Network of Experts in the Social Sciences of Education and training[1]

The dark side of the whiteboard

education, poverty, inequalities and social exclusion

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A contribution to the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion

[1] NESSE is a network of independent experts working on social aspects of education and training. It was established in 2007 after a Call for Tenders by the European Commission. It supports and advises the European Commission in the analysis of education policies and reforms and of their implications for future policy development at national and European level.

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Summary

At least 84 million people in Europe are living below the poverty line; more than 20 million of them are children. Those living in poverty and disadvantage face *greatly* reduced educational prospects and future life chances.

Education and training offers opportunities for individual upward social mobility, but education and training systems themselves are, to a greater or lesser extent, marked by inequalities - in *access* to high quality education, in *treatment* and in educational *outcomes*. These reflect, reproduce and very often compound the effects of wider socio-economic disadvantage. Despite the general presumption that education and training systems offer opportunities to reduce social inequalities and exclusion, decades of research show that the opposite is often true. While education is often seen as a vehicle (and sometimes the *only* vehicle) out of social disadvantage, education and training policy initiatives alone will have only limited success in removing barriers to inclusion unless they are articulated with wider social and economic reforms (such as improving employment, housing, or access to healthcare).

- Which education strategies contribute to preventing or overcoming inequalities, exclusion, vulnerability, marginalisation and disengagement and foster equality and inclusion in European schools and societies?

- What do schools, teachers, trainers, adult educators and other learning support actors need in order to develop an inclusive culture and practice?

- What are the external conditions (in terms of welfare, labour market, health, housing, migration and other policies) that can help maximise the impact of education and training measures?

1. The Problem

Education and training systems play a major role in the distribution of people's opportunities and life chances. They have a direct bearing on what people can *be* and what they can *do*. They affect all aspects of people's lives, and not just their opportunities to earn. For some education can provide the 'up escalator', the means of social mobility out of relatively poor home and life circumstances. For many others, education and training reproduces or even *compounds* patterns of disadvantage that lead to precarious lives of poverty and social exclusion.

The benefits of education and training are *not* evenly distributed. Inequalities in education and training **persist**. The consequences are devastating for individuals and social groups, particularly for the already disadvantaged. The early school leavers, the poor, the homeless, the disabled, the low-skilled, older workers, the unemployed, people re-entering the labour market, migrants, refugees and people from ethnic minorities are among the most vulnerable and severely affected by educational inequalities.

All European education systems (although to a greater or lesser extent) are still marked by widespread inequalities. All too often, these reflect wider socio-economic disadvantage. Inequities can be found at every facet and level of education systems –*in access, treatment* and *outcomes*. They endure and even increase as children progress through school. They often lead to lower achievement, to early school leaving and disengagement. Access to high-quality education, success at school and chances of higher education and further learning all remain socially divided, with implications for economic opportunities, personal growth, and civic and community development.

For example, currently, the number of people with low levels of reading literacy (the most fundamental expectation of education) continues to grow. One in six young Europeans leaves school with less than upper-secondary education. Many learners of immigrant origin succeed less well in education and training than their native peers and the disadvantage persists in the second generation and beyond (CEC, 2009). In several Member States, migrant background and Roma students are over-represented in segregated special needs schools. Early school leaving for young people with a migrant background is double that of natives and still higher for Roma children. While (especially working class) boys drop out of school more often and perform less well in reading, women are underrepresented in maths, science and technology studies and careers. Adults with low education attainment are several times less likely to be engaged in continuing education and training than those with high attainment levels. A learner's socio-economic background still has an important impact on his/her chances to access and succeed in education and training at whatever level.

2. Educational inequality -causes and consequences

Educational underachievement is widely recognised as *both a consequence and a cause* of household poverty and social exclusion. Educational qualifications show a clear and strong relationship to every single measure of adult disadvantage at ages 23 and 33 and both for men and women (Hobcraft, 2000; (Feinstein et al, 2008).

Based on a longitudinal study of a British cohort, Feinstein et al were able to demonstrate the consequences of a range of risks experienced at age 10 for their later experience of adult deprivation.

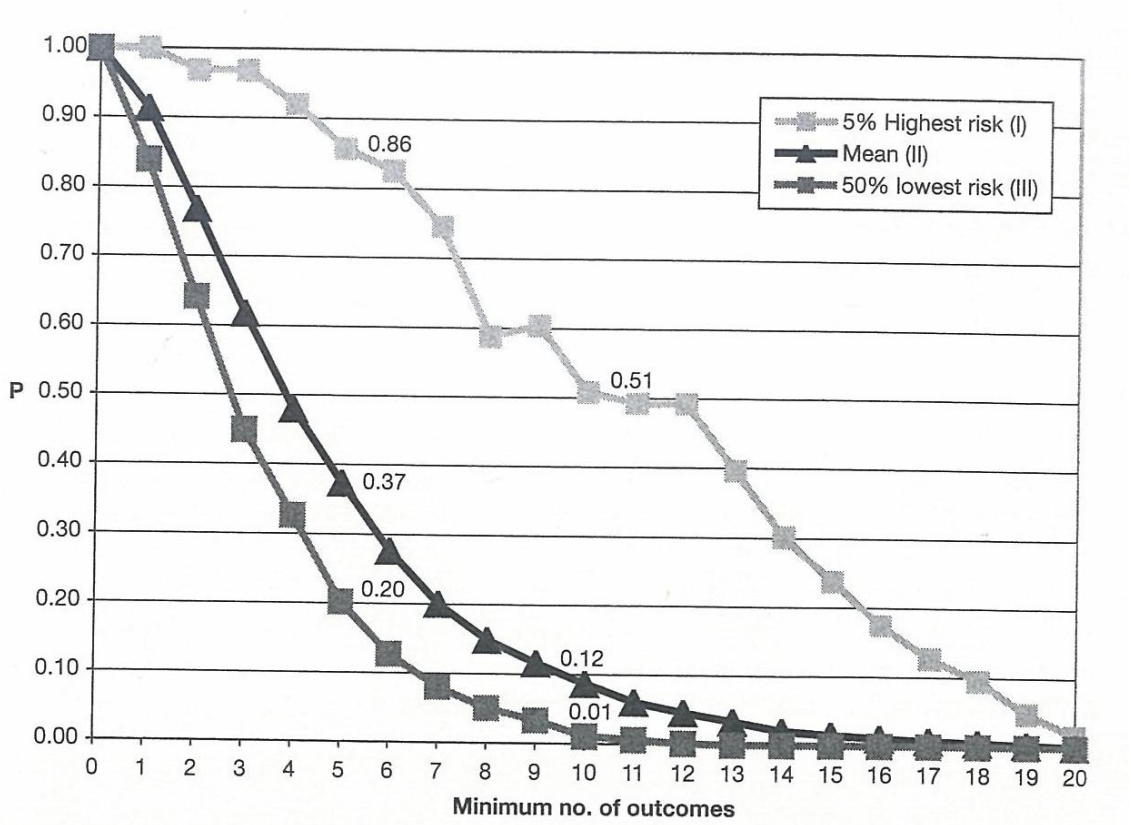


Figure 3. Probability of multiple deprivation at age 30, by level of risk at age 10. Source: Feinstein et al 2008:154.

