
State of the Art Briefings
**29th International Congress for School
Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSE),
Glasgow 2016**

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What Works Scotland (WWS) aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

We are working with Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public services (Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire) to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability

A further nine areas are working with us to enhance learning, comparison and sharing. We will also link with international partners to effectively compare how public services are delivered here in Scotland and elsewhere. During the programme, we will scale up and share more widely with all local authority areas across Scotland.

WWS brings together the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, other academics across Scotland, with partners from a range of local authorities and:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- Joint Improvement Team
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Education for Scotland
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

This is one of a series of papers published by What Works Scotland to share evidence, learning and ideas about public service reform. This paper relates to the WWS **Improvement and Effectiveness** work stream.

What Works Scotland is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scottish Government. www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk

Biographies

Former Deputy Chief Constable Police Scotland Steve Allen

Deputy Chief Constable (rtd) Steve Allen joined Avon and Somerset Constabulary in 1985 where, over 17 years, he undertook a range of roles including divisional command. In 2003, he became a Commander in the Metropolitan Police, leading the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force and then established the Violent Crime Directorate. He played a key role in responding to the families of victims of both the Tsunami and the London bombings in 2005.

In 2007 he was appointed as Commander of the City of Westminster, responsible for policing central London. During his time in London he was the national lead for Honour Based Violence and for Robbery. Transferring in January 2010, Steve became the Deputy Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police. In January 2013 he was appointed Deputy Chief Constable of Police Scotland. He was responsible for the safety and security of the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup in 2014 and was subsequently seconded into Scottish Government where he used his experience and expertise to advise on developments related to public service leadership and reform. Steve retired from Police Scotland in December 2015.

Professor Chris Chapman

Chris is Chair of Education and Public Policy and Practice, Director of the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change, University of Glasgow and co-Director of What Works Scotland. Prior to this he was Professor of Education at the University of Manchester and previously held academic and research posts at the universities of Nottingham and Warwick.

Chris has undertaken research and evaluation projects for research councils, charities, national and local governments and their agencies. Chris has also led D&R projects with local authorities, schools and teachers to build the capacity for leading and managing change and improving student outcomes. Currently Chris is seconded to Scottish Government on a part time basis as Senior Academic Adviser to the Attainment Challenge.

Professor Ken Gibb

Ken is a professor in the School of Social and Political Sciences in the subject area of Urban Studies. He is also Director of Policy Scotland, the University hub for policy research and knowledge exchange. He is a co-director of What Works Scotland co-funded by ESRC and Scottish Government. Ken was also Head of the Department of Urban Studies from 2005 to 2010 and associate dean of the Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences in 2009-10.

Ken's research interests concern the economic, financial and policy dimensions of housing. Ken was formerly the managing editor of the Urban Studies journal. He is immediate past president of RC43 (housing) of the International Sociological Association and is a former president of the European Real Estate Society. He was a visiting professor to the University of Amsterdam in 2011. He acted as advisor to the Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee and has also worked for the Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee. Ken sits on the board of Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and the Urban Studies Foundation.

Professor Sayantan Goshal

Sayantan Ghosal is a Professor of Economics at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow. He was a Professor of Economics at the University of Warwick from October 2004 to March 2013. He was Research Director for the ESRC Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy (CAGE) from 2010 - 2012 and continues his association with CAGE as a Research Fellow. He obtained his PhD from CORE, Universite Catholique de Louvain.

Dr Lorna Kelly

Lorna is the Associate Director of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, and joined the team in May 2014. She provides leadership to the Centre staff team on a day to day basis, as well as working with the Director to develop the work of the centre and its resource base, building profile, networks and influence and carrying overall accountability for the work delivered.

Lorna contributes across the range of work programmes, with a particular focus on new developments, connections to partner agencies and the Poverty, Disadvantage and the Economy theme.

Professor David Reynolds

David is Professor in Education within Southampton Education School at the University of Southampton. He has run undergraduate academic education courses in Cardiff, Exeter and Newcastle Universities and has an international reputation for his work on school effectiveness, school improvement, teacher effectiveness and dyslexia. He founded the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) which now has members in over 60 countries and has edited or been on the editorial boards of six international journals.

He has a particular interest in trying to get research into influencing educational policies, and chaired the Numeracy Task Force, was a member of the Literacy Task Force and was a .2 Adviser at DFES (as was) from 1999 to 2006. He has also been on the boards of both the TDA and BECTA. He is currently Senior Policy Advisor to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Professor Karen Seashore

Karen's primary research interests focus on school improvement and school reform and her main area of expertise includes improvement in K-12 leadership and policy over the last 30 years, particularly in urban secondary schools. Karen also conducts research on organizational changes within higher education, with particular attention to faculty roles, and on international comparative policy in educational reform. My interest in evaluation is a long-standing, and has emphasized in the assessment of large-scale educational programs and policies.

As a sociologist, Karen, tends to look at educational reform through the lens of organizational theory, with an emphasis on the interaction between culture and structure and her research in higher education is also influenced by her experience in administration, having served as department chair, associate dean, and director of the Centre for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.

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Introduction

What Works Colleagues and partners led a State of the Art Session at the [29th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement](#) held in Glasgow in January 2016 to stimulate discussion about what educational research might learn from other disciplines.

Professor Ken Gibb spoke about the methodological and implications from housing research. Steve Allen spoke about collaborative leadership within the context of public service reform. Professor Sayantan Gohsal spoke about his work using randomised controlled trials and interventions to explore aspirations in the South. Dr Lorna Kelly from Glasgow Centre for Population Health offered her insights into research and development on health and wellbeing and how this connects to the raising attainment agenda.

Professor Chris Chapman Chaired the session, Professor David Reynolds (University of Southampton) set the scene and provided a context for the session, and Professor Karen Seashore (University of Minnesota) provided the response by identifying a number of key synergies, opportunities and challenges posed by these external perspectives that have implications for the future development of the field of educational research.

