Social Mobility and Education

Record of a high level summit sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Sutton Trust

1–3 June 2008
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary of Policy Considerations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Comparisons of Mobility</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Policy Options</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Policy Options</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Policy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Cross-National Experiences</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Options</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: A Keynote</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 – Summit Agenda and Delegate List</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary – Policy Considerations

In June 2008, the Sutton Trust and Carnegie Corporation of New York brought together a number of researchers, policy makers and educationalists to discuss the impact of education on social mobility in the United States and the United Kingdom. The aim of the summit was to compare experiences on both sides of the Atlantic and to identify ways of using education policy – as a key driver of life chances – to boost levels of mobility.

The summit began with an overview of the data on mobility (measured by class, occupation, education and income) before particular areas of policy – early years education, schools, higher education and immigration – were looked at in detail.

In the final session of the two day summit, delegates were asked to list policy priorities for both governments. Although the language varied – and perspectives differed according to the distinctive US and UK contexts – a broad consensus emerged around the direction educational policy reform should take:

1. Concentrate on high-quality, cost effective early years provision, targeted to benefit the disadvantaged most
2. Improve the resources, skills and income of parents and carers in order to improve their capacity to support their children in education
3. Develop sophisticated funding schemes for students, teachers and schools to encourage success and combat disadvantage
4. Prioritise recruitment, deployment and support of high quality teachers to schools serving low-income children
5. Prioritise high quality personalised interventions for children, particularly in primary schools, including catch-up programs to ensure no child is left behind
6. Bridge the divide between schools and higher education, particularly by increasing the accountability of schools for the destinations of their students and by improving access to careers and education advice

A recurring issue during the summit was the need to focus on education policies that proportionately benefit disadvantaged children more than their better-off peers – in other words, to close the achievement gap rather than simply raising overall standards. Delegates also pointed out that radical and transformative policy options can stand a chance of working if they are stuck to over time – the UK government’s commitment to halving child poverty by 2010 was highlighted a good example of this¹. However, the point was also made that bold policies which take a longer term view rely on high quality and sustained interventions – which are often high cost – and the political, social and economic benefits of such policies are far from immediate.

¹ Please see www.dwp.gov.uk/childpoverty for background on the initiative and an update on progress
A number of more detailed policy options were highlighted by individual speakers and contributors during the course of the summit, which build on the broad suggestions above. These are listed below and in the relevant sections of this summary document.

**Early Years**

- Provide more support to parents during pregnancy and early childhood, particularly by expanding proven and targeted parenting programs such as NFP and PEEP
- Develop and improve programs that combine child care and family support for families with children aged 0-2, for example Sure Start and Early Head Start, particularly targeted at the disadvantaged
- Expand high quality preschool programs for 3 and 4 year olds, housed in or linked to schools, to promote high standards and access for those from non-privileged backgrounds
- Provide universal childhood allowances to parents linked to participation in certain activities or schemes, both pre- and post-natal
- Provide better education and training for staff working in the early years – for example by requiring new recruits to have college degrees and offering better in-service training opportunities for current staff
- Increase per capita spending on early years education to the same level as secondary / high school spending

**Schools**

- Ensure that all under-performing schools make use of evidence of student achievement gains in selecting curricular and instructional approaches to improving the teaching of reading and mathematics and in providing interventions for struggling students.
- Focus on the recruitment of teachers with attributes which have been shown to correlate with high student achievement – early experience, strong academic records and high test scores and in-depth subject knowledge
- Expand alternative certification routes to increase the pool of high quality teachers entering the profession, and create high quality staff induction and mentoring programs
- Introduce stricter tenure reviews for staff which take account of student achievement data and other measures of performance, and link teacher pay more closely – or even directly – to student achievement

---

NFP – Nurse Family Partnerships (see www.nursefamilypartnerships.org); PEEP – Peers Early Education Partnership (see www.peep.org.uk)
Develop a range of sophisticated and targeted student- and parent-focussed financial incentives to boost achievement among poorer student groups

Consider further reforms to school admissions policies to combat social segregation between schools

Ensure that both hard and soft skills are developed by the curriculum by integrating academic subjects with the development of students’ cognitive and executive skills

Higher Education

Undertake an information campaign to address misperceptions around the costs and returns to university, including the differing wage premiums across institutions and subject groups, and the financial aid packages on offer

Ensure that information and support for higher education begins early on, from the end of primary / elementary school upwards

Provide better identification and support of high-achieving, low income students during their school days, including advice on application strategies to maximise success in entering top-tier institutions

Introduce a higher education progression measure to increase the accountability of schools for student outcomes, and to encourage the provision of impartial and high quality advice and support

Encourage as much simplicity and transparency in the higher education application process as possible

Immigration

Focus on targeted programs at key transition points to address the particular situations faced by immigrant groups

As part of a series of integration policies, provide high quality English instruction to all immigrants, which is aligned with the mainstream curriculum and which demonstrates to wider society a willingness to integrate

Urgently provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrants

Provide families with support to negotiate unfamiliar education systems and provide advice on career pathways

Ensure that key public services are accessible to immigrant groups – for example in the neighbourhoods of immigrant communities or on a public transport route
For two days in June 2008, the Sutton Trust and Carnegie Corporation of New York convened experts from academia, public policy and the voluntary sector from both sides of the Atlantic to discuss the impact of education on social mobility in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Sutton Trust is the leading UK charity working on issues of social mobility and has commissioned significant research in this area, as well funding a number of practical projects improving access to education. Carnegie Corporation's programmatic interest in mobility stems from its major focus on strengthening educational and economic opportunity, particularly for disadvantaged populations and promoting integration of immigrants, within its national program.

A list of delegates and a summit program can be found in Appendix 1.

**Defining Mobility**

In broad terms, social mobility can be defined as measuring whether children improve on the position of their parents in society. In a mobile society, children of low socio-economic standing have realistic opportunities to move to a higher rung on the ladder, be that in terms of income, level of education, social class or occupation status.

An important distinction is between absolute and relative mobility. Absolute mobility defines how much better off children are compared with their parents, telling us how a whole generation is doing compared with a previous one. Relative mobility, however, measures the chances of children from lower income or class groupings prospering in adult life compared with those from higher income backgrounds. The meeting was particularly concerned with this latter question of improving relative mobility through education.

The meeting was also preoccupied primarily with *inter*-generational mobility, the upward or downward movement from one generation to the next, rather than *intra*-generational mobility movement within a single lifetime.

Discussions focused on average levels of mobility across whole populations, but also mobility for particular groups at the bottom or top of the income spectrum.

**Increasing importance of education**

An argument underpinning discussions throughout the summit was that education is a major – and increasing – factor impacting on social mobility levels. Education’s role in mobility can be related to today’s rapidly changing and evolving labour markets. Increasing globalization and new scientific and technological innovations have redefined certain jobs, as well as the qualifications

---

3 Please note that all references, quotes, statistics, and attributions in this document were taken from statements, presentation materials, and information presented at the Sutton Trust/ Carnegie Corporation Summit on Social Mobility held in New York City on June 2-3, 2008 unless otherwise specified.
associated with them. For example, thirty years ago a mechanic would need to have a high school education coupled with on-the-job training or an apprenticeship in order to work and make a living. Today, that mechanic might have to navigate complex computer systems in modern cars, requiring knowledge of mathematics at a level generally taught in college.

In this new labour market, the value of college degrees overall is greater than ever before. Between 1984 and 2000, employment in jobs requiring a college degree grew by 20 million in the US, accounting for two-thirds of total job growth. Over the same period, wages for college graduates increased. In contrast, high school graduates in America who did not continue with education saw their wages fall below middle class levels for the first time. As a consequence, the opportunities for Americans with terminal high school diplomas are less than a generation ago.

As shown by this data, there are significant wage premiums associated with college degrees, and these advantages are larger than in past decades. For example, in 1979, a male with a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) could expect to earn approximately 51 percent more over his lifetime than his male peer with only a high school diploma. By 2004, the college graduate would make 96 percent more over his lifetime, nearly doubling the lifetime earning potential of his counterpart with only a high school diploma. These increasing and substantial wage premiums for higher education are for the first time being coupled with actual wage costs for not having a college degree. A similar trend is apparent in the UK. As Steve Machin of University College London stated in his summit presentation, “the demand for education is still outstripping supply despite the rapid expansion of supply. So, the penalty for not having a good education level is rising.”