In the graph, the horizontal axis represents the number of outcomes of adult deprivation experienced; the vertical axis represents the probability of experiencing this number of outcomes.. The highest line represents the multiple deprivation possibilities for the 5 percent with the highest level of risk based on age ten data, the middle line the average, and the bottom line the fifty percent with the lowest level of age ten risk. Thus 10 or more outcomes of multiple deprivation are experienced by over 50 percent of the those most at risk at age ten, but only 1% of those with the lowest age ten risk.

Educational inequalities *accumulate* and become more obvious and destructive across the life cycle. At one level, the story is a simple one. Inequalities begin at birth, or even before. Children born into poor and multiply disadvantaged homes are less likely to receive good quality early childhood education. This makes it much less likely that they will succeed in primary school and hence be able to access to and succeed in high quality secondary education, the basis for an extended educational career, and especially entry to tertiary education.

This cumulative process means that different interventions are necessary at different points in the educational career if inequality is to be reduced. *Early childhood education and care* has been shown to be crucial in reducing the impact of being born into a disadvantaged family, to (one or more) parents with low educational achievement and poor employment prospects (NESSE/Penn, 2009; Eurydice, 2009). Intervention within primary and secondary education is essential if the benefits of good early childhood education are to be maintained. We consider below some of the ways that education can also strengthen the unequalising effects of education, and how that may be reduced. A further point of intervention is at the end of compulsory schooling. Leaving school early, without qualifications is at the same time the culmination of an ineffective and unrewarding school career, and the beginning of what all too often turns out to be an equally difficult an precarious life.

We are not suggesting that recognising and responding effectively to these inequalities will remove or overcome them. All the evidence suggests that it will not; and though they may possibly mitigate those inequalities, educational structures and processes can also exacerbate existing inequalities. Responding effectively to educational inequalities does, though, mean that we may come closer to meeting *the right of all children to an education they can benefit from, personally and socially, and that equips them with the capabilities necessary to live a fulfilling life in contemporary society*.

Education cannot remove inequality, certainly not alone; but it can help *reduce the effect of inequality on social exclusion by providing all children with the capabilities that most children take for granted*. One example of this shows the benefits of early childhood education for Turkish children in Germany (Spies et al (2003)). It does not mean that they completely 'catch up' with native children, but it does mean that they are much better off than Turkish children who did not receive good early education, through starting them on the road to accessing wider capabilities.

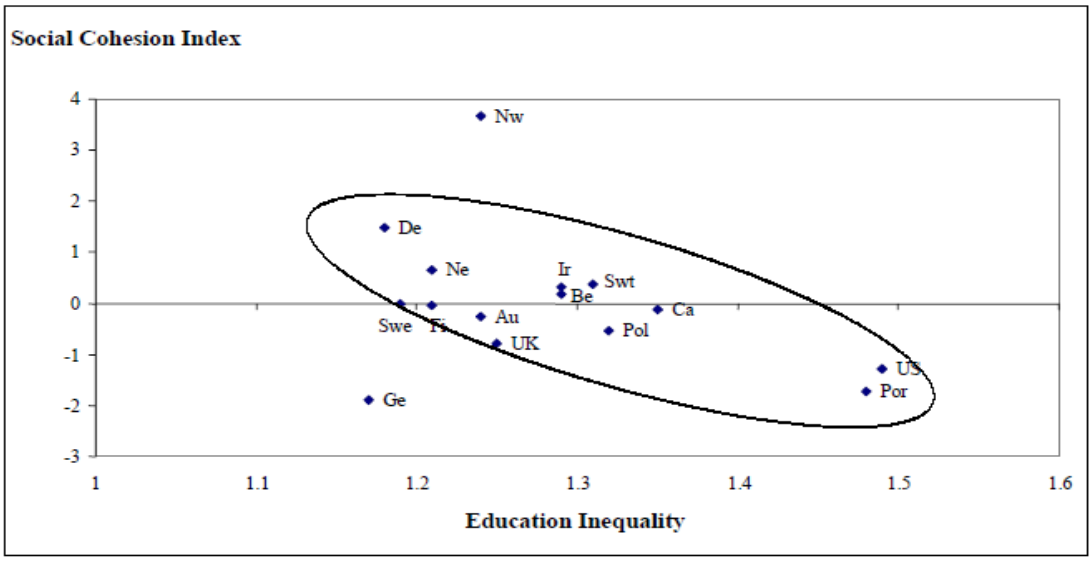
It needs to be pointed out that such inequalities are by no means 'natural', though the experience of education may make them seem so. Education and schools essentially convert initial socio-economic and cultural (dis)advantage into *academic* success and failure, and this then becomes the basis for labour market success and failure. Education systems are often driven in this direction by calculative parental strategies, especially seeking to maximise opportunities for their children to enter the 'best' schools, and avoid the 'worst schools' a strategy recently referred to by the UK Prime Minister as requiring 'the sharp elbows of the middle class'. Such strategies make us realise that the inequalities that pervade education systems are not only the result of working class failure, but of middle class success in dominating access to the most preferred schools. We may conclude from this that the inequalities that lead to social exclusion are not caused by differences in IQ. Children with the same IQ, but from different social backgrounds, follow educational careers that become increasingly divergent. Children from disadvantaged homes are less likely than middle class children *with the same IQ* to achieve highly at school, or to get the same level of job *even with the same qualification* (Lauder and Hughes 1991). This is clearly evident in the case of girls and employment. At every level, women with equal or better qualifications than men end up with poorer jobs than their male counterparts (NESSE/Lynch, 2009).

These inequalities persist over generations. They are not caused by education, but education does little to mitigate them, and in very many cases makes them worse, through unequal funding and resource, and through less rewarding and enriching experiences of schooling.

Inequalities impact not just on individuals and groups, but on societies as a whole. Green et al (2003, 2006) point to the close association between educational inequality and social cohesion; the more unequal educational achievement, the less cohesive the society (see Figure 4 below).

Inequality also makes a significant and *independent* difference to people's use and appreciation of a range of social services. The *distribution* of social goods affects how people value them more than the *level* or amount being distributed. This has been shown most clearly in the case of health (e g Wilkinson, 2005 and 2009), but it is also clearly evident in education (see Green et al, 2006).