The four briefing papers are presented in as a collection within this document and also available on-line as [WWS publications](#).

Aims and Objectives of State of the Art ICSEI 2016

Learning from other disciplines and sectors: What added value might Public Service Leadership, Urban Studies, Economics research, policy and practice contribute to Health add to Educational Effectiveness and Improvement Research, Policy and Practice?

Rationale

The field of educational effectiveness and improvement research (EEIR) has made much progress over the past 40 years. However, for the most part it has focused on a limited number of narrow outcomes in terms of student achievement and tended to focus on developing a knowledge base without extensive engagement with other disciplines or areas of enquiry. Put simply, the field has ploughed its own furrow. If the field EEIR is to optimize its potential and continue to make a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge it is imperative it engages with and draws on theoretical and practical insights from out with education.

Purpose

The purpose of this State of the Art Session was to provide ICSEI members the opportunity to engage with senior Scottish academics, policy advisors and practitioners from outside of education to share ideas and insights across both disciplines and sectors and research, policy and practice communities.

Aims

The aims for this session were threefold:

- To gain their insights and perspectives about how other academic disciplines, policy insights and practice might contribute to the future development of EEIR.
- To stimulate discussion about how EEIR might build stronger relationships with other disciplines and areas of policy development and practice.
- To reflect on the how EEIR might develop a coherent interdisciplinary programme of research

Session 1 – Learning from other Disciplines and Sectors

Steve Allen, Public Service Leadership

The Scottish Government have invested significant amounts of resource into developing the idea that there is a distinctly Scottish way of thinking about and delivering public services. The influences that have shaped this thinking are various and range from political philosophy through to pragmatic responses to significant events in national life. There was a period during 2014/15 when there was a strong desire to attach the label “The Scottish Approach” to this thinking but, for a number of reasons the current preference is to talk about a collection of ideas and principles that describe how government relates to and serves citizens.

In the context of cross-organisational/sector learning this thinking has been important. The willingness of any part of the public service to acknowledge potential learning in the experience of others is, in large part, determined by the extent to which there is a shared sense of purpose and values, a recognition of contributing to a coherent and broad consensus about what “successful” communities look like and the culture of individual organisations shaped by their leaders. Scottish thinking about public service delivery has, at its heart, an aspiration to impact, inter alia, on each of these.

The approach is dynamic and there is no definitive prescription. However, it is possible to identify some key elements:

- A recognition that equality, participation and sustained economic growth are interdependent and the strategic purpose of government;
- That citizens want and have an absolute right to contribute to the decisions that affect their lives and to hold public servants to account;
- That prevention is always the most effective use of resources;
- That the starting point for collaboration is public services collaborating with citizens (not each other) to design the service and then working effectively and creatively together to deliver outcomes;
- The importance of assets-based approaches. The experience, networks, relationships and talents that exist in communities are as important as the physical assets in building confidence, capability and the solutions to problems;
- The idea of co-production. The participation and engagement of citizens in design and delivery. The citizen is the starting point;
- A commitment to continuous improvement – specifically through the application of “Improvement Science”;
- There is no one solution that meets the needs of every community. Locally-appropriate solutions consistent with a shared set of principles;
- Budget constraints are not a driver of change in the public service, they are simply the context in which reform is occurring;

- The public service includes the public sector, the third sector and the private sector delivering public services.

The important point is the invitation to all public service organisations to understand their role in the wider context of nation-shaping. This type of public service requires a particular type of leadership, characterised by a broad and deep understanding of the role of public service as a whole system. It requires the confidence to empower and resource leaders at a local level to innovate and respond to local environments. It requires leaders who understand and practice genuine engagement and who have a sophisticated and long-term view about the wider outcomes citizens and communities are seeking. There needs to be a recognition of the significant investment required to train and develop staff at all levels of organisations to work in a different, more responsive, less prescriptive way and systems and processes need to select, promote and reward those who operate successfully in the new paradigm.

There are challenges to be met.

They include the political imperative to short term, demonstrable achievement. This manifests in target-driven performance regimes that distort behaviour, divert resources and can strip people-centred, vocational work of its essential meaning.

Budget constraints push some leaders into a reductionist approach that talks of “core functions”, reduces the commitment to partnership, encourages reactive rather than preventative activity and devalues any activity for which there is not a “measure”.

The continuing challenges around representation and diversity run the risk of being regarded as yesterday’s problem. The aspiration for public service can only be effectively met if talent is harnessed, if different perspectives and experiences shape the debates, if meaningful challenge is welcomed. The rhetoric is good but is there an understanding of and willingness to have a public discussion about dealing with institutionalised discrimination?

Increasingly it is recognised that effective leaders are those with highly developed emotional intelligence, who model compassion and humility, who see their role as being to coach and develop others. Leading through the building and maintenance of highly effective relationships. Are these really the criteria upon which senior leaders are selected? Are these typically the behaviours they display? Is it still commonplace for bullying to be dressed up as leadership and that bullying to be known about and not addressed? Is it still all about “delivery”? Is leadership still a competitive sport in which putting your organisation ahead of others, the satisfaction of ego, is more important than the lived daily experience of our citizens?

Whilst I have described the context from a Scottish perspective I am confident that the themes will be consistent across numerous jurisdictions. The posture for public service leaders needs to be more about looking up and out than looking down and in.

Education, as a sector, cannot respond to these challenges or this context in isolation, any more than any other. The questions may be as much about how, across the public service we learn with each other as about what we learn from each other.

