Higher education and school partnerships conference
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The role of partnerships in widening participation and increasing social mobility

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Schools and WP

John Denham's three objectives (11 Dec 2007):

1. Raise standards
2. Improve advice and support
3. Raise aspirations

'Aspiration is the most important of these'

National Council for Educational Excellence

- ‘Fair access’ to ‘top’ universities is an issue affecting a few thousand students
- ‘Widening participation’ is an issue relevant to at least 60,000 students
- Policy messages – more efforts to raise aspirations, more

NCEE recommendations

- 4 recommendations on IAG
- 2 on admissions processes, and only
- 1 includes school improvement (*and* IAG)

Socio-economic inequality and education

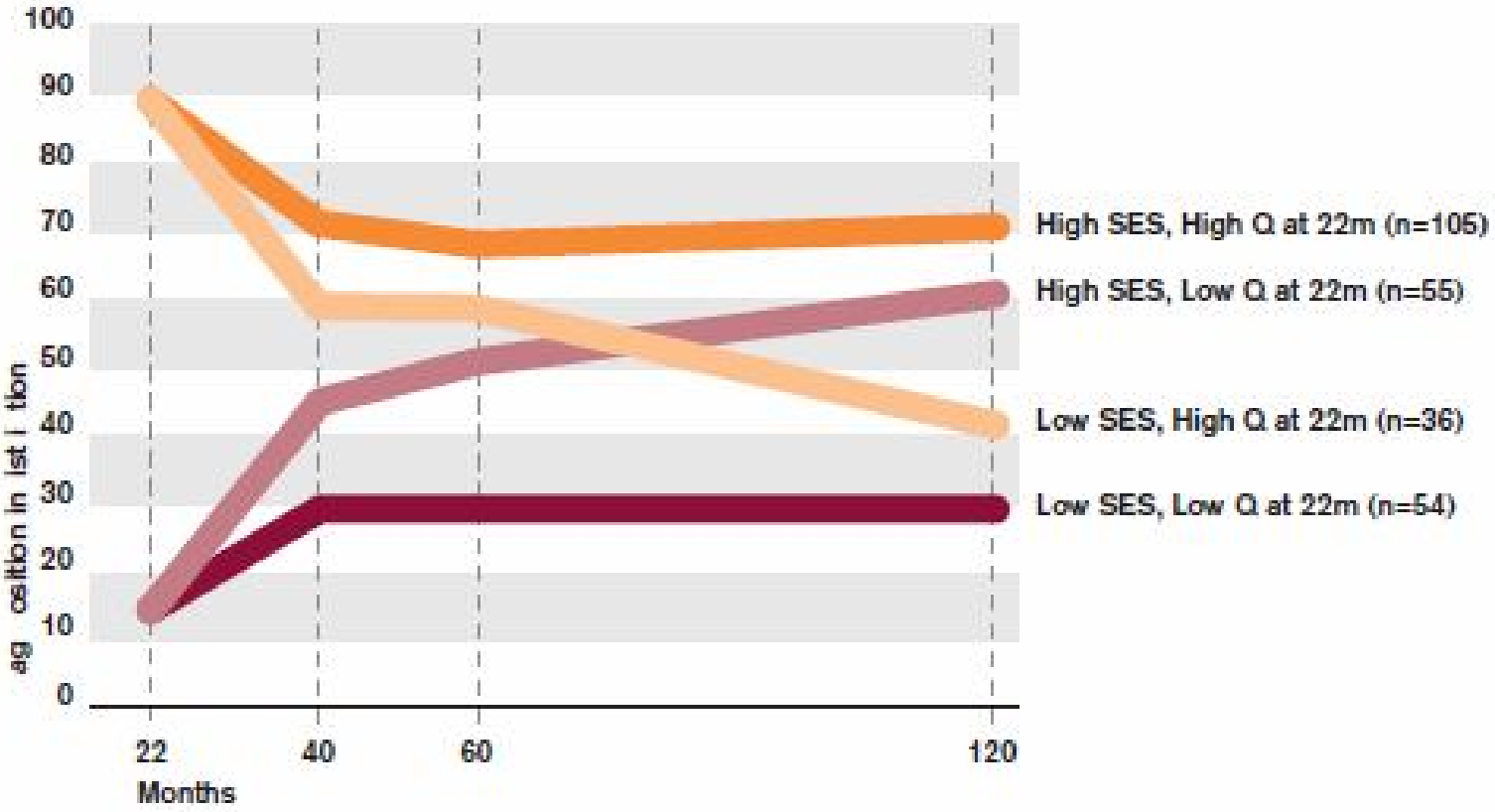
- Socio-economic inequalities in ‘educational’ performance start to widen from an early age
- And continue to widen! (Leon Feinstein)
- Some of this may be beyond the power of the education system to address – social deprivation, genetic inequality
- Investment in the education system can address inequality, but it needs to start early (James Heckman)