**Educational inequalities**

This suggests that education, particularly higher education, can be a primary driver of upward mobility. If the highest levels of job growth and wage increases are associated with college degrees, then it is important that poor children are able to pursue a path to higher socio-economic standing through educational attainment. However, this logic only holds if the entire education system, from early childhood to higher education, provides equivalent educational opportunities to all children, dependent on their talents and interests and regardless of background. Sadly, this idealized version of education as a socio-economic leveller is far from reality. Half of the social class attainment gap in the US is already present by the start of elementary school. And as Amy Wilkins of the Education Trust put it, “poor kids go to the worst schools,” and this situation is largely consistent in urban and rural areas across both nations.

The disparity in education quality along socio-economic lines is perhaps most clearly shown by data showing that just 11 percent of American children whose parents are in the lowest 20 percent of the income bracket have college degrees, compared to the 53 percent of children from families in the top income bracket. Similar statistics – 10 percent of the poorest children compared to 44 percent of the richest children – are evident in the UK.
It should also be noted that even starker gaps persist in the entry to the elite higher education institutions in both countries, with children from higher income groups taking up the vast majority of degree places – which also have higher earnings returns than other university degrees.

**International competition**

The UK and US are also facing intensifying competition in the global race to produce highly skilled graduates, with the latest international comparisons showing that other countries are rapidly increasing the numbers of university leavers.

At the same time, the UK and the US face major challenges in raising basic skills among people in general. A distinctive characteristic of both countries is a long tail of underachievement in basic numeracy and literacy skills. Reducing the numbers of high school leavers lacking these basic attributes would increase mobility for those from the lowest income backgrounds.

Education could – and should – serve as an engine of opportunity based on talent, enabling children of all backgrounds to have an equal shot at working hard, doing well, and succeeding in the labour market. However, education systems from early years through to higher education often operate inequitably, disadvantaging the least privileged and being more likely to perpetuate divisions than to narrow them. Some students from low socio-economic standing do succeed academically and go on to achieve economic success. However, these cases remain the exceptions rather than the rule, and too often their achievement is in spite of, rather than because of, the education system. Individual cases of beating the odds do not elevate mobility as a whole, nor do they absolve responsibility to address persistent structural barriers to equal opportunity. Rather, the onus is on the education system – and on those with power to effect systemic change – to transform itself into the primary national and global engine of opportunity.
The meeting began with a presentation by Jo Blanden of the University of Surrey and the London School of Economics on international measures and comparisons of mobility. She presented data on the mobility of children born around 1960 and their parents, discussing the methodological issues involved in using different approaches to measuring mobility and examining results for 65 countries.

Intergenerational social mobility is measured in four different ways: by social class, social status, income, and education. Social class is defined by a set of broad groupings of occupations or jobs, for example, managerial professions or manual work. Social status, in contrast, is more directly defined by a particular occupation. Income intergenerational mobility, measured in relative rather than absolute terms, shows where a child is on the income distribution compared with their parents. Income must be measured over a significant number of years to estimate lifetime income, as a person’s relative earnings power may change across their lifetime. Education mobility is defined as the change in level and quality of educational attainment across generations.

**Findings**

Generally speaking, the US appears rather immobile by measures of income and education compared with other nations, but is middle-ranked by measures of social class and social status. One possible explanation of this is that there are large inequalities in existence within the broader social class groupings that are being transmitted across generations.

The UK has relatively low income mobility, but is particularly immobile by measures of education and social class compared with other countries. The US and UK (alongside Germany) appear to have rather strong relationships between family background and test scores among children growing up today. For cohorts not yet in the labour market, those in Germany, the UK and the US (alongside some developing and transition nations) appear to have the poorest prospects for mobility through education.

The correlation between the various social mobility measures reveals that they all have a fairly strong positive association. The exceptions are the measures of social class fluidity which tend to be negatively correlated with the other measures. Blanden’s paper also concluded that differing social mobility levels in countries are not simply a reflection of their overall income inequalities. Higher levels of educational spending in countries are associated with higher intergenerational mobility. The higher the returns to education meanwhile (in particular the return to higher education), the less mobile a country is.

Blanden cautioned that we should be careful in interpreting these data for two reasons. First, she cited the paucity of decent comparable data from other countries such as France and Italy, and suggested that these two countries could be similarly immobile to the US and UK if such data existed. Second, she noted the wide discrepancies between social class mobility and mobility on other measures – income, social status, and education. She suggested that, given this discrepancy, social class may be “tapping into rather different mechanisms” and consequently excluded it from the remaining analysis.
Blanden also highlighted the particular importance of the “90/50” measure of mobility. Looking at a sample population of 100 people standing in line, this measure shows the difference between the 90th person and the 50th person. This measure of inequality compares the incomes of middle income families with those at the wealthier end of the spectrum (although not the super-rich). The demonstrated link between this measure of inequality and levels of mobility is important because it shows that it is important in thinking about the link between mobility and inequality to refer to inequality throughout the distribution, and not solely the role of child poverty.

OECD response

Bernard Hugonnier from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development responded to Blanden’s presentation with a focus on international comparisons specifically considering the implications for education policy. He argued that the relationship between education and social mobility was extremely powerful, stating that “education has in fact perpetuated in several countries social and income inequalities” and that “education did not sufficiently address the [needs of] disadvantaged students.” In these arguments, he related Blanden’s research on mobility back to the issue of how effectively education might be levered against socio-economic disadvantage. He suggested that the picture may not be universally dire. Rather, as he stated, “there are some countries where the educational system allowed students with low socio-economic status to perform better than in others” – suggesting that at least there may be some systems where education addresses socio-economic disadvantage more effectively than others.

Hugonnier detailed various education policy options and programs that are linked to higher achievement among disadvantaged students. He cited research indicating that significant public funding is needed for high quality and accessible early childhood programs, and summarised the wide benefits of such programs to both parents and children, both in the short and long term.

At the school level, Hugonnier documented issues of school differentiation and the resulting impacts on the broader character of the school – specifically, that with high levels of differentiation, students of low socio-economic status are more likely to end up in schools in which the majority of the students are also of low socio-economic status. Such schools face significant challenges in terms of student achievement. Hugonnier considered the implications of the early separation of students into academic and vocational tracks, and noted that when this differentiation of students is carried out at early ages (around 10 years old), the different education routes are closely related to family background, with poorer children more likely to end up on a vocational route.

Hugonnier explained the tension between excellence and equity facing schools: on the one hand addressing the challenge of increasing the quality of education afforded to all children regardless of background, while on the other, reaching high academic standards based on a rigorous curriculum. Certain countries – particularly China, Japan, Canada, and Korea – have achieved both high performance and high levels of equity. However, this is sadly not the case in either the United States or the United Kingdom.
Regarding higher education, Hugonnier cited research revealing that “not only are young people from poor backgrounds significantly under-represented in higher education, but when they do have access, they enrol in greater proportion in lower status and more vocationally-oriented higher education institutions.” So there are two explicit challenges. The first is to get a higher percentage of disadvantaged students to enrol in colleges or universities. The second, perhaps more complex, is to increase the proportion of disadvantaged young people entering higher quality colleges and universities with more selective entry requirements. All higher education institutions are not equal in terms of providing a high quality and rigorous academic experience and access to future economic opportunities.

**Discussion**

Discussion began with Geoff Whitty of the Institute of Education at the University of London, who argued that social capital is a particularly important consideration, given its crucial role in influencing both young people’s decision-making and the breadth and depth of opportunities afforded them. He suggested that, despite the apparent differences between the sociological data and the data on other measures of mobility, it was still important to take account of the factors highlighted by the social class data, as these were undoubtedly valuable in understanding social mobility trends.

Sandy Jencks of Harvard University stressed the importance of inherited traits, but cautioned that there was little that can be done about this, so we should not forget the context, including family income, particularly in the US. He also questioned the approach of measuring only the income of the father for these comparisons, citing the importance of “how two adults pair up.” Tim Smeeding, a scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, reinforced the importance of talking not about genetics but rather about heritability, the latter being defined as the mix of genetic inheritance and environmental influences. Eric Wanner of the Russell Sage Foundation, who moderated this session, suggested that the importance of heritability was higher among well-off families than more disadvantaged families, as the former would seem to have more control over their environments.

Markus Jantti, also of the Russell Sage Foundation, spoke of a growing base of evidence showing the connections between inequality and mobility and emphasizing the roles of educational institutions and the labour market. He argued that it would be helpful to examine labour market structures, choices, and needs.