Session 2 – Educational Effectiveness and Improvement Research, a Population Health Perspective

Lorna Kelly, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Introduction to Glasgow Centre for Population Health

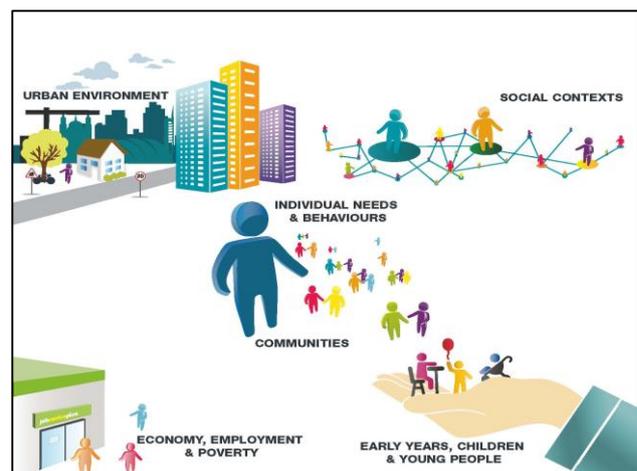
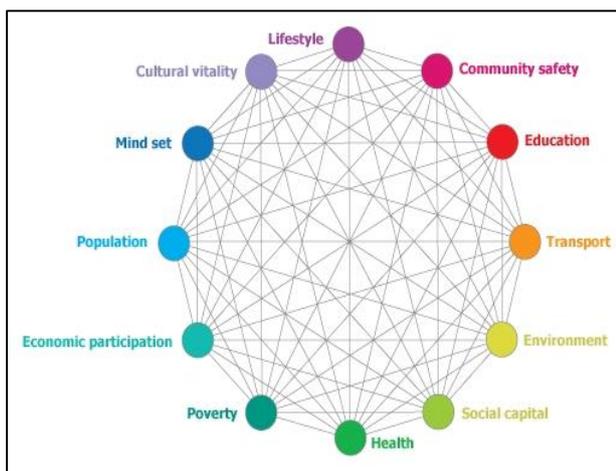
Established in 2004 to generate insights and evidence, support new approaches, and inform and influence action to **improve health and tackle inequality**.

Conduct research; facilitate and stimulate the exchange of ideas, fresh thinking and debate; and support processes of development and change.

www.gcph.co.uk

www.understandingglasgow.co.uk

Population Health Approaches



Understanding the patterns of health across the population – change over time, place and person.

Understanding the wider influences on populations – seeing individuals in context.

Having a broad definition of health – physical, mental, wellbeing.

Focus on inequality not average improvement.

Understanding differences in access to and benefit from services.

Progressive universalism: taking action across the gradient not just narrow targeting or ‘top vs bottom.’

Inequality related to deprivation – and a range of other individual characteristics and life circumstances.

Some key messages and shared concerns: insights from GCPH work and population health approaches

Shared influences on outcomes: poverty, home environment, social context

Mutual dependency. Correlation between educational outcomes and health; good mental and physical health a prerequisite for participation and attainment

The importance of social networks and social capital: schools which foster cohesion and participation; including families

The role of 'place': learning beyond school; public services as part of the community

The importance of the early years in shaping future health and education outcomes:

- Developmental milestones and school readiness
- Impact of adverse childhood experiences
- The importance of attachment
- Nurture approaches

Context matters – challenge to replicating success

Barriers to access: e.g. cost of the school day is a significant issue for many families

- Uniform
- Food
- Materials
- Transport
- Social participation
- Stigma

Different experiences: age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation

Intensive support required for high risk or marginalized groups (e.g. Looked After and Accommodated Children)

The value of universal services (health, education)

- of themselves
- opportunity for influence on other outcomes: contact and coverage
- tailoring to need

Implications for methods

Challenges: focus and progress amid complexity, limits of knowledge and authority to act

Working in partnership: research and practice

Addressing common determinants and underlying influences

Use of data to understand populations, variation, needs and impact

Understanding limits of measurement – not just what's picked up by services and routine data.

Look beyond the data: lived experience, participation and inclusion, 'voice'.

Innovation and futures thinking

The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood.

Disadvantage starts before birth and accumulates throughout life.....action to reduce health inequalities must start before birth and be followed through the life of the child. Only then can the close links between early disadvantage and poor outcomes throughout life be broken

(Fair Society, Healthy Lives)

Session 3 – Poverty, Marginalisation and Aspirations Failure: implications for the design of pro-poor policies

Sayantan Ghosal, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow

Summary points

- A key policy concern in India is the appropriate design of pro-poor policies.
- A significant strand of economic research focuses on external constraints that may perpetuate poverty traps, such as lack of credit or insecure property rights. From this starting point pro-poor policies tend to focus on relaxing the external constraints.
- Largely missing from conventional analyses of poverty traps are the psychological mechanisms through which the experience of poverty forms the beliefs, values, and aspirations of the poor. Recent research has emphasized constraints internal to the person that also perpetuate poverty, for example learned helplessness, pessimistic beliefs and an external locus of control.
- Unlike external constraints, these internal constraints are endogenous because they adapt to the experience of chronic poverty. Over time, however, they become an independent source of disadvantage for poor persons in their own right.
- Pro-poor policies that take into account the need to alter internal constraints among the poor, such as raising their aspirations, will have a greater impact on poverty alleviation than policies that address external constraints alone.
- Ongoing fieldwork documents the ‘Dream Building’ sessions (pioneered by the Durbar Mahila Samanweya Committee) to empower a marginalised, stigmatised community of sex workers in Kolkata and provides suggestive evidence of the potential impact of interventions in raising their aspirations.

Policy Context

A number of major pro-poor programmes and policies (e.g. Prime Minister’s AwasYojana (Housing Scheme for Rural Poor), GrameenSwasthaYojana (Rural health insurance scheme), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), SWAYAMSIDHA (IWEP) and SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA)) have been launched for the benefit of poor, marginalised communities by the Central Government. The primary responsibility for implementing these programmes, however, lie at the State Government level, in this case West Bengal.