Figure 4. Relationship between social cohesion and education inequality



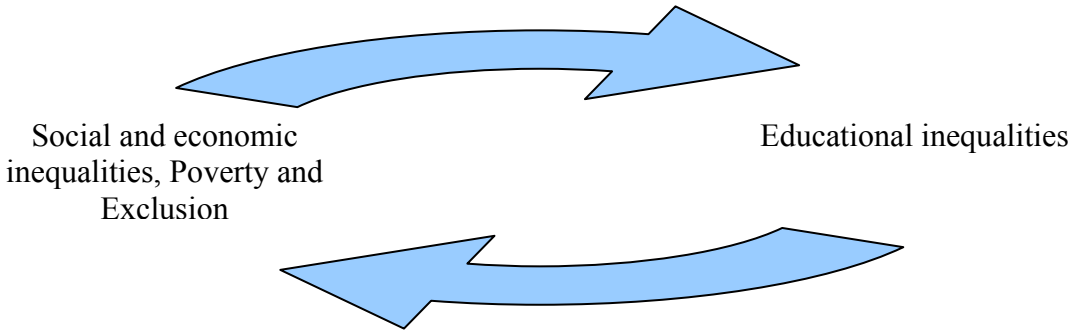
Source: Green et al, 2003

3. Understanding social exclusion is essential to achieving inclusion.

Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It is about more than being out of paid work. It is what can happen when individuals and communities suffer from a combination of problems and disadvantages such as low income, unemployment, poor skills, poor housing and health, high crime, family breakdown, linguistic skills. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the cohesion of society as a whole (Levitas et al 2007). These problems are linked and create a vicious circle that pushes individuals and communities deeper into vulnerability, marginalisation and disengagement. Exclusion leads to stigmatization, to low self-esteem, and to vulnerable and precarious lives. Individual, family and community experience of failure, derision, being targeted and picked out as 'different', of being bullied and victimised, of feeling unsafe and threatened, both deepen the feeling of exclusion and make it more difficult to escape (Attree, 2003). In this context, even if they still have access to educational provision, individuals and communities cannot take full advantage of this access to develop their full potential.

4. Cycles of disadvantage and education's place within them over the life-course

Education is both involved in the production of social exclusion and cycles of disadvantage through lack of achievement, and has the potential to break, or at least interrupt the operation of those cycles. The cycle might be represented as follows:



We will look first at the 'top' part of the cycle; how social and economic disadvantage and inequality, and especially the experience of poverty and social exclusion, impact upon educational opportunities and the likelihood of those opportunities being realised.

4.1. Social disadvantage and educational performance.

There is a large body of evidence of clear gaps between children from different social backgrounds in the cognitive and non cognitive abilities to succeed in and benefit from education. Crucially, these differences appear **very early in life**, well before children enter compulsory schooling, and their effects can be traced through their school careers, showing how social disadvantage continues to affect educational performance and outcomes.

Children:

- who live in low income households,
- whose parents have low qualifications (for 30% of poor children neither parent reached a secondary level of education (against 16% for all children), and only 16% of them have a parent with upper education (against 32% for all children).[2]
- whose parents are unemployed or are at risk of "in work poverty",
- whose parents show little interest in their education

[2] Frazer and Marlier, 2007.

- who live in inadequate housing and in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and
- who come from a migrant or ethnic minority background (for instance, in the EU as a whole, 30.1% of non-nationals leave school early, compared to 13% of nationals[3]

are much less likely to gain good qualifications themselves at school (and hence, of course, more likely to become the next generation of parents with low qualifications; there is a very strong link between the educational disadvantage of parents and children (Zaid and Zolyomi, 2007). In the EU, half of the poor children live in the two types of households that are most at risk of poverty: 23% live in lone-parent households and 27% in large families (ibid). These living conditions are associated with **health** and nutrition problems, problems of **housing** and overcrowding, and they strongly limit access to the kinds of experiences known to contribute to educational success. And these complexities are increased when the spatial concentration of disadvantage is taken into account.

The extent of the effects of poverty, poor housing and poorly educated parents on children's chances of school success, expressed in terms of 'developmental months', can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 (in annex, pp. 27 and 28). By the age of three, children from poor homes, whose parents have achieved poorly in education, are already **up to a year behind** their middle class peers in terms of school readiness and level of vocabulary. Figure 2 (below) indicates how **the gap continues to grow** across the school career. By the age of 7, poor children are already 2.5 terms behind their middle class peers, and by the age of 14, they are almost two years behind.

This is further confirmed over a longer period, with a cross over between Low SES children who started off in a higher position and High SES children who stated off in a low position (see Figure 5 on the next page).

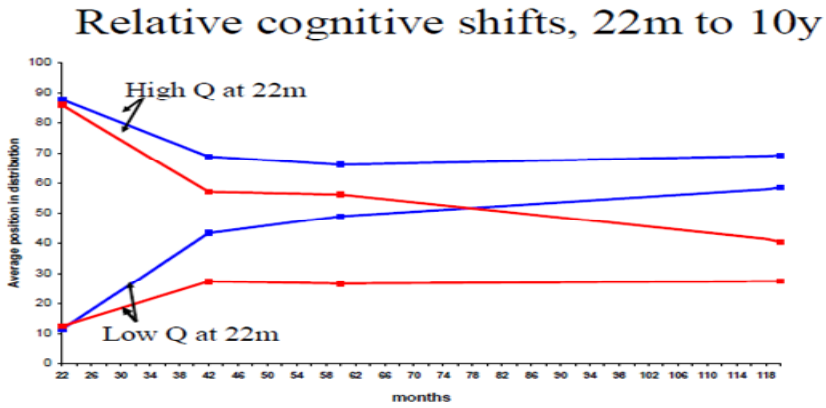
One explanation of this is that the stress of growing up under exceptionally difficult conditions can itself impair their neural growth and language development[4]. There are different explanations of this widening gap, but most of them point to patterns of academic performance that are established **very early**. These are based on the social contexts within the family and the classroom and the links between them.

[3] European Commission, 2008.

[4] See Krugman's (2008) "Poverty is Poison", http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/18/opinion/18krugman.html

Figure 5

Relative Cognitive Progress Of High SES Children (Blue) and Low SES Children (Red) between 22 Months and 10 years in the UK



Source: Feinstein, L. (2003) 'Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort', *Economica* (70) 277, 73-97

Studies of early school leavers, for instance, suggest that as early as pre-school education they are likely to have developed patterns of academic achievement, problem behaviour and poor attendance strongly associated with the likelihood of failing to complete school. They typically perform badly at school, and are academically and socially disengaged from school. They are more likely to be absent, and to be seen as discipline problems.

Horgan (2007) found that boys as young as nine in disadvantaged schools in Northern Ireland were already disenchanted with school and starting to disengage. She put this down to: a combination of the educational disadvantage faced by children growing up in poverty (both financial and cultural); the difficulties faced by teachers in disadvantaged schools; and differences in the ways that boys and girls are socialized.

Another explanation concerns the gap between teachers' and poor parents understanding of the nature and process of schooling. While middle class parents assume that the schooling of their children is a shared responsibility, working class parents tend to assume that it is the school's responsibility. The same phrases 'contacting the school,' 'checking homework,' 'helping with homework' and 'talking to teachers' appear to have different meanings for middle class and working class parents' (Lareau, 1996:59).