Brian Jacob of the University of Michigan asked whether we could really compare particular policies in countries such as Korea or Brazil with education policies in another very different country, such as Germany. Considering that every country adopts packages of policies, it may not be productive to cherry-pick individual policies which may not be suited to the overall context of that country. Hugonnier clarified that OECD, in its PISA work, attempts to compare learning outcomes, not individual policies and structure, in consideration of this very point.
Smeeding brought up the importance of immigration to the broader discussion on mobility, and reminded the participants of the need to distinguish between individuals designated as “immigrant” and “minority” in the survey data used by researchers. He cited research that showed immigrant communities tend to experience upward mobility over two generations, and OECD data that showed high levels of adaptability of immigrants in the US and UK. Bob Haveman of the University of Wisconsin, Madison suggested that while the US may not be particularly mobile in general, it still may offer increased opportunities to immigrants. He cited a comparison of immigration policies between the US and Australia, showing that the latter’s policies are highly regulated while the former’s are not.

Hugonnier responded that OECD data suggests that second generation immigrants generally improve upon the standing of the first generation. However, he cautioned that different countries show different results in this respect. Those nations which pursue selective migration, like Australia, have very small intergenerational difference of mobility among immigrants. Those countries which have no harmony between their education and immigration policies see large differences across generations, and at times the first generation may actually do better than the second in these cases. Finally, countries such as Sweden and Denmark with active education policies based on immigrant integration see very small differences in mobility across generations. Jane Waldfogel of Columbia University expressed interest in the high levels of mobility in Canada, and suggested that due to many factors Canada could be an applicable comparison with the US and the UK. She asked what was happening in Canada’s policies to result in such different – and notably higher – levels of mobility.

Nick Pearce, Head of Strategic Policy for the UK Prime Minister’s Office, cited research on the UK in the 1980s showing an increase in income inequality. Data beginning in the early 1990s showed that the top one percent – rather than the top 10 per cent – of the population have achieved the greatest gains. He asked whether these two data points were important to the broader questions of mobility. He then commented on Canada’s focus on not allowing children to fall behind in school and its strong mobility levels, and inquired whether this is an approach which unites the top performers – Canada, Finland, Korea, and Japan. Hugonnier responded that support systems in Korea and Japan are much less prevalent than those in Canada and Finland, with the former countries characterized as high competition-low support while the latter would be low competition-high support. In the Asian countries, he continued, success seems to be driven by competition and the time given to education, with school aged children generally having two to three hours of additional lessons out of school.

Discussion of the Scandinavian countries came up repeatedly, and the general perception among participants seemed to be that the region was generally high performing and had high levels of mobility. Hugonnier cautioned against this perception, saying that Finland is good, Sweden falls more in the middle, and Denmark is not. In contrast, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all score highly on mobility comparisons. In the case of Canada, he said that the federal state system makes it difficult to identify the principal ingredients of success.
Uri Treisman of the University of Texas at Austin noted that, in the US, it is important to distinguish between early education programs which reduce attainment gaps in early years, middle schools which work for poor children, and high school programs aimed at getting poor children into good colleges. However, no single reform can produce lasting results in isolation – this requires a sustained approach.

Successful early childhood programs such as Head Start indeed produce achievement gains, but these will be lost if the child enters an inadequate or dysfunctional middle school. Similarly, successful instruction and remediation in middle school may bring students to – or above – the grade level in subject areas, but there is no guarantee that these students will not fall behind again if placed in a high school without similarly rigorous curriculum and high-quality instruction. While each individual step is crucial, no single step or intervention is sufficient to close the achievement gap in the long-term. Rather, the systems of early childhood, middle and high school, and higher education are inextricably linked along a pathway. Treisman questioned, with this in mind, what were the education systems in which we see gains consolidated. Hugonnier responded that, unfortunately, the answer remained far from clear.

Hugonnier questioned whether the importance of education in driving mobility could in fact be declining in the UK in favour of softer skills, which are more directly influenced by one’s parents. Blanden suggested that it was crucial to consider the quality of education as well – for example, it may be true that merely having a university degree matters less than having one from a particular type of elite institution.

Michele Cahill from Carnegie Corporation of New York raised the issue of social mobility and the role of educational attainment as they related to comparative wages. She cited research demonstrating that wages for those with terminal high school diplomas have been declining in the US since 1993. In contrast, there are more college graduate level jobs in the labour market, and these jobs have shown greater increases in associated income. Cahill asked, therefore, how much occupational developments and changes in the labour market mandate attention in relation to social mobility, particularly considering that the types of jobs available are growing and the increasing need for higher skills to do those jobs significantly influences economic opportunity.
Early Childhood Policy Options

Key policy considerations:

- Provide more support to parents during pregnancy and early childhood, particularly by expanding proven and targeted parenting programs such as NFP and PEEP
- Develop and improve programs that combine child care and family support for families with children aged 0-2, for example Sure Start and Early Head Start
- Expand high quality preschool programs for 3 and 4 year olds, housed in or linked to schools, to promote high standards and access for those from non-privileged backgrounds
- Provide universal childhood allowances linked to participation in certain activities or schemes, both pre- and post-natal
- Provide better education and training for staff working in the early years – for example by requiring new recruits to have college degrees and offering better in-service training opportunities for current staff
- Increase per capita spending on early years education to the same level as secondary/high school spending

This session began with a presentation by Jane Waldfogel and Liz Washbrook of Columbia University. They stressed the well-documented advantages of early childhood programs, particularly for disadvantaged children. Approximately half of the achievement gap between more and less advantaged children is present upon school entry, with the poorest children scoring substantially lower on literacy, mathematics, language measures, school readiness and vocabulary. These gaps are present as early as age four in the US and ages three to five in the UK.

Waldfogel and Washbrook found that a range of factors influence the achievement gap in early childhood. The home environment and parenting style, maternal and child health, early childhood care and education, and maternal education all significantly influence school readiness of very young children, with parenting style and the home environment the two most significant factors.

The presenters identified a range of early childhood policy options that could mitigate these factors and narrow achievement gaps. The most successful programs best equip parents and carers to improve the home learning environment. The presenters stated that education policies must “do more to improve the performance of disadvantaged children than advantaged children,” advocating the need to actively discriminate in favour of poorer children to effectively reduce gaps in performance.
Along these lines, effective policies for early childhood fall within six categories: providing support to parents during pregnancy and early childhood; combining parental support with early care and education for children aged 0 to 2; early care and education for children age 0 to 2; preschool programs for children age 3 and 4; policies to raise incomes of low-income families with young children; and policies to close gaps in parental education.

Response

In his response, Larry Aber of New York University reaffirmed the significant achievement gaps present at age 4. He suggested a two-pronged response-first, identifying factors that account for income-related gaps in school readiness; and second, using data to identify policies that could play a role in closing these gaps. Aber brought up a range of other policy levers to consider along these lines, including tax policies and a possible universal child credit; and health policies, including universal primary and paediatric care for children age 0 to 3, and low-cost and high-impact early childhood care interventions. He concluded his response by advocating the role of implementation science to transform effective programs to widely-adopted public policies, and suggested the need for a transformative policy goal such as the UK government’s Child Poverty target, which aims to reduce child poverty by half in ten years and eradicate it by 2020.

Discussion

Discussion began with Markus Jantti highlighting the literature which tells us that things that happen in utero have very long lasting effects. If we want to start with early years then really we need to look at pre-natal care. There are public instruments that can be easily controlled – for example participation in pre-natal classes could be made a condition of receiving child benefit. Waldfogel responded that the availability of evidence-based work on in-utero development is still very limited.

Kirstine Hansen of the Institute of Education at the University of London brought up a possible conflict within formal early childhood group care, suggesting that such programs may have a positive effect on cognitive development but a negative effect on behaviour. Waldfogel responded that only very early (before age 2) and poor quality childcare can lead to behaviour problems for boys, but there is no evidence of similar negative side effects for other early childhood programs. Barry Sheerman, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the House of Common’s Children, Schools, and Families Committee and the session’s moderator, asked for elaboration on the importance of the early childhood care providers. Waldfogel cited a study showing the positive impact of key staff with college degrees, and said that the successful pre-kindergarten programs in the US have high percentages of staff with college or graduate degrees. Larry Aber brought up the higher costs associated with having and retaining highly educated personnel and suggested that less educated staff could still be effectively trained for the role.
David Willetts, UK Shadow Secretary for Innovation, Universities, and Skills, asked whether the amount of parental time spent with children could be correlated with parenting style and maternal education levels. Washbrook clarified that the quality of parental interaction was not measured simply by the time spent, and Waldfogel added that higher income parents did tend to spend more time with their children.

Willetts then questioned whether, if early childhood programs based in schools are seen as high quality, high quality independent preschool provision could disappear and parents would be forced to enter the formal school environment earlier. Aber responded that this could result in premature formal education for very young children without the corresponding social and emotional elements of the primary school curriculum being given enough prominence.