Problems related to their effectiveness, in terms of directly engaging their target populations, who are often both poor and socially disadvantaged, persist.¹ For example, the dropout rates for children belonging to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe communities as well as other marginalized communities tend to be higher relative to that of the general population as do the literacy rates amongst the corresponding adult populations.

Pro-poor programmes that follow a conventional public service delivery model have the feature that the communities they are supposed to benefit rarely have a say in how these programmes are formulated. Research (summarized below) has strengthened the normative argument, and provided empirical evidence in support of, building in an element that aims to empower (e.g. by raising aspirations and agency) in the design and implementation of pro-poor policies aimed at poor, marginalised communities.

The main objective of the policy briefing is to engage with institutions and policy-processes in West Bengal in order to build in an element of empowerment (e.g. by raising aspirations and agency) in the design of pro-poor policies aimed at women and children belonging to poor marginalised communities by engaging with relevant civil society organisations, public institutions and policy-processes.

Poverty, Marginalisation and Aspirations Failure

Conventional pro-poor policies typically tend to focus on relaxing external (material resource) constraints such as lack of credit, education or insecure property rights. Largely missing is a focus on internal (psychological) constraints that may cause poverty traps. One example of such an internal constraint is an aspirations failure, defined as the failure to aspire to our own potential.

Aspirations positively affect the outcomes that individuals achieve. Empirical evidence gathered across a wide range of countries and settings shows that low aspirations go hand-in-hand with persistent poverty. Moreover, this link between poverty and low aspirations cannot be fully explained by lack of opportunities or information about pathways out of poverty. Appadurai (2004) refers to what appears to be a lack of the 'capacity to aspire' among the poor – which raises the question of whether such aspirations failure is a cause of poverty, or its consequence.

As the pre-eminent psychologist Alberto Bandura puts it, "People's beliefs in their efficacy influence the choices they make, how much effort they mobilize in a given endeavour, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties and setbacks ...". Poverty and social exclusion, given the stigma and social distance they typically imply, may distort beliefs and self-perception. Such distorted beliefs could then become an independent source of disadvantage

¹ E.g., Govt. of India Report (2011)
http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/wcd/wgprep_women.pdf

-- trigger 'internal' constraints that limit the efforts, and hence outcomes achieved by, the poor and marginalized.

The 'Dream Building' workshops (pioneered by the Durbar Mahila Samanweya Committee) to empower a marginalised, stigmatised community of sex workers in Kolkata. Given the social stigma attached to the sex trade many sex workers suffer from a loss of hope and a sense of defeat. The "Dream Building" workshops aims to give sex workers a renewed sense that they are as entitled as others in mainstream society to have hopes and aspirations, to teach them how to work towards these aspirations, and to develop a positive, pro-active outlook regarding their future. We report below evidence, from ongoing fieldwork in Kolkata, of their impact.

Several groups around the world face social exclusion and stigma too: racial and ethnic minorities (e.g. African-Americans in the US, low caste groups in India) and women (especially in a patriarchal society), to name a few. The work of Wilson (1987), the renowned sociologist, offers clear evidence of the 'social exclusion-lack of aspirations-poverty' link first observed in urban ghettos in the United States in 1970. Loury(1999) describes how African-Americans in US are subject to public derision, often owing to their "purported intellectual inadequacy". Similar contemptuous attitudes are also found to exist against low caste people in India (Srinivas 1951, Deshpande 2007).

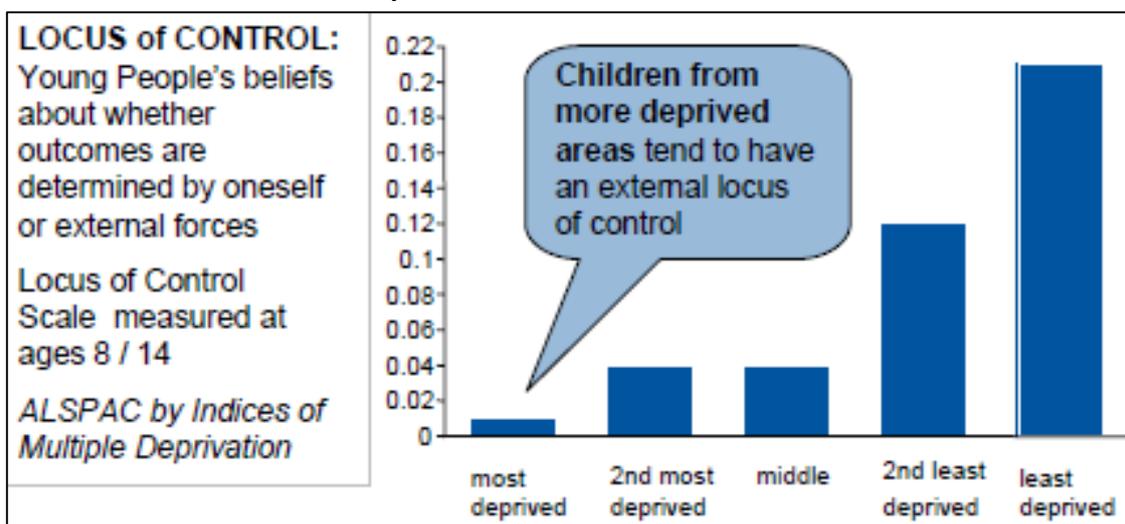
What does such unfavorable regard do to an individual's self-perception? As the celebrated sociologist Erving Goffman points out in his classic work on stigma, "[t]hose who have dealings with [the stigmatized individual] fail to accord him respect and regard ...; he echoes this denial by finding that some of his own attributes warrant it". Such prejudice may also lower an individual's belief about how much his effort matters for his life outcomes (agency or self-efficacy): this creates a "self-fulfilling pessimism about the returns to effort for certain activities" (Loury, 1999).