At the moment, the most effective way of mitigating the home and family background effects just set out appears to be early childhood education and care (NESSE/Penn, 2009; Eurydice, 2009).

Quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) provides a solid foundation for more effective future learning, achievements and children's social development, although theoretical conceptions of the processes involved may differ. Quality ECEC benefits *all* children and socialises them for starting school, especially children from poor or migrant families, for whom it is the best or only means of becoming integrated into wider society.

However, early childhood education and care services can enhance children's subsequent school performance and development only if they are of a high quality. Poor quality ECEC may do more harm than good, especially to children from poorer backgrounds**.**

Early and generous funding of ECEC pays off for both the general population and for the migrant population. In terms of **migrant children**, child-care, pre-school and early-years interventions should address the need for their socialisation by supporting general development and learning the language of the immigration country (NESSE/Heckmann, 2008, 8).

4.2. School effects leading to reinforcement of the cycle of disadvantage.

A key issue is *what kind of 'education' do children from poor backgrounds have access to?* 'Mere' access by no means guarantees access to all the school has to offer, or to the kinds of experiences enjoyed by the educationally successful. This occurs in part because of the sorting function of education, which helps distribute children to their appropriate place in the economic system, in part by exposing them to different opportunities to learn in schools. There is clear evidence that for some, the experience of schooling may reduce rather than enhance their life chances, not only by increasing the cognitive and credential gaps between them and their more successful peers, but by curtailing their chances of social inclusion and producing levels of disenchantment with the processes and consequences of education as a whole that reduce the likelihood of further participation in education.

Hirsch (2007, 14) points out that 'a child in poverty has **worse prospects at secondary** school than a non-poor child with exactly the same results at primary school. This poses a challenge to secondary schools to ensure that teachers' expectations are not affected by children's social backgrounds, and that they give adequate support to children whose lack of home resources might affect their ability to progress'**.**

In many cases, poor children are concentrated into particular schools, leading to what is known as **the 'school composition effect'** (Thrupp et al, 2002; Willms, 2006). This means that students' results are affected by the social class character of their school intake; schools with predominantly poor intakes experience far more discipline problems, greater pressure on guidance and discipline systems, and many more non-teaching related problems. What this adds up to is less time available for actually teaching, which in any case was carried out with less compliant students.

Similarly, the **location** of schools in areas of multiple and concentrated disadvantages also affects educational outcomes – through, for instance, impacts on learners' aspirations and self-esteem, the limited social capital and survival strategies available to families, the lack of educational resources, the lack of support services, the absence of positive role models, the availability of 'non-standard' life styles, the poor quality of schools, and negative effects on school processes (Lupton, 2006).

These factors mean, individually and collectively, that a young person—with the same mix of disadvantages and the same history of school achievement--will be more successful in one school than another, depending on the socio-economic composition of its population.

Overall, in many such schools a process of disengagement, whether for social or academic reasons, is common, mirroring in microcosm the wider social exclusion the young people experience.

Among the key elements mentioned in this process is that dropouts:

- do less homework
- exert less effort in school
- participate less in school activities
- have more discipline problems at school
- show low behavioural engagement
- have social difficulties and negative attitudes towards school
- are more likely to truant, and to be suspended

It is important to note that improvement in cognitive performance alone is insufficient to lift children from disadvantage to advantage. Cognitive differences make only a moderate contribution to the explanation of economic inequality and account for only a moderate portion of the returns to schooling. The rest is made up by parental cultural, economic and social capital, and in particular the ways that this can be deployed in entry to, and progress through, the labour market. Changing this, though, is very difficult, given the very strong hold that measures of cognitive achievement have over the work of schools, and the appraisal of their own

performance 'rather than a comprehensive and logically defensible set of social outcomes of schooling, including impacts on earnings independently of cognitive scores' (Bowles et al, 2001:1139).

The emphasis throughout the education system on cognitive performance could be **doubly disadvantageous** to poor and socially disadvantaged children; not only does it provide a performance benchmark where they are less likely to succeed, but it also prevents them from acquiring key (non-cognitive) elements of labour market success that are transmitted to their middle class peers by their parents.

4.3. Consequences of poor educational outcomes

A key benchmark of social exclusion through school failure is **the rate of early school leaving**. Early school leavers are:

- more likely to be unemployed as those that complete their education
- more likely to be in blue collar jobs with less employment security and more part-time work
- significantly more likely to experience pregnancy, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide
- more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives
- likely to die earlier
- less likely to be 'active citizens'
- much less likely to become involved in lifelong learning.

In the short-term, early school leaving can be associated with immediate unemployment, precarious and low-paid jobs and difficulties in gaining a place in vocational training (Wößmann and Schütz, 2006).

In the medium-term, early school leaving is strongly associated with 'social' costs (social breakdown, increased demand on the health system, and lower social cohesion) and 'economic' costs (lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments)[5].

[5] European Commission, 2008.

In the long-term, ESL constitutes a tremendous waste of potential for social and economic development.

Early school leaving generates **tremendous economic and social costs** which are only rarely shown in public accountancy systems. It has been estimated that high school dropouts in the US have a life expectancy that is 9.2 years shorter than high school graduates. They also have higher rates of cardiovascular illnesses, diabetes and other ailments. While the very different costs of health and social care in the USA make accurate calculations of the financial consequences of these problems very difficult, the calculation that health-related losses for the estimated 600,000 high school dropouts in the US amounted to nearly $100,000 per student should make us think about the costs of early school leaving in Europe.

Combining these costs from the US (including income tax losses, increased demand for health-care and public assistance, and higher rates of crime and delinquency), we obtain a global estimate for the average gross cost over the life time of one 18-year-old who does not complete high school of approximately $ 450,000.

As well as improving individual life chances, educational success also generates wider social benefits in terms of health crime reduction (Feinstein and Sabates, 2005) or higher civic participation (Bynner and Egerton, 2001), possibly 'because it mainly improves the non-cognitive abilities of individuals, for example motivation and discipline' (EC 2008,64).

5. Breaking/interrupting the cycle of disadvantage

Different explanations of the cycle of disadvantage[l] promote three broadly different **strategies for breaking the** cycle of disadvantage;

- changing the attitudes and beliefs of the poor;
- addressing geographical concentrations of the poor and socially excluded;
- addressing the structural conditions that create 'the poor'.

Overwhelming evidence suggests that *neither schools nor education policy can 'do it alone'*. Broader social and economic policy also has a major part to play in reducing poverty and social exclusion. 'Countries where child poverty is rare combine low levels of joblessness with effective redistribution. Giving priority to 'work-first' policies and reducing unemployment and inactivity are not enough unless they are accompanied by measures to reduce poverty in working families and by effective redistribution to those out of work' (Whiteford and Adema, 2006).

It is only if broader social and economic policies remove obstacles to capability, or to effective engagement with education, that schools will be able to do more than 'firefight' the problems facing young people and the communities they live in, or address those problems in other than a piecemeal way.