Tim Smeeding expressed concern with the implication that trained professionals could be substituted for disadvantaged parents. Waldfogel responded that parental and family support programs would be the ideal for the youngest children. For children age three to four, preschool provision for all children, provided through schools, could potentially reduce segregation, as both advantaged and disadvantaged parents could put their children into such schemes. She noted that affluent parents tend to already put their young children into high quality preschool programs.

Regarding parenting style, much discussion focused on how to effectively engage with parents even before a child’s birth, for example through nurse-family partnerships. Aber noted the difficulty of engaging concretely with parenting issues prior to a child’s birth. Sue Hackman, Chief Advisor on School Standards at the Department of Children, Schools, and Families in the UK, cautioned against simply taking middle-class ideas of parenting and imposing them on working-class families, which risks alienating them.

Michele Cahill of Carnegie Corporation noted that in New York City, universal pre-kindergarten is very expensive, but it is significantly increasing the schooling opportunities available to disadvantaged families. Markus Jantti added that universal programs avoid the problem of stigmatising children from particular groups, but the flip-side is they are far more expensive than targeted initiatives.
This session began with presentations by Brian Jacob of the University of Michigan and Sandra McNally of the London School of Economics on policy options at school level for closing the achievement gaps in the US and UK respectively.

US school reforms

Jacob began by grouping school reforms into distinct categories: input-oriented approaches, such as early childhood education and class size reduction in early grades; whole school reforms, including reforms of curriculum, instruction, and school organizational structures; human capital improvement, including the hiring, tenure, and compensation of teachers; and efficiency-oriented approaches, such as school choice and accountability.

Key policy considerations:

- Ensure that all under-performing schools make use of evidence of student achievement gains in selecting curricular and instructional approaches to improving the teaching of reading and mathematics and in providing interventions for struggling students
- Focus on the recruitment of teachers with attributes which have been shown to correlate with high student achievement – early experience, high test scores and in-depth subject knowledge
- Expand alternative certification routes to increase the pool of high quality teachers entering the profession, and create high quality staff induction and mentoring programs
- Introduce stricter tenure reviews for staff which take account of student achievement data and other measures of performance, and link teacher pay more closely – or even directly – to student achievement
- Develop a range of sophisticated and targeted student- and parent-focussed financial incentives to boost achievement among poorer student groups
- Consider further reforms to school admissions policies to combat social segregation between schools
- Ensure that both hard and soft skills are developed by the curriculum by integrating academic subjects with the development of students cognitive and executive skills
Jacob cited research showing that high quality teachers are absolutely central and one of the primary drivers of student achievement. A highly effective teacher can mitigate many other disadvantages. Investigating what types of teacher characteristics influence student achievement, Jacob found that the early experience, test scores, and subject matter knowledge of the teacher are all linked to higher student achievement. However, the teacher’s certification status, advanced degrees, or later experience were all found to not correlate to student achievement.

In terms of policy options related to strengthening human capital in the teaching workforce, Jacob discussed choices around both the supply of high quality teachers and the demand for them by districts and schools. To increase supply, Jacob suggested that the expansion of alternative certification programs had moderate benefits with few costs, and that targeted incentives for high need schools and subjects (for example, secondary-level mathematics and science) combined with high quality induction and mentoring programs have significant potential. To increase the demand for high quality staff, Jacob recommended improved screening of new hires, improved efficiency of human resources systems, and stricter tenure reviews that incorporate student achievement data along with other measures of performance to refocus the system toward strengthening the quality of teachers.

Teacher compensation has long been a much-discussed issue within school reform. In both the US and UK, teacher pay is largely determined by length of service – in effect, the longer you teach, the more you make. Jacob discussed instead linking teacher pay more closely – or even directly – to factors associated with student performance and data on student progress, suggesting that this could drive improved teacher quality and performance.

There has been much more national attention, sustained by No Child Left Behind in the US and the publication of performance data in the UK, on data-driven decision-making and rigorous accountability mechanisms within schools. There is a growing body of evidence that schools improve their performance and increase student achievement in response to stronger accountability measures. Jacob suggested potential reforms to accountability efforts, proposing to include within NCLB uniform proficiency standards across states; coherence between federal and state accountability requirements; increased focus on student gains; and increased focus by districts on the neediest schools. Accountability measures have been extensively used in England since 1988 and now include measures which take account of pupils’ background.

Whole school reform has been extremely successful in New York City, where high performing small schools have increased student achievement levels and graduation rates. The most successful new designs for schools and school systems build in human capital and data-driven decision-making and accountability as foundational elements. These schools further incorporate rigorous curriculum and standards to most effectively remediate students in need and bring increased percentages of students to higher levels of achievement.
On the topic of school choice, Jacob explained the various options in the US—charter schools, magnet schools, and vouchers to private and parochial schools. He discussed the basic theory of action behind the choice movement—in effect, that choice should allow poor students to access better schools and that competition would raise overall standards. He then assessed the various concerns with school choice, including constraints of information, transportation, and other logistics; enhanced segregation through choice selection mechanisms that further disadvantage the most needy children; and reduction in diversity and other public goods.

UK school reforms

Sandra McNally began her presentation by comparing the situation in the US to that in the UK. Similarly to in the US, disadvantaged children in the UK face significant challenges to educational attainment and economic opportunity. In both countries, poorer children tend to attend lower-achieving schools. Over the past ten years, the UK has significantly increased spending on education, resulting in an increase of approximately $2,000 per pupil.

Regarding class size reduction, McNally found that classes under 25 students are best for increasing literacy skills for children with the lowest school entry scores and the most significant needs for remediation. However, she found that the effects from such reduced class size only persist if children move into a similar (or smaller) class in the subsequent year of instruction.

McNally assessed the impact of a recent UK initiative, Excellence in Cities, to raise standards in inner city secondary schools. This policy is aimed at raising the standards of attainment in these schools, and it currently covers approximately one-third of all secondary schools. Through this program schools accessed additional funding—ranging from $100 to $280 per pupil based on the level of disadvantage—which was allocated to specific programs including learning mentors, gifted and talented programs, and learning support units. McNally cited research showing the greatest impact of these programs was on mathematics and school attendance, and further that “the greatest impact has been on more disadvantaged schools and middle/high ability pupils within these schools.”

Regarding teacher quality, McNally first addressed the need for more coherent data collection on teacher records, classes taught, and student achievement. She cited “big problems of teacher labour supply in the UK, especially given the aging of the profession and low relative wages.” She continued, “there is good evidence that teacher pay and labour market conditions affect teacher supply,” affirming further similarities between the US and the UK on this issue. Research on new policy options in this area has found a positive relationship between school performance and head teacher pay.

Addressing efforts to strengthen accountability in the UK, McNally discussed the impact of inspections on accountability and improved performance. She cited research examining the impacts of these inspections. This research found that “both failure ratings and ratings of ‘very good’ have an effect on school enrolment, and that principal exit rates are very responsive to
getting a rating of failure.” McNally concluded that “research shows that accountability has a real
effect; however, tentative evidence suggests that performance at ‘very bad’ schools does not
change much after the inspections.”

Regarding school choice in the UK, McNally stated that there was relatively little research about
the effects of such policies, and that the research that did exist “found little evidence of a link
between choice and achievement.” She cited similar concerns to those raised by Brian Jacob – that
choice may exacerbate rather than mitigate segregation and inequalities; and poorer families,
despite having choice in theory, still face obstacles in exercising choice which do not affect higher
socio-economic families to the same extent.

In conclusion, McNally agreed with Jacob that “rigorous research has identified a number of
intervention strategies that seem capable of improving school outcomes for disadvantaged
children.”

Response

Charles Payne of the University of Chicago responded to both presentations, and began by
affirming the need for “practitioner-friendly research that leads to relatively simple transparent
steps.” He affirmed the need to not ignore the exceptions and outliers when assessing data on
what works, stating that “the exceptions show what’s possible.” He drew attention to the
importance of the local context, particularly when considering replication and transplanting of one
successful model to a different place. For example, successful school reforms in New York may not
be able to be directly transported to Chicago. Instead, improved management practices appear to
be common elements of recent improvements in several large urban US schools systems. Certain
key elements such as high quality human capital and data-driven decision-making may be able to
drive successful reforms in both cities.

Payne stated, “the most successful schools protect instructional time, [and] in the best schools,
academic and social support work together.” In these statements, he echoed the model of highly
rigorous and highly supportive school structures that together increase student achievement. He
also mentioned the importance of high expectations for success, asserting that adults encouraging
youngsters to do well has a positive overall impact, beyond the benefits of academic teaching.