For example, Moreira (2003) argues that lack of hope, with low self-esteem, is a shared characteristic of Brazilians of the poor north-east: 'As the poor lose their values, they no longer believe in themselves. They go through a process of Nihilism (denial of hope)'. There is clear evidence that people of lower socio-economic status tend to place greater weight on external circumstances in deciding life outcomes (Schultz and Schultz, 2004).

This is of particular importance for younger people, who have more opportunities ahead of them to shape their own futures. In the United Kingdom, for example, evidence of the impact of poverty on young people comes from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. As Figure 1 demonstrates, children between the ages of 8 and 14 years from the most deprived areas have a strongly external locus of control, attaching almost zero weight to their capacity to determine their own outcomes. They believe that external factors will decide how

they live, rather than the fruits of their efforts. For other children, the weight placed on their own effort rises strongly with increases in prosperity.

Figure 1: Locus of control and deprivation



Source: Cabinet Office (2008), drawing on Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (2006), data.

Note: ALSPAC, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children, is hosted at the University of Bristol.

Young people who come from deprived backgrounds also demonstrate less faith in their own academic abilities and overall intelligence. Between the ages of 8 and 13 years, children from the most deprived families in the ALSPAC data have almost no confidence in their ability to succeed in school work; again, this confidence rises strongly with family prosperity.

Other research, such as the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE 2006), shows that children from the most deprived backgrounds have the lowest academic aspirations. They are least likely to say that they will apply to university or that their friends will stay on at school. Such measures of personal and group aspiration rise steadily with family income.

However, there is a flip side. Falk et al. (2011) have shown experimentally that raising ‘reference points’ (or goals) can raise performance outcomes. In their study, when subjects were given higher reference points for earnings, they persevered longer at the experimental task. Because aspirations are ‘reference points for life goals’, this evidence underscores how higher goals can affect life outcomes.

In real life, such reference points emerge from the social settings that people inhabit. It is important, however, to separate two distinct channels of influence. One is the *information* that a person receives from a deprived social milieu; the other is the set of *values, beliefs and preferences* that a person forms under the influence of the same milieu. In the first view, aspirations fail because the poor person suffers from an information disadvantage, with fewer role models to copy and less chance of learning what matters for success. Alternatively,

aspirations failure is an internal response to the experience of poverty that devalues success, even when it is visibly attainable.

There is considerable evidence to support the second view. Experimental work by Steele (2010), the social psychologist, and others on 'stereotype threat' shows that merely invoking racial/gender identity damages the educational performances of African-Americans and women respectively. In another case, Clark et al. (2003) found that more pessimistic expectations raised the likelihood of frequent smoking and reduced that of exercise – suggesting *a feedback effect from low aspirations to low effort* even in matters such as health, where individual motivations need not be driven by market returns alone.

Poverty and aspirations failure: a theoretical framework

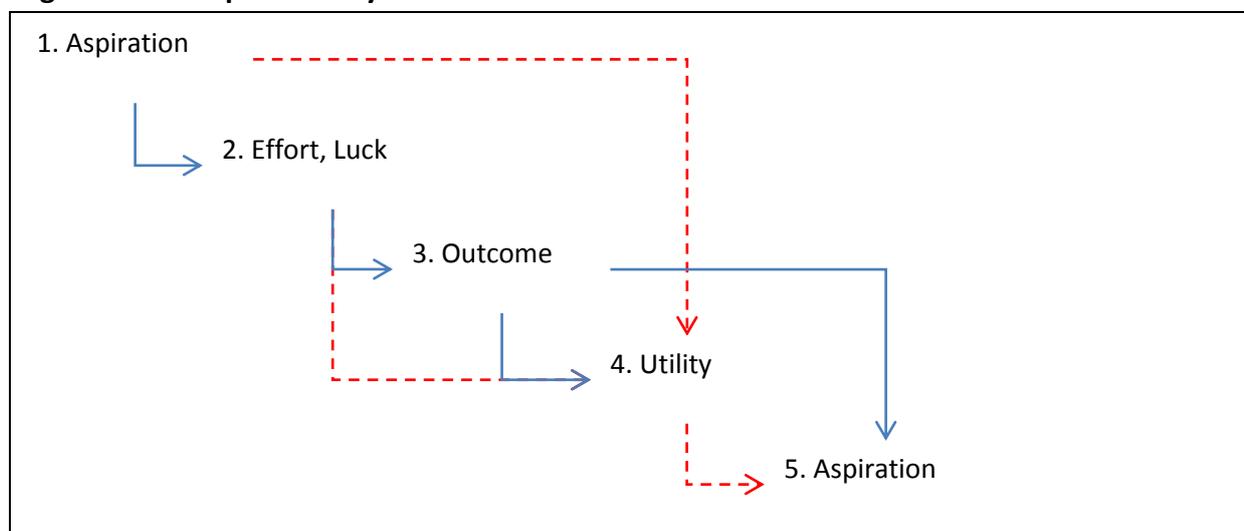
In their paper, "Poverty and Aspirations Failure", P. Dalton, S. Ghosal and A. Mani, provide a conceptual framework linking poverty and aspirations, which shows that it is the latter. The authors outline a framework where higher aspirations help achieve better outcomes – and better outcomes (achieved through higher effort) spur higher aspirations too. The research builds on the assumption that individuals underestimate this latter channel, i.e. how their aspirations may evolve over their lifetime as a consequence of their current effort. It is not that the poor alone suffer from this bias, the rich do too. However, those who are already poor and marginalised, given their low initial wealth and marginal social position, have a lower expected benefit from investing effort to achieve their goals and thus reach their aspirations. In the long-run, such an effect lowers the aspiration level of a poor person as well. Taken together, the implication is that persistent poverty makes it more likely that these internal constraints become self-fulfilling and, in the long run, an independent source of disadvantage for poor persons in their own right. Poverty lowers the aspirations' level of a poor person, relative to what he could optimally aim to achieve". This is what we refer to as an aspirations failure. In this sense, poverty curtails a poor person's capacity to aspire, in the spirit of Appadurai (2004).