These are by no means straightforward issues. The perceived trade off between reducing child poverty and weakening work incentives for their parents is a core dilemma in social policy, typically resolved by claiming that the social inclusion of parents in paid work is the only effective way to combat child poverty (Sinfield and Pedersen, 2006).

Just how much **extra resource** is needed to make a difference seems not to have been recognized. Schools in UK's Education Action Zones received an average of 5% extra funding per pupil and those in French *Zones d'Education Prioritaires* received 10% more, but neither of these are likely to come close to matching levels of parental investment in middle class children's schooling. Adequate funding of such interventions is absolutely crucial. Without it—which means continuing to fund schools for the poor at levels below those of the better off and already successful—failure is almost inevitable, and the cycle of disadvantage rolls on its way, now accompanied by even stronger bouts of victim-blaming.

There is also the range of factors implicated in social exclusion for which **schools alone cannot compensate**, especially when they are concentrated in particular localities. The contexts that spawn social exclusion have to be addressed before their consequences can be eliminated. Although much can be done by committed educators, the state of education cannot be separated from the reality of life in deeply impoverished neighbourhoods (Lipman, 2004:182). No answers to the problems of social exclusion, poverty and education will succeed if they ignore the need for material redistribution and cultural recognition (Lynch & Baker, 2005).

The forms the cycle of disadvantage takes and 'the poor' are both extremely heterogeneous and will not all be suited by a single solution. The inequalities and disadvantages—of income, class, gender, ethnicity, language, disability- suffered by the poor are multiple and intersectional; they combine with each other in myriad and complex ways, which defy any easy or simple response. Minimally, addressing these requires a shift of mind set, to one that takes **diversity, rather than homogeneity, as the norm.**

Given all that, the possible ways of addressing aspects of the cycle of disadvantage through education might be divided into **two broad groups**; those aimed at limiting education's contribution to the reproduction of the cycle of disadvantage, which as the evidence above shows is very considerable; and those where education might contribute more directly to the interruption of the cycle.

6. How to limit the damage caused by education?

Recognise the nature and importance of the problem, and make resolving it a priority.

This involves recognising that removing or reducing inequality in education involves a quite different approach. Treating everyone equally will only add to the inequality of those at the bottom (and at the top). Desirable though it is in other ways, if we are to overcome the problems of extreme social disadvantage in and through education, it is not enough to raise average performance in schools. The evidence shows that this continues to leave a distinct 'tail' of underachievement, which is separated further from the mainstream as average scores rise. To do this would require a very high level of political boldness and strength. The disadvantaged are less likely to vote, for instance, while those who do vote are not likely to welcome such a redistribution of resources.

Reduce the stratification built into education systems and schools

We have already noted that education carries out a crucial social and economic 'sorting' function. This may (possibly) be useful for economic purposes, but it is also fundamental to the reproduction of the cycle of disadvantage —and this tension again requires a political solution. The price of the emphasis on the direct relationship between education and the economy is to make it much more difficult for the excluded overcome some of the bases of their exclusion.

For the disadvantaged students, it means access to less effective and enjoyable educational experiences than are available to non-disadvantaged peers. One effective way to do this is to delay academic selection in schools. The impact of socio-economic status and migrant status on educational achievement is reduced in systems which **delay selection** of students to ability tracks (Woesmann and Schutz, 2006).

The school composition effect very clearly exacerbates divisions in educational achievement, and it is highly amenable to policy intervention. It is evident that the geographical concentration of intersecting inequalities that lead to social exclusion makes an independent contribution to the nature and depth of social exclusion, in both the processes and the outcomes of schooling. There are two possible, non mutually exclusive, responses to this problem. One is via school zoning policies, which would break up the concentration of the socially excluded. The other is recognising the need to fund and support such schools at *very* much higher levels than 'mainstream' schools. The concentration of difficulties makes the problems exponentially rather than arithmetically greater in such schools (Thrupp, 2002). Given the sums of money which societies give to education and social policies,

outcomes which produce disengagement and disadvantage can clearly be termed failures of investment and as both school and societal failures. Resources have to be effectively used as well as sufficient to close the real gaps of family income and educational resource and provision that together underlie educational inequality.

How can education contribute to breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage?

At the level of the child

- Early identification of children at risk of failing to obtain benefit of education, and early and sustained intervention with this group– particularly at key transition stages (Bradshaw et al 2004).
- *High quality* Early Childhood Education and Care is crucial. Though it may not lead to the excluded 'catching up' it does ensure that they do not fall further behind (which is at present the net contribution of education to reproducing the cycle of disadvantage).
- Acknowledgement of the non-cognitive contributions of education to the development of young people's capabilities and well being, and hence their chances of escaping social exclusion, is crucial and their introduction and recognition across the curriculum is a matter of great importance
- Raising the educational qualifications of poor and socially disadvantaged children. This may not advance them in the credentialist competition for jobs, but it may make them less ineffective parents of the next generation of poor and socially disadvantaged children

At the level of the family

- Providing supportive 'across the board' responses to what are recognised to be complex and intersecting disadvantages and inequalities, that are imbricated with educational experiences in a range of different ways. This could include providing parental training programmes for at risk young people, and linking education programmes to health education and training
- Mitigating the financial costs of schooling (uniform, books, materials, 'trips')
- Refining cash transfer programmes to retain young people in school

At the level of the school

- Experimenting with forms of 'full service schools' (Raffo and Gunter, 2008)
- 'Fostering connectedness', making at risk students, and also their families, feel less 'out of place' in school; increasing trust in students, as part of raising their expectations; providing tasks with immediate and tangible outcomes; a

shift of emphasis from crisis intervention to primary prevention before serious maladjustment has already manifested itself.

- A change in emphasis from preventing youth problems to the promotion of youth development and youth engagement in their communities and societies[6]; harnessing notable strengths of 'vulnerable populations' to derive a significant momentum for positive change[7]; and integrating interventions into the cultural context, the educational programme, and personal behavioural repertoire of the developing individual[8].

- Recognising the 'spatial' effects, but recognizing their complexity; *in what ways* do concentrated multiple disadvantages affect children's experience of school? For education and wider social and economic policies to address social exclusion effectively they have to focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged.

- Targetting assistance is crucial. Policies such as EAZs in UK and ZEPs in France have been shown to raise pupil performance in the target schools, though these have not reduced inequalities[9]. The successor to EAZs in the UK, Excellence in Cities, has showed positive impact, though with varying effects according to pupil and school characteristics, with students of medium/high ability benefiting most[10].

- Providing continuing educational opportunities for those who leave school have with no or very few educational qualifications. These could include forms of VET, and enhanced use of workplace learning. Such opportunities should be linked wherever possible to continuing paid employment, but there are also benefits of work experience for those who have never been in a household where no one has ever had a job. This involves taking lifelong learning seriously. As we saw, one of the consequences of early school leaving is that young people are much less inclined to continue in education after leaving school. Ensuring that everyone has access to acquiring the eight key competences for Lifelong Learning, for instance, would represent a major step forward. young people at the end of their compulsory education and training equipping them for adult life, particularly for working life, whilst forming a basis for further learning, and providing adults with opportunities to develop and update their skills throughout their lives. This represents the strongest of the EU's current programmes likely to be able to have an effect

[6] Pittman et al., 2001); Schoon and Bynner, 27.