John Dunford, General Secretary of the UK Association of School and College Leaders, began the
discussion by arguing that in the UK at least the reality is that schools choose children rather than
children choosing preferred schools, particularly taking into account the finite options available.
He agreed with McNally’s observation that there is little evidence that choice boosts results.
Dunford agreed with the importance of accountability in driving changes in school behaviour, but
questioned whether such a focus on accountability could inadvertently result in “schools being
incentivized to pick the best pupils.” Jacob responded that accountability measures must be fair
and used intelligently to avoid such unintended consequences.
Many questions addressed the importance and methods of identifying, training, and retaining high quality teachers. Barry Sheerman questioned the importance of academic qualifications for teachers, citing seemingly contradictory research that on the one hand advocates highly qualified teachers, but on the other dismisses the value added of having teachers with advanced degrees. Jacob responded that it would not be practical for schools to fund MA and PhD programs for their staff and affirmed the need for improving instruction in a way that is scaleable and replicable.

The broader distinction within this question is significant in its policy implications. Teachers with college-level content area knowledge and academic achievement have had substantial success in raising student achievement, even in their first years of teaching, in certain subject areas such as secondary level mathematics. However, similar gains were not evident for teachers in primary school. Uri Treisman asked, “if thinking seriously about accountability measures, what would be the conditions in schools which allow teachers to perform optimally,” again returning to the need for replication of key conditions and drivers of change.
Sarah Turner of the University of Virginia began her presentation by explaining past and current statistics on college attendance and graduation based on income groups. Turner found that in 1972 an American high school senior from a low-income background would have had a 31 percent chance of attending any kind of college (public, private, or community). If he was from a high-income home, however, the chance of him attending college jumped to 69 percent. Once in college, the low-income student would have a 39 percent chance of obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree, while his high-income counterpart would have a 59 percent chance.

Looking at the data twenty years on, in 1992, a low-income student would have a significantly higher chance – 58 percent – of attending college. His high-income counterpart would have an 87 percent chance. Both of these numbers are much higher than in 1972, suggesting that in all, more students were attending college than in the past. However, Turner found that the same low-income high school senior in 1992, once in college, only had a 28 percent chance of attaining a BA, while his high-income counterpart had a 62 percent chance. Turner’s data showed that while more low-income students entered college in 1992, a significantly lower percentage of the former group graduated. The discrepancy is striking. It begs the question of what is happening, or rather not happening, in higher education institutions to result in such limited graduation rates for low-income students.

Key policy considerations:

- Undertake an information campaign to address misperceptions around the costs and returns to university, including the differing wage premiums across institutions and subject groups, and the financial aid packages on offer
- Ensure that information and support for higher education begins early on, from the end of primary school upwards
- Provide better identification and support of high-achieving, low-income students during their school days, including advice on application strategies to maximise success in entering top-tier institutions
- Introduce a higher education progression measure to increase the accountability of schools for student outcomes, and to encourage the provision of impartial and high quality advice and support
- Encourage as much simplicity and transparency in the higher education application process as possible

The above statistics came from Sarah Turner’s power point presentation at the Sutton Trust/Carnegie Corporation Summit on Social Mobility, held in New York City on June 2-3, 2008.
An initial reaction may be that the low-income students entering but not graduating from college may simply be less academically prepared than their high-income counterparts. However, Turner's data revealed the case to be far more complex. Low-income students scoring in the highest percentage group in mathematics still enter college at a lower proportion than their high-income counterparts. While academic readiness for college is absolutely an important issue facing poorer high school students, Turner's data shows that the broader challenge of college graduation cannot simply be reduced to discrepancies in academic preparation along lines of income.

Turner made the key point that all colleges are not equal. In the US, attending a selective private college such as Harvard, Yale, or Stanford confers much more potential for future economic opportunity than attending less prestigious colleges. Public universities such as the University of California Berkeley and the University of Virginia are national flagships, but they are also of a much higher quality than the majority of American public universities. Turner found that, “conditional on achievement, low-income students apply to fewer colleges and universities and have a lower concentration of top-tier schools in their portfolios.” This means that poorer students, even those who achieve at high academic levels, still tend to apply to fewer top-tier institutions than their high-income peers.

Looking only at students scoring in the top group for mathematics, Turner found that only 11 percent of low-income students attend public four-year universities ranked in the top 50 (compared to 21 percent of high-income students in the top math group), and only 8 percent attend highly selective private colleges (compared to 17 percent of high-income students in the top math group). In both cases, twice as many high-income students attend the US’s most selective colleges and universities than low-income students. This gap persists at other achievement levels, with more high-income students consistently attending high quality colleges and universities, suggesting that increasing college enrolment and graduation among low-income students is itself necessary but not sufficient to increase their economic opportunity.

A major issue related to access to and success in higher education is the cost of higher education. Turner posed the question of whether “capacity to finance full-time attendance limits college choice.” Costs of attendance are significantly lower in the UK than in the US. However, costs of living may still influence decision-making on college attendance and choice in the UK. In the US, Turner noted an “unambiguous erosion of federal financial aid and an increase in tuition prices.” In recent decades, the cumulative cost of attending a four-year public university has increased while the maximum aid available over four years has decreased, thus increasing the amount that the student would be responsible to pay. School employment has somewhat mitigated, but not eradicated, the net monetary costs of school attendance.

Turner also addressed the importance of school application, admission, and choice for low-income students, describing the process as “a complicated problem benefiting the well-informed.” In the US, the college application process can begin as early as ninth grade with the selection of courses in high school. In the UK, the process begins the year before the equivalent of senior year with A-level exams. She noted that “course selection at the secondary [high school] level and university
options are closely coupled,” affirming other research on the impact high school coursework has on college acceptance and success. Applying to and choosing a college requires students to assess their likelihood of admission (and, implicitly, their own skills relative to the skills of their cohort) and their best fit with any particular college, among other factors.

Turner notes that throughout this process, uncertainty is greater for low-income students. She cited research by Melissa Roderick of the University of Chicago and others on “potholes” or drop-off points along the path from high school to college for students in Chicago public schools. The cumulative findings showed that, while virtually 100 percent of students attending Chicago public schools will say that they aspire to attend a four-year college, only 72 percent “plan to apply in the coming fall;” only 59 percent actually apply; approximately 51 percent are accepted; and only 41 percent enrol the following fall. This leaves 59 percent – a majority of Chicago public high school seniors – not enrolled.

A significant finding of this research is that the biggest pothole was not between students applying and being admitted to college. Indeed, approximately 86 percent of students who apply are admitted to a four-year institution. Instead, by far the most significant drop-off occurs between the aspiration to attend a four-year college (100 percent) and actually submitting an application to one (59 percent). A full 41 percent of students are lost along this part of the path.

Turner related these statistics back to the previous session on schools, asserting “the secondary school achievement gap is a primary cause of differences in university enrolment and attainment [graduation] in the US and the UK. Differences in college choice by high school and family circumstances serve to exacerbate differences in higher education attainment.” In effect, there is a unified pathway across secondary and higher education. Just as the achievement gap present in early years hinders academic attainment in secondary schools, so too does the achievement gap in high school hinder a student’s access to and chances of success in higher education. And, just as both early childhood programs and schools programs share the mandate to close or at least narrow the achievement gap for their most disadvantaged students, so too do high schools and higher education share the responsibility or make more students college-ready and to make higher education more accessible.

Toward this end, Turner listed policy options for higher education aimed at both raising academic achievement and strengthening other support structures around the application and preparation process. Furthermore, she placed a significant onus directly on higher education institutions to first, better identify high-achieving low-income students and second, better support the academic achievement of these students once in college.

---

5 The data comes from a graph presented by Sarah Turner. It originated from a 2008 report by Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, and Moeller entitled “From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College.”
UK issues

Anna Vignoles of the Institute of Education, London, presented the UK perspective on low-income students’ access to and achievement in higher education. She began by stating that in the UK, as in the US, “children from poor backgrounds remain far less likely to go to university than more advantaged children.” However, despite this general similarity, Vignoles highlighted a significant difference. In the UK, controlling for academic achievement in high school, advantaged and less advantaged students have more similar college enrolment rates. Consequently, “if disadvantaged pupils improve in secondary school, they are as likely to participate in higher education as are their more advantaged peers.”

Vignoles further affirmed Turner’s contention that, similarly to the American context, British universities are also not all equal, with some offering better labour market returns than others. She noted a strong negative relationship between the quality of the university and its percentage of low-income students. In effect, British colleges and universities with the greatest percentage of low-income students tend not to be nationally recognized institutions. This suggests that most low-income students in both the US and the UK, even once in college, still face significant obstacles to building the knowledge and skills required by the labour market.

In light of this data, Vignoles suggested that interventions would be most productive if done earlier, while students were in secondary school. She continued to suggest that improved support structures and guidance for low-income students while in high school combined with more efficient and easy to navigate college admissions processes would combat this problem, and stressed the need to “raise expectations early.” This focus on schools would, Vignoles argued, broaden participation while keeping standards high.