Following, Ghosal (2013), the logic of aspirations failure may be explained as follows. Figure 2 presents a person's 'aspirations cycle' as a timeline with five steps. In Step 1, aspirations are set. In Step 2, effort depends on aspirations (+). In Step 3, the outcome depends on effort (+) and good luck (+). In these first three steps there is nothing unconventional. However, at Step 3 a key factor that makes aspirations failure more likely for those who are already poor makes its mark: the importance of luck. Poverty imposes an additional constraint on the poor: they face much greater downside risk from bad luck in their lives.² The greater downside risk lowers their expected benefit of investing effort into any goal. When their child is performing poorly in school and they are worried about whether the harvest will generate enough to eat, they will think twice about hiring a remedial teacher.

² As Banerjee and Duflo (2011) put it, "Risk is a central fact of life for the poor, who often run small business or farms or work as casual laborers, with no assurance of regular employment. In such lives, a bad break can have disastrous consequences'.

Lower effort, driven by risk, increases the odds of low performance and will then feed into endogenously lower aspiration and achievement in the long run.

Figure 2. The aspirations cycle



Note: Blue (solid) arrows are positive (+) feedbacks; red (dashed) lines are negative (-) feedbacks (but also, two negatives make a positive).

In short, the downside risk of bad luck exacerbates the adverse effects of the behavioural bias in setting aspirations. By limiting the effort choices of the poor, it makes them less likely to aspire to their own best possible outcome.

In Step 4, utility depends on the outcome (+), on the effort cost of obtaining it (-), and the aspirations that motivated it (-). Utility in Figure 2 is the psychological payoff from performance. While this is not always the same, for present purposes one could equally think of it as ‘life satisfaction’ or even ‘happiness’. Utility here is based on both conventional and unconventional assumptions. Conventionally, it is assumed that more utility is linked to higher outcomes and lower effort. Unconventionally, however, a person’s psychological gains and losses are determined relative to a reference point defined by aspiration.³ The lower one’s aspirations, the more one will be satisfied by a given outcome.

In Step 5, aspirations are reset by outcome (+) and utility (-). Finally, aspirations evolve in ways that the social scientist – but not the subject – can predict. In this model, good outcomes lift aspirations; when things go well, a person is empowered to raise ambitions and strive towards higher goals. But, at the same time, aspirations are depressed by higher utility, indicating that a person is satisfied with the life he or she has achieved.

³ This idea dates back to Simon (1955) and, more recently, Selten (1998).

Figure 2 suggests that an intervention to lift aspirations may also raise effort and outcomes. Paradoxically, lifting aspirations may *reduce* utility; but in the struggle to escape from poverty *unhappiness is productive*; it maintains effort, outcomes and aspirations in the next cycle. These theoretical implications are substantiated by an increasing body of empirical work. Beaman's et al. (2012), for instance, found that in India, the exposure to female leaders in local government has raised both the aspirations and educational attainment of girls significantly, despite no change in the resources available for their education. Jensen (2010) and Jensen and Oster (2009) provide a helpful contrast. Jensen (2010) reports on the results of a field experiment in the Dominican Republic where students were informed about the benefits of staying in education after primary school, which they had previously underestimated. The result was a substantial increase in perceived benefits from education – but almost no discernible effect on the actual rates of completing secondary schooling. This suggests, at best, a modest effect of the *informational* role of the social environment on a person's aspirations, especially among the poor.

In contrast, Jensen and Oster (2009) report that, in India, exposure to cable TV programmes with inspiring female protagonists substantially changed beliefs and attitudes on gender-related issues. Women in villages with cable TV reported a lower tolerance of domestic violence and weaker preference for sons, as well as increases in autonomy and declines in fertility. A greater number of girls enrolled in schools in those villages where cable TV had arrived earlier.

The contrast between the modest effects of *information* in the Dominican Republic and the significant impact of *characters* in a soap opera on gender-related beliefs and outcomes in India is striking. Soap operas in this and other contexts (Bandura 2009) emphasize the similarity between their target audience and the life experiences of the characters. Their impact suggests that a woman's social environment affects aspirations through beliefs and values, independent of the information obtained from the life experiences of others. Likewise, Bernard et al. (2014) found that poor rural Ethiopians increased their aspirations and assets six months after they watch a documentary about people from similar communities who had succeeded in their business. The World Development Report (2015) provides an extensive review of the evidence underpinning this new way of looking at pro-poor policies. The paper by Dalton, Ghosal and Mani provides the theoretical underpinnings of such a promising research and policy agenda.

Interventions: Evidence

But what about in practice? What interventions work in break the spell of low aspirations? An ongoing project in Kolkata called "Dream Building", pioneered by DMSC, is working to raise the aspirations of a marginalised group in society: sex workers. Given the social stigma attached to the sex trade, particularly in India, many sex workers suffer from a loss of hope and a sense of defeat. The programme aims to give sex workers a renewed sense that they are as entitled as others to hope and to aspire, to teach them how to work towards these

aspirations, and to develop a positive, proactive outlook on the future. Over eight sessions, experienced trainers use novel methods of discussion and engagement with the subjects. Some of the trainers are themselves former sex workers who have reinvented their lives and careers and thus serve as role models for the participants.

In a new research paper (Ghosal, Jana, Mani, Mitra and Roy (2015))⁴, assess the impact of the these “Dream Building” workshops, via a randomised control trial. Based on a population census of sex workers in three "red-light" areas of the Kolkata, 467 program participants were randomly selected, out of which 264 were randomly assigned to the treatment group and 203 to the control group. Consistent with the focus on psychological dimensions of poverty and marginalization, we collected baseline and endline data on a range of (self-reported) psychological outcomes, including sense of agency, self-esteem, happiness, current aspirations, self-image, sense of shame etc. Changes in participants' orientation towards the future, as measured by their choices across savings products with different maturity periods and interest rates, as well as health seeking behaviour were also tracked.