[7] Luthar & Ciccetti, 2000.

[8] Pianta & Walsh, 1998.

[9] Hatcher and Leblond, 2001.

[10] McNally, 2005.

on the populations discussed here. It is aimed at 'disadvantaged groups whose educational potential requires support' with a strong emphasis on the principles of equality and access for all.

7. The dimensions of Equality in Education

The equality objectives that we promote depend on the interpretation of equality that we endorse. Achieving equality and promoting inclusion in education is not simply a issue of distributing existing forms of education more equally between groups. Distributive theories of social justice dominate our thinking in education. We think of schooling as an unmitigated good that must be distributed equally to all people in society. Lynch and Baker (2005) point to four key dimensions of equality in education:

- **Equality of Resources** (ensuring that all students are equally resourced economically, socially and culturally)
- **Equality of Respect and Recognition**- granting equal respect and recognition to differing abilities and peoples in education
- **Equality of Power** – equalising power relation
- **Affective Equality** (equality of Love, Care and Solidarity; equality in the doing of love, care and solidarity work and equality in benefiting from care.

To have substantive equality of opportunity it is essential to have **equality of economic resources.** Socio-economic (social class) based inequalities remain the primary cause of inequality in education in all societies even when controlling for other attributes such as ethnic/cultural identity/migrant status. Inequalities in wealth enable richer families to use excess wealth to advantage their children by investing in out-of-school educational activities and resources to maintain their competitive advantages within schools

Equality of Respect and Recognition matters as there is a large body of evidence showing that many of those who experience inequality in education experience it as a lack of respect. This lack of recognition may take different forms: it may be a lack of respect for different abilities (an issue for students with disabilities or differing abilities for example); for cultural values and languages, for sexual orientation, age, marital status, gender or social class background. Even social class inequality is experienced as moral judgement. It is especially important to *recognise different abilities* (intelligences in education). The research from the Harvard Zero project shows that there are multiple human intelligences but that most formal educational systems only formally recognise two of these, namely linguistic and logical mathematical-related intelligences. And it is these intelligences that dominate conceptions of educational achievement. All the research indicates that tracking or

streaming on the basis of so-called ability (most of which is measured by simple language and mathematics tests) is both arbitrary and profoundly dysfunctional for children and young people's development. It does not promote achievement at an aggregate level and it exacerbates drop out rates.

Equality of Power matters because there is a good body of research indicating that dialogue-based and democratic forms of education enhance educational engagement and lower drop out rates especially among young people from marginalised communities. Promoting more egalitarian relations between children and teachers (and across the educational community) also matters because it shows respect for children as persons.

Affective Equality matters as human beings are not simply rational (economic) actors on the stage of life. They are also profoundly emotional and sentient beings whose memories and feelings about schooling and education often outlive their cognitive gains (or failures). There is a lot of research showing that people do not experience the injustices and inequalities in education simply in terms of low grades or early leaving. Schooling can and does create *affective inequalities by depleting children and young people's sense of educational self worth.*

8. Tackling Social exclusion - The equivalent of "a minimum wage" in education?

Effectively tackling the link between education, inequality and social exclusion needs at least a double pronged attack. The first, looks for ways to distribute success in existing schools more evenly. This involves the kinds of reforms to education and school systems and modifications to school practices that we have just advanced. These include a major emphasis on early childhood education and care, the provision of a range of 'second chance' opportunities for those who have failed in the system, and perhaps most fundamentally, accepting that contemporary education systems need to be based on diversity rather than homogeneity.

But achieving equality and promoting inclusion in education is not simply a issue of distributing existing forms of education more equally between groups. Our second proposal is more radical. Its target is making education a means of reducing social exclusion rather than a transmission belt for it. It recognizes that education has limited possibilities of successful elimination, or even serious mitigation, of inequality in a system that is so closely linked to the economic system. The situation is little different now from that described by Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) four decades ago. They described it as 'Persistent Inequality', since they could find no evidence of any education policy bringing about a successful weakening of the

links between parental occupation and chances of educational success. Education does not create economic inequality but it reinforces it and distributes opportunities for success and failure, in life as well as school. The same applies now as then, and it applies now as then despite equally strenuous efforts to improve the life chances of disadvantaged populations through education. This may not be a reason for abandoning the effort altogether, but it may be a reason to look at the issues rather differently. So, what we propose involves modifying the 'education offer' for socially disadvantaged young people. The current offer has meant that they pay the price for the prioritization of education's contribution to the knowledge economy, in school failure and social exclusion, and that price is paid across generations.

What we are proposing instead is a kind of equivalent to a minimum wage in the area of education. The minimum wage does not alter the basic fundamentals of the labour market, but it does mitigate some of its worst excesses by ensuring a safety net that provides the possibility of survival and some form of dignity for all those in employment. In the same way, a minimum 'Educational Entitlement' might be constructed, that would be aimed not at directly enabling the disadvantaged to compete more evenly on a playing field that is so blatantly and persistently uneven, but at providing the basis for a broader and fuller and more worthwhile participation in education and wider society. The Entitlement would be based on the idea that it is possible to mitigate the worst effects of the current situation, which are those that fuel its perpetuation. Basically it would be expected to provide some of the cognitive, affective and cultural conditions of social inclusion and solidarity. It would be based in part on changing what young people learn at school, but also on the importance of providing them with the means of 'converting' what they do learn at school into something of practical value to them, and this could also bring about spin offs into other areas. If this were achieved, it could constitute the basis of a contribution of education to social cohesion as significant and effective as its contribution to competitiveness.

What might that entitlement include, and how might it mitigate the effects of poverty, inequality and social exclusion? We cannot specify closely what should be included, but the intended outcomes are broadly clear. It should be based on cultivating the possibility of *access* to knowledge, *acquisition* of knowledge, and the *capacity to convert* that access and acquisition into something personally, culturally and aesthetically useful that will provide the basis for greater respect, recognition and representation, as well as labour market success. Access and acquisition are in various ways parts of the existing educational offer. However, as we have shown, they are by no means equally available to all. The point about conversion is that it works across the whole sequence, not just at the end. It involves what the Nobel prize winning economist Amartya Sen calls 'capabilities', and he prioritises them over both resource- and rights-based conceptions of equality (Otto and Ziegler

2006). We might see capabilities as comprising those things whose absence leads to social exclusion.

As elaborated in the previous section, Lynch and Baker (2005) talk about the same thing when they refer to the 'equal enabling and empowerment of individuals', and 'giving everyone 'real options' as the necessary basis for an 'equality of condition'. These would form an excellent framework and basis for the proposed Education Entitlement.