Discussion

David Eastwood, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, began the discussion by pointing out that, while drop-out rates were relatively low in the UK once students entered a university, the critical age for “losing” students was 16 to 17. He suggested the key question was how to think about university entry, as in the UK “we aim to recruit the very best, and the result of this has been to heavily skew entry profiles.” David Eastwood also highlighted the ‘arms race’ in education spending, with better off parents always willing to invest more in their children to give them a competitive advantage, regardless of the level of spending in the state system. Steve Smith added to this point, commenting that the politics of reform would be difficult, as it involved “social engineering versus reinforcement of the class system.”

Steve Machin stressed the importance of information about the substantially increased financial returns of higher education in the labour market – in effect, that adults with college degrees or even higher levels of education tend to earn substantially more over their lifetimes than those without college degrees, who have actually seen their wages decline over recent decades. He suggested that children should be made aware of such wage premiums by particular degree and subject areas in higher education – for example, in science and technology – much earlier.
Uri Treisman voiced concern about data showing that half of America’s high school graduates are not college-ready. He cited further data showing “college remediation courses have 50 percent failure rates” and discussed the complex levels of engagement needed to raise higher education attainment and graduation rates. Finally, he drew attention to the low levels of transparency and accountability in higher education as compared to those at the school level, and addressed the need for improved “performance management” in higher education.

Bob Haveman addressed the impact of American college rankings in *US News and World Report*, and the resulting focus by colleges on the SAT scores of those entering the college. He noted that because there is consistent pressure to move up in the ranking, the inevitable result is that this increases the average income levels of the students because much research has shown that higher-income students tend to perform better on the SAT and similar measures. He further mentioned the shifts in some colleges’ financial aid packages from need-based to merit-based awards and the negative impact of such policies on the socio-economic diversity of the student body.

Geoff Whitty reinforced the importance of building social capital among students entering or aspiring to enter higher education institutions, and particularly for low-income students aiming for highly selective and prestigious colleges. He identified a common tendency of children with non-graduate parents to start thinking about university later on in the process, which is likely to place them at a relative disadvantage. He asserted that social capital and the quality and nature of information available to students before college are two major issues which need to be considered.

Sandy Jencks suggested that the focus on the higher education selection process (once students have applied) misses a key issue of financial constraints. He suggested that, “if more high income parents had to borrow money to send their children to college, fewer high income children would go to college.”

Along these lines, Amy Wilkins suggested that we examine institutional financial aid (aid distributed by individual colleges and universities) as well as federal financial aid. She cited data showing that more institutional aid goes to children in the top income quartile who attend the best institutions, in order to effectively buy the highest SAT scores. This results in an obviously negative impact on low-income students seeking to attend these institutions. Wilkins also addressed the need for higher education institutions and the system as a whole to clarify both the academic standards for entering freshmen and the skills and knowledge that entering students must have in order to succeed.

Michele Cahill agreed with Treisman’s point about performance management and asserted that the system itself was in need of redesign to effectively grapple with the challenges facing low-income students. She contended that the building of social capital among students who never previously would have considered higher education a viable option needed to be virtually “built into the secondary school pathway.”
Immigration and Cross-National Experiences

Key policy considerations:

- Focus on targeted programs at key transition points to address the particular situations faced by immigrant groups

- As part of a series of integration policies, provide high quality English instruction for all immigrants, which is aligned with the mainstream curriculum and which demonstrates to wider society a willingness to integrate

- Urgently provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrants

- Provide families with support to negotiate unfamiliar education systems and provide advice on career pathways

- Ensure the key public services are accessible to immigrant groups – for example in the neighbourhoods of immigrant communities or on a public transport route

This session began with a presentation by Demetri Papademetriou of the Migration Policy Institute. Papademetriou began by describing immigration as a global phenomenon highly likely to persist in the future, in large part due to little or no growth in the native labour force; the retirement of the baby boomers; human capital needs and international competition; mismatches in locations between jobs and workers; and specific labour shortages by industry and occupation. He cited data showing that falling birth rates and increasing average life expectancies mean that countries such as the US and the UK will grow increasingly dependent on immigration and immigrants and their children to fuel the economy and sustain the labour force. Papademetriou emphasized that while there were other policy solutions to this problem, including improving the skills of current workers, increasing the retirement age, and maximizing the participation of native-born workers, immigration will remain a necessary part of the broader solution – without it, any other combination of responses is difficult to envisage.

Indeed, in the US today, immigrants are 1 in 8 residents and most new workers in this decade. They comprise 15 percent of workers, including 21 percent of low-wage workers and 45 percent of low-skilled workers. Approximately 30 percent of immigrants in the US are undocumented.

---

6 Low-wage workers earned less than twice the federal minimum wage in 2004. Low-skilled workers are those with less than a high school education. This data and the relevant categorizations come from Papademetriou’s presentation on June 3, 2008, originating from the Urban Institute’s calculations from its 2005 Current Population Survey.
Another 31 percent are naturalized citizens, 28 percent are legal permanent residents, 7 percent are refugees, and 3 percent are legal temporary residents. There are approximately 4.6 million children in undocumented families, and two-thirds of this group are US citizens with the remaining one-third also undocumented.7

When examining the mobility trends of immigrants, Papademetriou found that “first generation immigrants with mid to high skills tend to experience downward [or negative] mobility.” He attributes this trend in large part to discounted academic qualifications in the new country, lack of knowledge of the local labour market, and limited English proficiency which can all result in a high percentage of college-educated immigrant workers in unskilled occupations. The broader problem Papademetriou finds is the “underutilizing of today’s immigrants’ human capital.” The roots of this problem lie in “professional regulations that limit transferability of skills obtained elsewhere; lack of infrastructure to evaluate and validate credentials; employer preference for domestic education and experience; and heightened citizenship and immigration requirements for licenses.”

This downward mobility was specific to workers with at least middle skill levels, as “low-skilled first generation immigrants are unlikely to suffer as much wage depreciation because they are already at or near the bottom of the scale.” After 25 years, most adult immigrants catch up to the mobility levels of their native-born counterparts, although Papademetriou noted, “immigrants from certain non-white or minority backgrounds [still] do not catch up.”

Children of immigrants make up 30.3 million individuals, or 10 percent of the population in the United States, and at least 5.6 million individuals or 11 percent of the population in the United Kingdom.8 Children of immigrants tend to experience slightly more opportunity, with the majority performing better both than their parents and than their native-born peers on certain socioeconomic indicators. Regarding wages, Papademetriou found that children of immigrants tend to do better than their parents and, “with some group exceptions, than their native-born peers.” In the US, the second generation of immigrants also tends to be more educated than the first, with only six percent over age 25 lacking a ninth grade education, compared to 21 percent of first generation immigrants over 25, and four percent of those over 25 born to native-born parents.

In the UK, Papademetriou noted that for some minority groups, children with working-class parents are more likely to end up in professional/managerial class occupations than white British people with similar backgrounds; however, second-generation Pakistanis show lower levels of upward mobility than their white British counterparts, even when taking into account education levels. This suggests that education may function as a source of future economic opportunity for certain immigrant groups, but that other factors still play a significant role in determining outcomes.

7 This data comes from the Urban Institute’s estimates in 2003.
8 These statistics came from Demetri Papademetriou’s presentation to the Sutton Trust/Carnegie Corporation Summit on Social Mobility, held in New York City on June 2-3, 2008.
Overall in the US, a much greater percentage of immigrant workers than native-born workers have less than a high school-level education (28 percent compared to 6 percent). However, this gap closes significantly with increasing levels of education, as 24 percent of immigrant workers have high school diplomas or GEDs compared to 30 percent of native-born workers. The gap reopens slightly – although not to its previous extent – with college entry, as 16 percent of immigrant workers have attended college in some form, as compared to 30 percent of native-born workers. However, interestingly, the education gap is smallest at the top, with 31 percent of immigrant workers and 34 percent of native-born workers having a BA or higher. This data shows that the picture of immigrant workers in the American labour market is complex and at times incongruous.

English proficiency is a significant issue for both immigrants and their children. Papademetriou presented data from the American Community Survey in 2005 showing that almost half of all immigrant workers have limited English proficiency (LEP). The US Census in 2000 showed that more LEP children are in fact native-born than are foreign-born, including 75 percent of second generation or higher children in primary school (compared to 25 percent of foreign-born) and 57 percent in middle and high schools (compared to 43 percent).