The main findings are as follows:

1. There are strong and significantly positive effects of the training program on self-reported psychological outcomes, including measures of agency, self-esteem and happiness. Relative to the control group, sex workers assigned to the treatment group are more likely to report feeling a greater “sense of agency”, are more likely to have high self-esteem and more likely to report being happy. They are also, on average, likely to feel ashamed of their occupation compared to their counterparts in the control group which is consistent with the findings on improved self-esteem described above. Compared to baseline measures, too, the estimated effects of the training program with respect to these outcomes are of a similar order of magnitude.
2. There is also find a strong positive impact in the degree of future-orientation of the participants, as measured by their savings choices relative to the control group. Specifically, sex workers assigned to the treatment group are more likely to choose a future-oriented savings product than a present-biased one. Interestingly, in the early stages of the training program, the choices of the treatment group look very similar on average to those of the control group, but over the course of the program, a distinct divergence emerges between the two groups that persists till the end of the program. Moreover, in a follow on study 15 months later, the same pattern of behaviour persists i.e.:-

There is also a positive impact of the training program on health-seeking behavior in that sex workers in the treatment group are on average 9 % points

⁴An early version of the paper has been cited and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of the World Development Report, “Mind, Society and Behavior”, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2015>, and summarized in “Sex Workers, Stigma and Self-Belief: Evidence from a Psychological Training Program in India”, <http://gap.hks.harvard.edu/sex-workers-stigma-and-self-belief-evidence-psychological-training-program-india>.

more likely to have visited a doctor since the program's commencement relative to the control group. This is especially striking since the baseline levels of such doctor visits was already quite high at approximately 80%. What is striking to note here is that this change in health-seeking behavior is observed despite no explicit mention of health issues at any time during the training. This suggests that the observed changes are not driven by any unobserved information advantages conferred on the treatment group relative to the control group over the course of training.

The World Development Report (2015) provides an extensive review of the evidence underpinning this new way of looking at pro-poor policies.

Policy Implications

Conventional pro-poor policies typically tend to focus on relaxing external (material resource) constraints such as lack of credit, education or insecure property rights. Largely missing is a focus on internal (psychological) constraints that may cause poverty traps. One example of such an internal constraint is an aspirations failure, defined as the failure to aspire to our own potential. The research described above provides analysis of how poverty leads to aspirations failures and how, in turn, low aspirations become a constraint on its own right.

A key policy implication is that pro-poor policies aimed at raising aspirations will alleviate poverty more effectively than those that address external constraints alone. Moreover, under certain conditions, pro-poor policies aimed at raising aspirations will enhance welfare, without any change in material circumstances.

Examples of such policy interventions include:

1. The Fesnojiv classical music orchestra programme developed in Venezuela 30 years ago by Jose Antonio Abreu provides free classical musical training and the opportunity to perform in orchestras to children belonging to poor, marginalised communities. In the founder's words, 'Participating in the orchestral movement has made it possible for them [the children] to set up new goals, plans, projects and dreams... and helping them in their day-to-day struggle for better conditions of life'. About 96% of the young musicians have good to excellent school records – even though education was not the focus of the programme. In effect, the programme manages to raise the initial aspiration level of the children.
2. The UK programme 'Supporting parents on kids education (SPOKE)' which works with groups of parents to set personal goals for their children is another example of this kind of intervention.
3. Beaman et al. (2012) find that in India, that exposure to female leaders in local government (as part of a mandated reservation of posts for women) raises both the aspirations and educational attainment of girls significantly – despite no change in the resources available for their education, such exposure helping them see the link between their current effort and future aspirations.

Understanding how, in practice, such an element can be incorporated within a whole raft of pro-poor programmes and policies is a key challenge. This policy briefing would have achieved its objective if it facilitates such an outcome.

Concluding Remarks

A key policy concern in India is the appropriate design of pro-poor policies to maximize their impact on alleviating poverty. Taken together, the theoretical and empirical considerations reviewed in this policy briefing suggest both a gap in the conventional analysis of, and design of policies aimed at mitigating, poverty traps. Largely missing has been consideration of the psychological mechanisms through which the experience of poverty forms the beliefs, values, and aspirations of the poor. As Bandura (2009) points out, 'Failure to address the psychosocial determinants of human behaviour is often the weakest link in social policy initiatives. Simply providing ready access to resources does not mean that people will take advantage of them'. Much of the research in the field of economics focuses on the role of external constraints, such as market imperfections, coordination problems or institutional failures in perpetuating poverty traps. Pro-poor policy interventions should aim not only to provide resources to relax external constraints but also to alter internal constraints (such as beliefs and aspirations), which adapt to the condition of chronic poverty and become, over time, an independent source of disadvantage for poor individuals in their own right.

Pro-poor policies that take into account the need to alter internal constraints among the poor are likely to be far more effective and to have a greater impact in alleviating poverty than policies that are limited to addressing external constraints. The 'Dream Building' sessions pioneered by the Durbar Foundation to empower and modify the behaviour of a marginalized and stigmatized community of sex workers in Kolkata provide suggestive evidence of the potential impact of interventions that raise aspirations on the psychological constraints. This policy briefing has made the case for re-examining pro-poor initiatives of the Government, both at the Central level as well as the state level, and other agencies from the lens of aspiration failure. Our objective, in this policy briefing, is to make a case for including specific intervention elements, such as the Dream Building workshops, that directly address aspirations within the multitude of pro-poor programs being implemented in India and West Bengal.

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Session 4 – Adding value to effectiveness and improvement – are there research, policy and practice lessons from housing?

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Why consider housing as a relevant field of study for this session?

