent more likely to achieve a high school diploma and continue in further education. Criminal activity, in the form of number of times participants were arrested, was 28 percent lower than for non-participants (Penn, 2000). However, this was not consistent across all areas (Maxfield et al., 2003), highlighting the need to control for regional differences when estimating determinants of crime.

The Vocational Delivery System (VDS) program in North Carolina, US, comprised vocational and academic learning, as well as self-improvement and life-enrichment activities. The main aim was to increase the employability of participants once out of prison; the evaluation (Lattimore et al. 1990) also considered whether or not criminal behavior remitted for participants. Inmates

randomly assigned to the program received support including an evaluation of the individual's vocational aptitudes and interests, monitoring activities, vocational program placement and job development.

Thirty-five percent of individuals in the program group finished one or more vocational programs, compared with 23 percent of individuals in a control group who had access to vocational education and training but without the additional support. Those who were arrested after release (around 40 percent of the whole sample) were more likely to be from the control group, suggesting not just that vocational education and training brings the wider benefit of reduced criminality, but also that the form of provision is crucial.

Information about the project “European Lifelong Learning Indicators” (ELLI)

It is important to remember that this study is just one part of the larger European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) project.

The ELLI project was launched by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in January 2008 in an effort to make the concept of lifelong learning more understandable and transparent. It is meant as a resource for political decision makers – from the European to the community level – as well as educational institutions, private industry, academics and journalists. In addition, it assists individuals in Europe who want to know more about learning in their own community, country and the rest of Europe, i.e., what learning entails and the impact it has. The ELLI project is breaking new ground by expanding its focus to include not only the formal educational system, but also learning that takes place outside of traditional educational institutions. This holistic approach is an essential component of the project, and is reflected in all of its instruments and activities.

For an overview of all activities please visit our webpage

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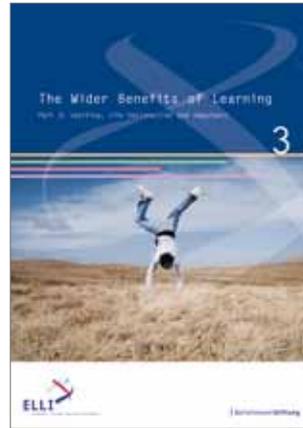
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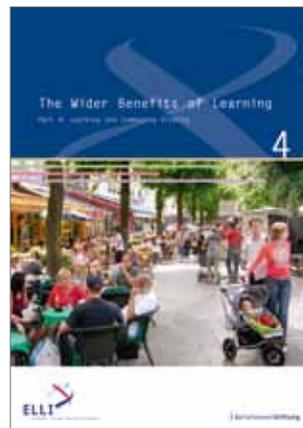
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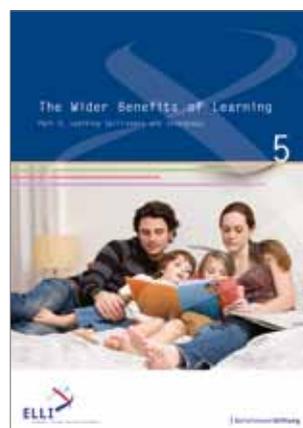
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