As the above data demonstrates, English language acquisition is a significant issue facing education systems across the US and, to an extent, the UK. It is widely accepted among both immigrant and native-born populations that learning English is required for future economic opportunity and civic integration. However, significant barriers remain for immigrants. Access to high quality English language instruction varies widely across the US, and particularly in regions new to immigrant populations (such as the American Southeast) such programs remain sparse, underfunded, and in need of significant strengthening and redesign. English proficiency also influences the opportunities afforded to adult immigrants, and Papademetriou detailed obstacles such as “clustering of instruction at the lowest levels and the unintegrated nature of English and workforce skills programs.” He suggested that immigrant and LEP youth participation in workforce training programs, career pathways for LEP youth, and recognition of foreign credentials may all serve to mitigate these challenges.

Immigration and immigrant integration are politically charged and fraught issues on both sides of the Atlantic. Papademetriou explicitly addressed tough questions about immigration, including whether there are adverse effects of immigration on overall social mobility. Indeed, in certain areas – for example, New York City – immigration has diminished job opportunities for certain populations of native-born workers. In other areas, immigration has provided the only major infusion of capital and labour into local and regional economies, revitalizing them for immigrant and native populations alike. It is certain that the impacts of immigration on the opportunity of native-born workers are plural, diverse, and at times contradictory, depending on the specific context.
Papademetriou suggested productive policy interventions in the areas of language, education, economics, and immigration itself, including selection systems. He further proposed a new research agenda, including focus on “under-researched variables that could help explain social outcomes [such as] the nature of the immigrant penalty, the relative importance of family learning strategies, the importance of immigration policy barriers including legal status, and comparative transatlantic work on mobility from particular countries.”

Response

Alan Jenkins of the Opportunity Agenda began his response to the presentation by addressing the question of why some immigrant groups do not experience the broad tendencies toward more mobility from the first to the second generation. Jenkins agreed with Papademetriou that the data shows most immigrant groups in both the US and the UK achieving greater upward mobility in the second generation. However, he also agreed that some groups are being left behind.

Drawing the comparison between two such groups – Mexicans in the US and Pakistanis in the UK – Jenkins noted a significant similarity between them. Both lacked social capital, not only in comparison to the native-born population, but also in comparison to most other immigrant groups in the US and UK respectively. He drew a clear distinction between issues stemming from this lack of social capital, including discrimination and difficulties in accessing services, and any inherent characteristic of the cultures. Indeed, he pointed out, these groups may enjoy significantly higher levels of mobility in other countries to which they immigrate.

Jenkins also addressed the importance of racial segregation in the US, citing evidence showing that African Americans born in the 1960s have actually been downwardly mobile. This group faces significant discrimination in seeking to buy a home or apply for a job, two traditional and foundational sources of upward mobility. Further exacerbating this situation is the persistent racial and socioeconomic segregation of schools across the US, frequently resulting in schools with high numbers of both immigrants and minorities having less adequate capacity to deliver opportunity through education. The end result is the most struggling and least capable schools often get the most disadvantaged children, compounding the obstacles.

Jenkins asserted that a universal approach to policymaking will not suffice to close these gaps in opportunity, and that specific interventions are needed. He cited policies “breaking down the racial hierarchies in the labour market through litigation, support, and information” and providing a pathway to citizenship and integration policies for immigrants as urgently needed interventions. He finally urged “expanding the toolkit with which we tackle these problems,” and cited the example of Texas, where the top ten percent of each high school is accepted to a top state university, resulting in a transformed school culture across the state. Papademetriou concurred that targeted programs were needed at key points to address the particular situations which different groups face.
**Discussion**

Anna Vignoles argued that we need to distinguish between educational mobility and social mobility, pointing out that immigrants may do better in terms of educational opportunities, but often this is not translated into better labour market opportunities. Papaemetriou responded that France is a good example of this trend in large part because of “marginalization by the system” hindering progress. Michele Cahill added that we must think about higher education and the obstacles for immigrant youth getting to college.

Sandy Jencks addressed the politically charged reactions to immigrants and immigration, wondering “whether the immigration backlash will win [and] we stop moving people to the US.” David Davis, UK Shadow Home Secretary and moderator of this session, affirmed that anti-immigrant backlash and tensions existed in the UK as well. Papademetriou responded that we have never before experienced the current combination of low birth rates combined with greater life expectancy and contended that immigrants will remain necessary to the functioning of the American and UK economy as a result of this situation. Jenkins added that the “backlash was already here, as there are lots of punitive measures attempting to deter illegal immigrants from the US.” However, he reiterated the need to change the terms of the debate and correct its errors, most specifically by highlighting the willingness of immigrants to learn English and contribute to and integrate with society.
This session began with presentations by Tim Smeeding and Steve Machin, and it was dually moderated by Congressman Mel Watt of North Carolina and Ed Miliband, Member of Parliament and UK Minister for the Cabinet Office.

Smeeding began by summarizing the biggest obstacles to upward mobility in the US and the UK. He noted poverty and health care issues beginning before birth and persisting through childhood; inadequate preschool and early childhood learning programs, particularly for the poorest families; falling graduation rates and significant achievement gaps in secondary schools; and stratified college attendance and graduation rates, which all pose significant challenges to increasing educational and economic opportunity for low socio-economic status children.

Considering the increasingly determinative impact of a college degree on future economic opportunity, Smeeding focused the bulk of his discussion on unequal access to and success in higher education. He noted that while a high-income family has approximately $50,000 per year to spend on each child, a low-income family has only about $9,100. Such a significant financial constraint would undoubtedly influence the opportunities available to the low-income child. And, as a result, Smeeding stated that “most lower-SES kids, and especially those who are minority, first enrol in two-year community colleges. From there, only about one-third of these kids go on to four-year colleges and universities.”

Smeeding concurred with the earlier points by Vignoles and others on the importance of college readiness in high schools, and highlighted the importance of “aspirations, course enrolment, remediation policy, information policy, and advisory and counselling policies.” He continued that students must apply to four-year colleges and prestigious institutions in order to be accepted, and affirmed the need for improved guidance on the true costs of college, including financial aid options for low-SES children, assistance with the application process and peer mentoring. Recognizing the need to keep students in college and achieving once they arrive, Smeeding recommended an “enrolment management policy” targeting entering freshmen and sophomores to minimize the dropout rate.

Machin noted that mobility itself would be difficult to influence directly, and recommended instead “a focus on the drivers of mobility.” He noted that education is a primary and complex driver of mobility, and listed other contributing factors such as personal behaviour and social and cultural capital. However, despite the importance of these additional factors, Machin reaffirmed the primacy of education, stating “education has become more important for economic and social outcomes, and this has actually reinforced existing inequalities.”

Because education garners such significant wage premiums, it is increasingly becoming the driver of economic opportunity. However, because of the many persistent inequalities in the education systems, it is much more difficult for low-SES kids to use education to achieve a better socio-economic standing in the future. Machin reiterated the need for better information on the significance of educational achievement, most notably through college degrees, in providing access to a better economic life. He also voiced support for public policies that could reduce inequalities across the education system, from early childhood through schools to higher education.
Congressman Watt voiced agreement with Machin and Smeeding, affirming that “we need to establish that education is important – and what the policymakers’ role should be in promoting it. There is also the critical issue of ensuring that sufficient resources are devoted to education and that it remains a public policy priority.”

Ed Miliband supported the critical importance of early childhood education, the quality of the teaching force, and the need to instil and support high aspirations in children of low socio-economic standing. He agreed with Congressman Watt that all of these things require both money and political will, and challenged the participants to grapple with strategies to win public support. Finally, he stated that social mobility should not just be thought of in terms of the top and the bottom, but rather “throughout the income distribution – for example, middle income earners could improve their positions too.”
A Keynote, One City’s Strategy for Improving Public Education to Expand Opportunity and Mobility

Joel Klein, Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education served as the Summit’s keynote speaker, and he detailed the radical reforms undertaken by New York City to raise achievement among low-income students. Chancellor Klein conveyed his belief that the public education system can and must be an instrument of mobility in the United States and focused on the strategy developed in New York City to improve public schools on a large scale. Klein described the New York City public school system – 1.1 million students, 130,000 employees, and 80,000 teachers. At the start of the current reform its schools were responsible to 40 different district or high school superintendents, a special education bureaucracy, and multiple court consent decrees. And, New York City’s results data showed the largest proportion of poor children with the lowest academic achievement, the most unlicensed teachers, and a stagnant graduation rate of 50 percent from 1992 to 2002.

Chancellor Klein argued that clearly, this was a system in need of radical reform. To dramatically improve this situation, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein launched a reform named and themed Children First. Klein stated that he chose “Children First” to counter the long-standing experience of most urban districts where institutional cultures result in decisions being made with adult interests in mind, and that this had to change.