Housing is a key integrative system facing every household and individual in society. It is our major expenditure as households, is heavily intervened in by the state (the *wobbly pillar* of the welfare state) and is thought to have major consequences for economic productivity, intergenerational transfers of wealth, lifetime income smoothing, health outcomes and, perhaps, other socio-economic spheres such as education and training.

Across several dimensions, housing is inherently hybrid or dual in nature: renting and owning, private and public ownership, devolved and reserved policies. In many respects much progress has been made on key outcomes over time: quality of stock, homelessness, housing conditions, etc., in other areas things are not improving and indeed housing and mortgage finance were culpable in the global financial crisis. Also, the complexity of housing as a system and its uneasy positioning between the market and the state make it controversial (and expensive) to tackle the key symptoms and causes of unaffordability, housing shortage, market volatility, as well as fundamental questions such as what would make a good housing system?

Housing makes a good basis for comparison, therefore, because (a) it is an important socio-economic system; (b) it is politically contentious; (c) it is complex and that makes attribution and transmission of cause and effect difficult; and, (d) it is a long term project full of path dependency, interdependencies and overactive interventions by the State and its agencies, including regulators.

Five general lessons from 25 years working in the housing sphere

1. It is a complex commodity and should not be over-simplified in analysis or policy making. Housing is, at the same time, a durable good (creating consumption and asset/investment motives and hence owning and renting tenures), a spatially fixed good (and therefore subject to spatial positive and negative externalities), a joint good (occupy a home and you also purchase a neighbourhood and a local authority and often mortgage finance), it is fundamentally heterogeneous (every property is slightly or completely different making common pricing formidably difficult), housing costs a lot relative to income and it is heavily intervened in by the state (regulation, finance/tax/subsidy, direct provision and in terms of tax/benefit transfers). Many commodities have some of these features; none have all of them allied to a sense of social or merit good status. Policies and analysis inevitably focus on one or two of these aspects are likely to be partial (and possibly faulty) in their impact.

2. Housing is fundamentally a complex interdependent *system* (across space, by tenure, in terms of class or other socio-economic cleavages, and in terms of a complex two ways relationship with the economy, etc.) - it does not exist in a vacuum, the past is important in a system dominated by the stock rather than new flows and perturbations across space and time and as a system it should not be considered in a partial equilibrium manner.

3. Good housing is a popular demand made in the media and is high up the topic agenda in surveys of opinion. It is deemed to be essential to many of the things we want of a good society, so everyone says, But can you prove it? For instance is expanding home ownership good for society? Careful empirical meta-analysis found the causality of the many claims made hard to substantiate with the exception of its impact on parenting and maybe on some health outcomes (reviewed in O'Sullivan and Gibb, 2012).

4. Don't assume your field of study is necessarily evolutionary or that learned lessons stick. For instance, in England, the U.K. Government is arguably pursuing an incoherent set of housing policies which has resurrected the goal of expanding home ownership above all and is now surprisingly seemingly opposed to the private rental market and social renting. Implicitly it also seeks to maintain or support rising house prices.

5. Do use different lenses of analysis but do so carefully: by discipline (economics, sociology, finance, social policy, geography, housing studies - all have value;) or by different methodological stances as well, but recognise that they may be incompatible or incommensurable. Moreover, we should imagine that in complex social systems that there important features to be accounted for: institutions (and their hybridity in the housing sector), multiple stakeholders (e.g. current and future tenants, the local state, regulators, competitors, the national state, finance and other commercial collaborators) and the vital importance of the nature over time of risk and uncertainty.

Adding Value

What lessons from the housing sector might add value in terms of educational improvement and effectiveness?

1. Research

Do undertake comparative/international analysis to broaden the evidence base but be careful in so doing and undertake policy transfer from other systems with great care.

Economic, financial and statistical modelling, premised on robust and obvious assumptions and the appropriate form of data, can be highly useful, in helping to assess policies but not necessarily the be all and end all of such evaluation.

As part of What Works Scotland I would of course also champion the careful use of the existing evidence base, suitably filtered and interpreted, for policy-making, policy design and implementation.

All three of these principles apply equally to drawing learning from what does not work and why, as well as what does work.

As an example, it is well known now (e.g. Picketty and Atkinson among others) that housing is an important transmitter of wealth inequality - we can draw evidence from around the world on this and can model and try to explain the impacts that this growing inequality has on a range of socio-economic and policy outcomes. This can also help us build evidence to think more clearly about ways to tackle and overcome such inequality.

2. Policy

I have been much taken by recent work on policy failure (e.g. Schuck, 2014) and can see why housing policy often fails. A key dimension to me is not just the adequate analysis of the diagnosis but actually building the long term consensus required to get commitment to policy delivery on a consistent reinforcing basis over at least the two terms of a parliament that it can take to achieve sustained lasting change in the housing arena. While one may despair of the ability to achieve this, there is good news - some important housing policies have worked on exactly this basis: homelessness policy in Scotland and the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief (there was also a less successful case is social rent policy in England - but one also worth examining to understand why).

A second success story is the local delivery usually by local authorities working in partnership in a well-defined city-region, it is able to undertake the research and measure their local housing requirements, housing needs, new land supply, etc. in order to inform housing strategies, housing needs and strategy planning locally. This is where the evidence base, modelling, conceptual frameworks and data can come together in the face of transparent assumptions and judgement in order to quantify the scale of local problems and inform the strategies then put together to tackle them. There are good stories about this across the UK (though not without problems of resource and sustained commitment, etc.).

3. Practice

Finally, housing management is an increasingly professionalised occupation. More than just delivering a housing service, however, the housing service is also increasingly a front line for dealing with multiple disadvantage, the consequences of welfare reform and an important partner to work alongside other support agencies.

Spatially, social housing providers can also effectively play critical roles leading communities, acting as community anchors and marshalling community assets. Housing associations can

play a key role in place-based strategies and in community planning partnerships. Arguably, at this point, they have not done so on a sufficiently consistent or embedded basis.

Further Reading

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