It is easy to dismiss all or some of these as somehow 'non-instrumental'. But that is only the case for those who cannot take them for granted. They are the things that put the 'ex' into 'exclusion', and the 'dis' into disadvantage, where inclusion and advantage are taken as the norm. Everybody needs them, but they do not come automatically, and as we have showed, education systems are as likely to take them away as to supply them. So they are hugely instrumental for those who cannot take them for granted. They are necessary, not discretionary add ons. The target of the Education Entitlement should be mitigating the worst effects of inequality and social exclusion, because they are what drive the cycles of deprivation. We have emphasized above that 'education cannot do it alone', and that would remain the case if everyone had access to an effective Education Entitlement. The point is that the conversion part of the Entitlement applies to being able to maximise the benefit of other social policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion.

The idea of a European Education Entitlement is not fanciful. It is in fact already present in embryo, both in a form and with a content that is quite compatible with the EEE proposed here. It exists most explicitly as the key Competences for Lifelong Learning. There have been major efforts (CASE, DeSeCo, PISA, Key Competences for 21st century) at both spelling out what key competences would look like, which should be included, usually for the same broad set of purposes—personal fulfilment, economic contribution, and active citizenship, and these are very welcome and potentially powerful contributions to a remodelled and reoriented education system for the 21st century.

There are, though, two differences between them and what is being suggested here. They are differences of purpose and scope. The purpose of the 'Competences' studies is to shift the balance of current schooling as a whole; they are not add ons, but require whole school initiatives. They were not designed specifically as enabling means of addressing poverty, inequality and social exclusion through education. They are about changing the 'education offer', but in order to do the same things more effectively, rather than ensuring that everyone has access to the basic capabilities, which the majority are able to take for granted.

The target population for the Education Entitlement is not everyone between 3 and 18 (which seems to be emerging as the duration of the typical school career), but that 10% or so of that population who do not have the capabilities necessary to develop the competences spoken of in the Competences reports. It is in this small minority that the disadvantages that fuel the cycle of disadvantage are most likely to be found. The parallel with the minimum wage is again apt. The great majority of the employed do not need the minimum wage; they already have it. The target population here is those who because of the extreme disadvantages they suffer lack the capabilities on which effective learning rests, and where this leads to their effective exclusion from the possibility of being able to 'catch up' in school, benefit positively from their environment, or be included in community activities (see Andresen and Fegter 2010).

9. Concluding remarks

Educational inequalities reflect, reproduce and often compound a range of intersecting wider socio-economic disadvantages. They increase in severity throughout school careers. They harm lives, threaten the prosperity of nations, undermine democracy and work against social cohesion. Inequalities in education and training also generate huge hidden costs which are only rarely shown in public accountancy systems. It is both our moral obligation and our crude financial interest to develop not only more efficient but also more *equitable* education and training systems. Inequities within and around education and training systems are neither natural nor inevitable.

Education policy measures alone are unlikely to alleviate the impact of multiple disadvantage. Investing *enough*, investing *early* (in quality early childhood education and care) and *linking up* education and training initiatives with action in other policy fields is essential in the effort to break the cycle of disadvantage.

We end with a series of challenges generated by attempts to overcome the consequences of multiple disadvantage on educational achievement and the quality of educational experiences, and their contributions to cycles of disadvantage. This set of questions is neither exhaustive nor intended to identify the most important of pressing issues. It is offered as a means of opening up the nature of the problems in the area, and pointing to possible responses to them.

What is it about disadvantaged home backgrounds, and what can be done about it?

Their disadvantages tend to be multiple—poverty, household composition (single parents), language handicaps-- and intersecting. This produces children who lack experience of what can be taken for granted in the great majority of homes—in particular the kinds of capabilities that are needed to be able to benefit from formal schooling. This is evident in their being already at age three one year behind their more advantaged peers.

Redressing these disadvantages, which are the starting point of accumulating deficits, requires first of all recognition, and than action, in the form of high quality, and accessible—early childhood education, together with effective community support. As the example of the Turkish children in Germany shows, this will not enable them to catch up, but it will make them better equipped to benefit from formal schooling.

Non-patronising parental education programmes—themselves important forms of lifelong learning-- have a distinct and constructive contribution to make (see Tett, 2001)

What is it about social exclusion and what can be done about it?

It is access to the kinds of experiences (including language), social relations, social customs and activities that are basic to the capacity to benefit from schooling. It is precisely these absences that the Education Entitlement is intended to respond.

What is it about school systems and what can be done about it?

School systems are directly linked to the economy in numerous ways, and not all those links can or should be broken. But 'sorting for the economy'—though dual track schooling, or streaming—creates greater inequalities than more homogeneous systems and practices. School systems distribute life chances through the ways that they distribute access to schools, with a range of financial, social, personal and emotional consequences. Offering different kinds of opportunities to those who have failed in the mainstream system—such as the opportunity to gain 'school graduation' qualifications—could be a means of preventing school failure becoming labour market, social and personal failure

What is it about schools and what can be done about it?

Schools still tend to take the homogeneity of their populations as the norm, and this limits their ability to recognise, acknowledge and respond to diversity. They recognise and foster a small part of the range of human capabilities and intelligences. The phasing of the school career limits the possibilities of those who

start, or fall, behind catching up; it is one of the reasons that the gaps get wider as the children grow older. They operate on a basis of equal opportunities and equal treatment, which curtails their readiness to offer more to those who need more.

What is it about school success and how can it be made more widely available?

One feature of school success as currently evaluated is that it can become a zero-sum game; the more some have of it, the less others can have of it. Assessment systems sometimes encourage this. Where school success is measured in 'value-added' rather than absolute terms, it does provide more incentive to heed the needs of the disadvantaged, though the currency of the value added tends to remain the same.

What is it about school funding and what can be done about it?

School funding differs enormously, within and across Member States. What matters for reducing the effects of multiple disadvantages is that it is properly targeted—especially in schools who receive extra funding to compensate for their disadvantaged intake.

What is it about education policy and what can be done about it?

Education policy, too, frequently driven by electoral considerations (the disadvantaged are always a small minority electorally), often operates on a basis of equal opportunities and resourcing to those with unequal needs. A significantly different offer is needed by the multiply disadvantaged and excluded.

What is it about early School Leaving and what can be done about it?

