

A look at the connection between academic achievement and dispossession

[Education](#)



An analysis of the relationship between educational attainment and deprivation

Introduction

Variations in people's educational attainment can be analysed using different disciplines, including psychology and biology, which focus mainly on the impact of students' psychological needs and status, problems, desires and genetics on their academic achievements. (Levinson, D. et al., 2014)

Sociology, on the other hand, emphasises the effects of social structure on human behaviour, thus taking into consideration the possibility that certain social phenomena may be caused by external factors, rather than "internal" ones.

As Levinson et al. (2014) pointed out, during the 1970's researchers started to realise that although personal deficiencies and skills certainly played a very important role in affecting students' academic achievements, a broader approach was necessary in order to fully understand the reasons behind different levels of educational attainment. As a result of that, numerous sociological studies have been conducted on the relationship between educational attainment and various social aspects, including social stratification, ethnicity and social class. (Moore, S., 2001)

In view of the above considerations, this essay will analyse English pupils' educational attainment in relation to social deprivation, which is a broad concept that encompasses numerous issues caused by poverty and a lack of possibilities and opportunities. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) A combination of theories and practical cases will be

used to identify and discuss the factors that affect the relationship between educational attainment and deprivation.

Social deprivation and IMD (Index Of Multiple Deprivation)

Before investigating the relationship between social deprivation and educational attainment in England, the concepts of social deprivation and IMD should be analysed in order to understand how the British government measures deprivation.

First of all, unlike poverty, social deprivation is a broad concept which covers a number of aspects, such as employment, income, health, housing, crime, education and the environment in which people live. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) The Index of Multiple Deprivation uses all of the aforementioned dimensions, as well as additional ones, as indicators to determine how deprived specific areas are.

With regards to social deprivation in England, a recent report published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) revealed that around 9% of the country's population lives in highly deprived areas, which have a tendency to suffer from multiple deprivation-related issues, low income and unemployment being the most common ones. Therefore, by combining data concerning each area's IMD score, employment and income with local pupils' academic results, it may possible to determine whether there exists a relationship between deprivation and educational attainment and what factors affect it.

Social deprivation and educational attainment

Recent data concerning deprivation and educational attainment in various English counties and districts reveals that, as of 2010, the percentage of pupils who had at least five grades comprised between A+ and C (including English and Mathematics) ranged between 38% and 71%. Therefore, considering that the aforementioned figures apply to all pupils, regardless of their income or social status, it follows that if social deprivation really had an impact on educational attainment, pupils who live under disadvantaged conditions should have lower grades.

However, as Yitzhaki and Schechtman (2012) pointed out, deprivation is a complex concept whose multiple dimensions need to be taken into consideration in order to determine how deprived an area, a group of people or an individual are. This means that without accurate data regarding each student' address, health, living environment and income level, as well as other aspects, it would be very difficult to determine their deprivation level. However, since income and employment make up for 45% of each area's overall IMD score, it may still be possible to draw quite reliable conclusions on the basis of pupils' eligibility for free school meals. (Corporate Research and Intelligence, 2011; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) In fact, the British government offers free school meals to pupils whose families don't possess sufficient resources due to income and/or employment-related difficulties and limitations. (U. K. Government, 2014)

In view of these considerations, from an analysis of 2010 data it emerges that the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who had at least five grades comprised between A+ and C (including English and

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Mathematics) ranged between 14% and 62%. In order to gain a better understanding of these data, the relationship between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils' academic achievements can be investigated through a scatterplot (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Comparison between all pupils and deprived pupils' academic attainment (all counties/districts have been included in the graphic, although some of them are not visible due to space limitations)

As can be seen in Graph 1, disadvantaged pupils' educational attainment is quite low in comparison with the grades achieved by the majority.

As Moore (2001) observed, in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the impact of various social factors and phenomena on education, average values should be taken into consideration. In fact, the data in analysis shows that while an average of 55% of pupils living across England gained grades comprised between A+ and C in 2010, only 31% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the same result.

Evidence from local authorities

Although research has revealed that many children living in deprived areas have high aspirations and perform well in school, statistics clearly indicate that deprivation has a profound effect on young people's self-esteem, goals, academic success and achievements in adulthood. (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; GTC, 2010)

In this regard, a report by London Councils (2007) revealed that poverty is one of the main causes of poor educational attainment among

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disadvantaged pupils as their families are usually unable to support them, do not have a particularly positive attitude towards higher education and fail to encourage children to pursue their dreams. (London Councils, 2007)

Manchester

As England's fourth most deprived area, Manchester is an excellent example of social deprivation leading to various social issues, including low educational attainment. (Corporate Research and Intelligence, 2011)

However, in order to find the exact reasons behind local pupils' poor academic achievements, Manchester's deprivation should be analysed in relation to the dimensions identified by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2011), i. e. unemployment, crime rates, living environment, health, education/training, housing and key services.