Klein characterized Children First as characterized by several agenda points which he described as follows: First, it raised expectations across the system, conveying the belief that effective schools can trump poverty, and that children in low-income families can achieve at high academic levels. There was no mistaking the difficulty of this task – indeed, if it were easy, it would have been done. Children First conveyed a sense of empowerment, grounding its reforms on the core belief that while research has indeed shown close connections between family status and educational attainment this is descriptive, not determinative; that good schools can turn this around. The reform communicated a coherent core vision of a system of good schools where every parent would be willing to send his or her child to any school. Everything else in the system had to be justified by whether (and how) it contributes to creating good schools and whether it is the best way to support these schools.

Children First also articulated why New York City needed radical as opposed to merely incremental reform. The system itself was failing, and it had been virtually structured to fail at the job of bringing students from poor backgrounds to the high level of achievement required for the 21st century knowledge economy, higher educational attainment and graduation, and future jobs. These structural failures included a maldistribution of teachers with lock-step advancement, salaries, and easy tenure; contracts that made removing poorly performing teachers and principals onerous; weak internal accountability mechanisms at the school level; and secondary schools which the national evidence showed were impervious to gradual change and in need of new designs.
To tackle this situation, Children First had to identify and develop powerful levers of change on which to design a new system. A good school requires a capable, effective school leader or principal. High quality leadership is determinative of the broader quality of the school, as this principal is the key strength or weakness determining whether there will be a core of effective teachers, resources directed towards achieving measurable outcomes, and a culture of learning and achievement throughout the school. Children First focused on leadership as a critical first step in building the human capital of the system. It developed a Leadership Academy with a continuous emphasis on building the capacity of principals to become empowered to direct resources effectively.

Underlying the program was also a belief that a good school requires rigorous accountability mechanisms that inform instruction. A system of such good schools requires coherence of rigorous standards and data on achievement to drive improvements in practice, instruction, and student achievement. Children First began by investing in a core curriculum for literacy and mathematics to ensure that the poorest performing schools would be teaching a coherent curriculum aligned with high standards for which they would be held accountable. The reform also infused accountability into all aspects of schools, principals, teachers, and families, ending social promotion and adding resources such as Parent Coordinators and Saturday Academies. A key component of these special programs was that they had to be staffed by proven effective teachers. The second step in strengthening accountability was to develop a robust accountability system with transparency and fairness, grading schools within bands of similar student populations, and implementing school quality reviews and a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Given the need for radical and rapid transformation, Children First addressed the need to infuse innovation and invention into the system. It created large numbers of new schools, not only to immediately increase the supply of high quality options for students but also to promote systemic reform. These new schools, designed to incorporate all other key levers of change, enabled the system to close and replace its lowest performing schools, making accountability real and visible. In his speech, Klein emphasized how these new schools have provided opportunities for excellence through innovation, best practice and new leadership. Entrepreneurial school developers, lessened regulation, and new partnerships have fostered new designs and pedagogy, and partnerships with key resources in the city have built social capital for students. Klein highlighted the dual prongs of accountability and autonomy built on a strong foundation of human capital throughout his speech. In New York City, Children First promoted and strengthened principal and school empowerment linked to accountability by driving money and other resources to the schools directly, enabling principals themselves to control their budgets. Children First also redesigned system management so that every principal could choose the source of support for his or her school. Options included an empowerment network, a learning support network, services from the system’s instructional teams; or partnership support organizations, contract agencies for networks of schools sharing an approach to school design.
Klein was explicit about the fact that radical and transformative change requires conflict, and Children First’s reforms were no exception, most recently around teacher tenure proposals. However, he stressed the mandate to make continuous and difficult systemic change and redesign. In all, Klein concluded that reform must continue because it is working. New York City was awarded the Broad Prize, based on key criteria of reducing racial and socio-economic achievement gaps. Graduation rates increased ten percentage points, representing about 5,000 more young people graduating per year. Finally, he advocated our shared aim of creating systems of schools that will be pathways to educational and economic opportunity in a rapidly changing global context where our young people will live and where our democracies must thrive.
Summit Agenda

Monday, June 2

International overview
Speaker: Jo Blanden, London School of Economics
Responder: Bernard Huggonier, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Chair: Eric Wanner, President, Russell Sage Foundation

Early Childhood Policy
Speaker: Jane Waldfogel, Columbia University
Responder: Larry Aber, New York University
Chair: Barry Sheerman, Chair of the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee

Schools Policy
Speaker: Brian Jacob, University of Michigan
Speaker: Sandra McNally, London School of Economics
Responder: Charles Payne, University of Chicago
Chair: Michele Cahill, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Drinks and formal dinner at Tavern on the Green
Keynote Speaker: Joel I. Klein, Chancellor of Schools, New York City

Tuesday, June 3

Higher Education Policy
Speaker: Sarah Turner, University of Virginia
Responder: Anna Vignoles, Institute of Education, London
Chair: David Willetts, Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Immigration and Cross-National Experiences of Social Mobility
Speaker: Demetrious Papademetriou, Migration Policy Institute
Responder: Alan Jenkins, The Opportunity Agenda
Chair: David Davis, Shadow Home Secretary

Levers of Change and Policy Priorities
Panel: Timothy Smeeding, Syracuse University
Stephen Machin, London School of Economics
Michael McPherson, President, Spencer Foundation
Chair: Congressman Melvin Watt, 12th District, North Carolina
Ed Miliband, Minister for the Cabinet Office
Delegates

Lawrence Aber  Professor of Applied Psychology and Public Policy, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University

Laura Barbour  Early Years Consultant, Sutton Trust

Sandy Baum  Professor of Economics, Skidmore College and Senior Policy Analyst at the College Board

Jo Blanden  Associate Researcher, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Michele Cahill  Vice-President, National Programs and Director of Urban Education, Carnegie Corporation

David Davis  Shadow Home Secretary

John Dunford  General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders

David Eastwood  Chief Executive, Higher Education Funding Council for England

Lee Elliot Major  Research Director, Sutton Trust

Leon Feinstein  Professor of Education and Social Policy, Institute of Education, London

Vartan Gregorian  President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Sue Hackman  Chief Adviser on School Standards, Department for Children Schools and Families, UK

Kirstine Hansen  Research Director, Millennium Cohort Study, Institute of Education, London

Bob Haveman  Professor Emeritus of Economics and Public Affairs, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Bernard Hugonnier  Deputy Director, Directorate for Education, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Vanessa Shadoian  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Brian Jacob  Professor of Education Policy, Professor of Economics, Michigan University

Markus Jantti  Professor of Economics, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Sandy Jencks  Malcolm Wiener Professor of Social Policy, Harvard University

Alan Jenkins  Executive Director, The Opportunity Agenda

Ianna Kachoris  Senior Associate, Pew Charitable Trusts’ Economic Mobility Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan King</td>
<td>Vice President, External Affairs, Carnegie Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel Klein</td>
<td>New York City Schools Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Machin</td>
<td>Director, Centre for Economics of Education, London School of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geri Mannion</td>
<td>Program Director, U.S. Democracy and Special Opportunities Fund, Carnegie Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra McNally</td>
<td>Director of Education Programme, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael McPherson</td>
<td>President, Spencer Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Miliband</td>
<td>Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demetrios Papademetriou</td>
<td>Co-founder and President of the Migration Policy Institute, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Payne</td>
<td>Professor of African American history and sociology, Duke University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Pearce</td>
<td>Head of Strategic Policy, Prime Minister’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Sheerman</td>
<td>Chairman, House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Smeeding</td>
<td>Professor of Economics and Public Administration at Syracuse University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Smith</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor, Exeter University and member of the National Council for Educational Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Smithers</td>
<td>Director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research, Buckingham University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa Stone</td>
<td>Director, Sutton Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug Thomson</td>
<td>Development Director, Sutton Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uri Treisman</td>
<td>Professor of mathematics and public affairs, University of Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Turner</td>
<td>Policy Director, Sutton Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Turner</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Education and Economics, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaveri Vaid</td>
<td>Program Assistant, National Program, Carnegie Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Vignoles</td>
<td>Director, Centre for the Economics of Education, Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Waldfogel</td>
<td>Professor of Social Work and Public Affairs, Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Wanner</td>
<td>President, Russell Sage Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz Washbrook</td>
<td>Research Associate, Centre For Market And Public Organisation, Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel Watt</td>
<td>Congressman, 12th District of Northern Carolina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eulada Watt  North Carolina State Board of Education
Geoff Whitty  Director, Institute of Education, London
Amy Wilkins  Vice president, Education Trust
David Willetts  Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Kathryn Wilson  Associate Professor of Economics, Kent State University