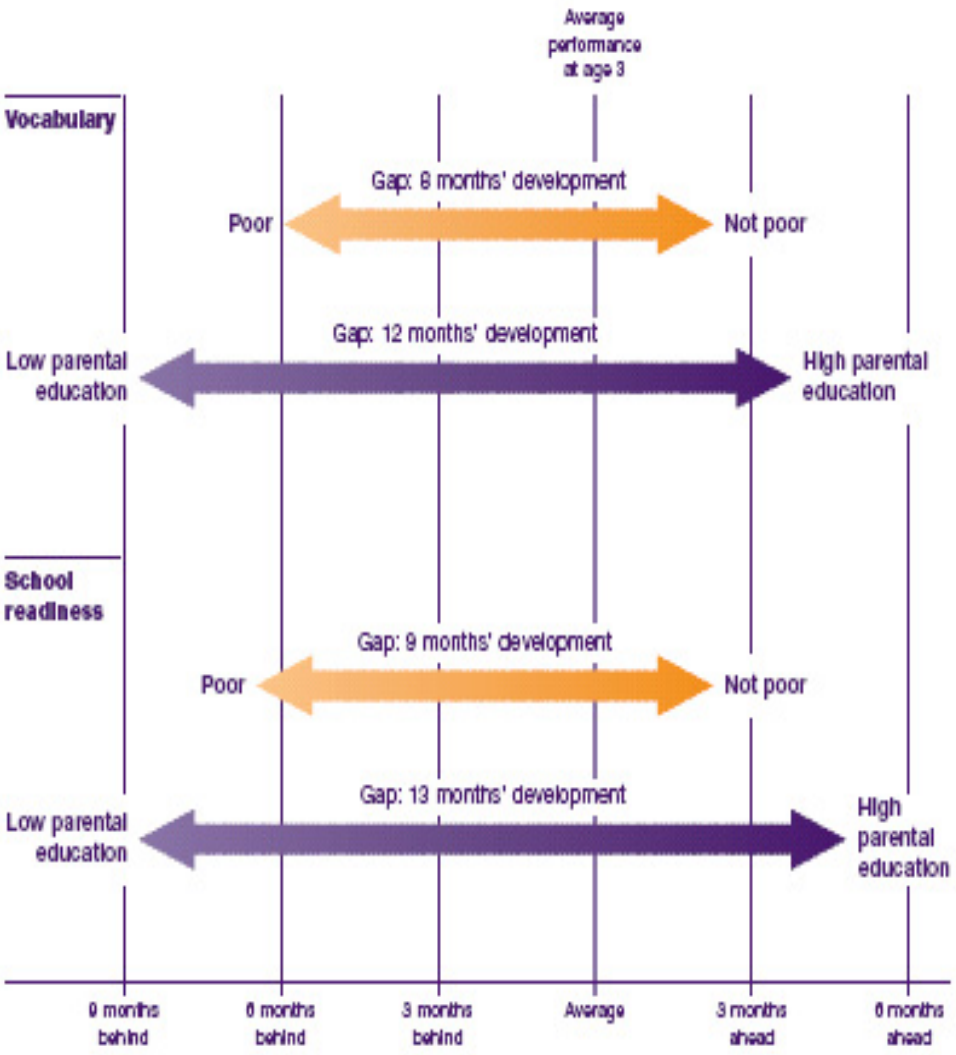
We have shown above how early school leaving is an outcome of earlier disadvantage and ineffective and dispiriting school experiences, leading to disengagement from the school and the likelihood of rejection of further educational opportunities. A number of, usually piecemeal, remedies have been introduced with varying success (see NEESE report on ESL), but amog those that have demonstrated some success are financial assistance programmes that enable more young people to remain in education and well designed mentoring schemes

What is the most important thing to be born in mind in addressing educational inequality and social exclusion?

Bourdieu's famous saying that 'all that is necessary to maintain inequality is to treat people equally'.

Figure 1

The poverty gap at age three, 2003



Definitions:

Poor = family income is below 60% median

Low parental education = no qualifications

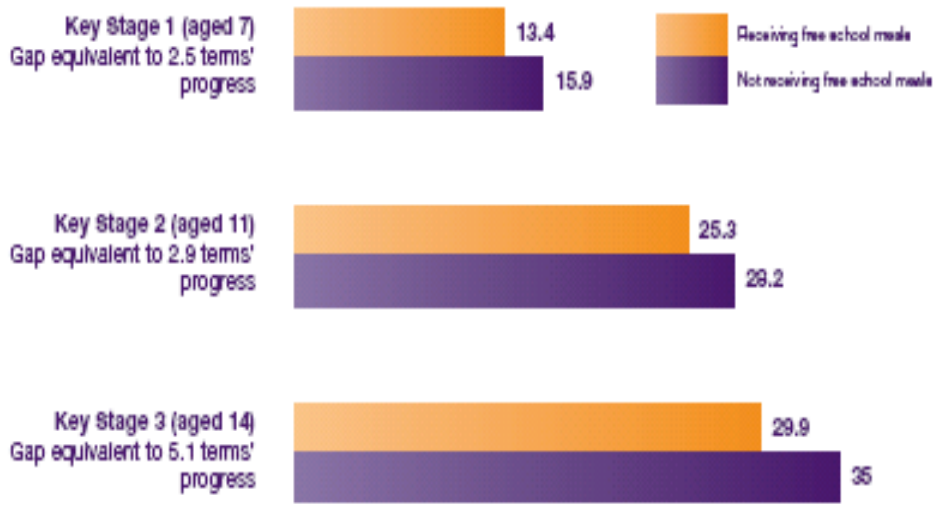
High parental education = graduate qualification or equivalent

Source: *User's Guide to Second Millennium Cohort Study*, Institute for Longitudinal Studies, 2007

Figure 2

The poverty gap in school attainment, 2005

SAT point scores: one point difference = one term's progress



GCSE point scores: average for best eight subjects

Source: www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000657/SocialMobility20Apr06.pdf

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[i] If we want to know how to break the cycle of disadvantage we need first to understand more clearly how it works. Different explanations of the intergenerational perpetuation of poverty, point to different to different means of changing education to break, or weaken, the cycle (Deacon, 2003). These alternative explanations are based on work done in the United States, but their relevance to debates in Europe is very clear.

Cultural explanations emphasise the importance of deeply rooted *intergenerational culture* that 'keeps people poor even if opportunities for advancement are created for them' (Lewis, 127). We see elements of this in the idea that 'school is not cool'.

Rational explanations of the cycle of disadvantage say that the incentives offered to poor people to break out of the cycle of disadvantage are insufficient to make it worth their while, that the work or conditions on offer do not add to their quality of life. Here, school is rejected because it is 'not worth the effort'. We may see Education Maintenance Allowances and other forms of cash payment dependent on school attendance as responses to this explanation of the cycle of disadvantage.

The *permissive* explanation of the cycle of disadvantage sees the long term poor as 'distinctive not in their beliefs but in their inability to conform to them as closely as other people' (Mead 1986, 22), and this produces a sense of fatalism, a 'sense that it is permissible not to fulfil the obligations of citizenship' (128). This could contribute to the inability of young people to be able to benefit from jobs when they are available.

The *adaptive* explanation sees the behaviour of the poor and excluded as responses to their social and economic (especially employment) conditions, particularly when they are highly concentrated geographically. The response to school here might be 'there is no point because there are no jobs here anyway'.

Structural explanations see the causes of the cycle of disadvantage in deep seated and pervasive social inequalities, which shape opportunities to access and benefit from the services and information that are crucial to the capacity to *benefit from* schools. Here, education might be seen to perpetuate the cycle of disadvantage by showing that the ways it is distributed make it futile to expect anything from it.