First of all, Manchester's population has changed significantly during the past few years, going from 436. 700 in 2003 to almost 511. 000 residents in 2012. (Office for National Statistics, 2013) As of 2011 Manchester residents' average gross disposable household income was £13, 776 and in 2012 its unemployment rate reached 11. 9, one of the country's highest percentages. (Office for National Statistics, 2013) As far as health is concerned, Manchester's high deprivation score reflects on its people's health, which is significantly worse than the national average, with lower life expectancy rates, higher mortality rates, higher children's obesity rates, more hospital admissions and more adult smokers . (Public Health England, 2013) Similarly to health, crime also represents a major concern for Manchester as crime rates increased in several areas between 2007 and 2010. However, the

overall living environment has improved quite significantly during the last decade and targeted government policies have made it easier for residents to access. (Corporate Research and Intelligence, 2011)

With regards to education, data indicates that in 2010, 45% of pupils in Manchester achieved at least five grades ranging between A+ and C, which is a relatively positive result compared to other counties and districts. (Department for Education, 2013) However, the negative impact of deprivation on educational attainment was reflected on the performance of pupils who were eligible for free school meals, as only 32% of them gained at least five grades ranging between A+ and C in 2010.

Waltham Forest

Similarly to Manchester, the London Borough of Waltham Forest also suffers from various forms of social deprivation to the extent that in 2010, it was ranked as England's 15th most deprived area. (Age UK Waltham Forest, 2013) First of all, Waltham Forest's overall population grew from over 218. 000 in 2001 to more than 258. 000 in 2011 and only 38% of its residents are white British or Irish as a result of the arrival of large groups of immigrants from Asian countries, Romania and Poland. (Waltham Forest, 2014) With regards to health and disability, the 2011 Census revealed that residents' overall health has improved quite significantly since 2001, with 5. 2% of the population suffering from poor health conditions. (Waltham Forest, 2014)

Unemployment represents one of Waltham Forest's worst domains, as between 2010 and 2011, 10. 5% of economically-active residents were unemployed, whereas the national unemployment rate was 7. 7%. (Waltham

Forest, 2014) The number of workless families is also worrying, as in 2012 it was reported that over 20% of local dependent children lived in unemployed households. (Waltham Forest, 2014)

As a result of the borough's critical economic situation, in 2011 over 30% of children in Waltham Forest were found to be living under poverty conditions, benefit claimants made up for over 7% of the local population and almost 35% of residents suffered from income deprivation. (Age UK Waltham Forest, 2013)

Crime is also a serious issue, as in spite of periodical fluctuations, Waltham Forest is considered to be a high-crime area with rape and burglaries being the most common offences. (Waltham Forest, 2014)

As for housing, as of 2010 nearly one in ten households were overcrowded and the overall demand for social housing was very high, even though only 22% of local dwellings were available for social housing. (Waltham Forest, 2014)

All of the aforementioned aspects certainly have a significant impact on pupils' educational attainment, which is also affected by the fact that 26 percent of residents are not English native speakers. (Waltham Forest, 2014)

As of 2010, in fact, 50% of pupils in Waltham Forest gained at least five grades ranging between A+ and C, whereas only 37% of pupils who were eligible for free school meals achieved the same results.

Causes and origins

The cases presented in the previous sections suggest that even though deprivation can have a profound impact on pupils' achievements, its various dimensions need to be taken into consideration in order to identify the factors that affect the relationship between deprivation and educational attainment.

Education-related data, in fact, suggests that pupils who are eligible for free school meals tend to perform worse than other pupils in all of the counties and districts that have been analysed. However, government statistics indicate that the performance gap between all pupils and deprived pupils varies depending on the area and the reasons behind its deprivation.

In Manchester, for example, deprivation is mainly associated with health, income, unemployment and crime, whereas other dimensions such as housing, service and living environment are near the national average. Therefore, considering that the last few dimensions do not represent significant obstacles, it can be inferred that health problems, low income levels, unemployment and high crime rates are the main reasons why pupils eligible for free school meals have been found to perform quite worse than the majority in Manchester.

Deprivation in Waltham Forest, on the other hand, is mainly associated with unemployment, crime and poverty, which suggests that the reasons behind its deprivation are different from the ones that caused Manchester to rank as England's fourth most deprived area. (Corporate Research and Intelligence, 2011) However, considering that Manchester and Waltham Forest suffer from

different kinds of deprivation, it is surprising how the performance gap between all pupils and deprived pupils in both areas is 13%.

This clearly indicates that even though deprivation certainly has a negative impact on pupils' educational attainment, different issues and circumstances can have different effects on their performance, which makes it impossible to make accurate observations or predictions about all deprived areas without carefully analysing each one of them.

Conclusion

In light of the data and observations illustrated in this essay, it can be inferred that although there certainly exists a relationship between deprivation and educational attainment, various factors need to be taken into consideration when analysing the impact of the former on the latter. From an analysis of two deprived local authorities, i. e. Manchester and Waltham Forest, it emerged that different areas can suffer from different forms of deprivation, with low income levels and unemployment being the gravest ones. As the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) observed, this is because these particular dimensions have a stronger impact on society than other deprivation-related issues. In fact, although both Manchester and Waltham Forest suffer from different forms of deprivation, data suggests that the impact of deprivation on educational attainment varies, depending on each area's particular circumstances. In this regard, it should be noted that the findings presented in this essay are based on the assumption that pupils who are eligible for free school meals usually live under deprived conditions, without considering that pupils who pay for their school meals may also suffer from deprivation. Moreover, the cases <https://assignbuster.com/a-look-at-the-connection-between-academic-achievement-and-dispossession/>

analysed in this essay represent another limitation as only two areas, namely Manchester and Waltham Forest, were selected. However, the conclusions drawn from the cases analysed certainly support the Department for Communities and Local Government's (2010) statement that low income levels and unemployment are the main dimensions of deprivation, as these particular problems are more likely to interfere with families' ability to support their children's education both financially and psychologically.