The influence of early development on later achievement

	Age 26 highest qualifications		
Scores at 5	None	Lower/ Middle	A-level or higher
Low quartile	30.2	51.8	18
Top quartile	5.2	36.4	58.5

Source: Leon Feinstein, Very early evidence, CentrePiece 2003
Statistics from 1970 Birth cohort study

Figure 2. Average rank of test scores at 22, 42, 60 & 120 months by SES of parents and early rank position



Source: Feinstein

Sutton Trust research

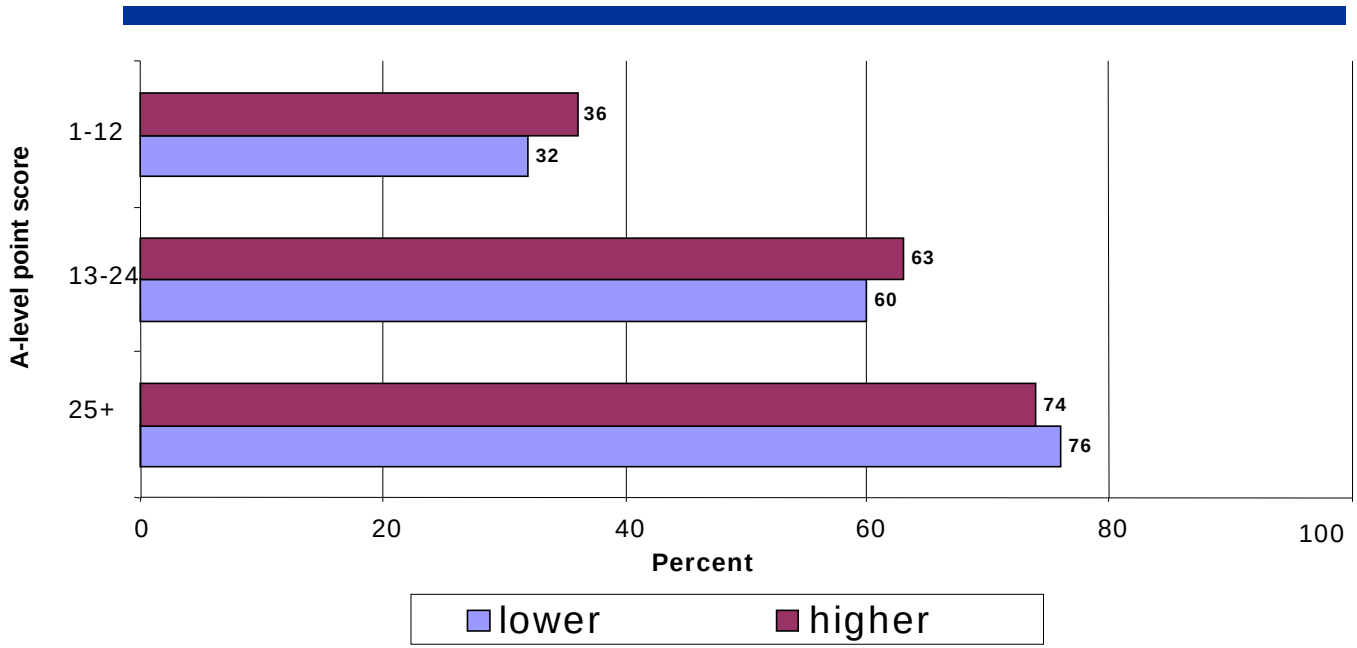
“we estimate that there are as many as 60,000 pupils in every year cohort of pupils -- who at age 11, age 14 or age 16 were among the top fifth of performers in school – who do not subsequently enter higher education by age 19.”

Sutton Trust report to NCEE, *Increasing higher education participation amongst disadvantaged young people and schools in poor communities*, April 2008

Sutton Trust (cont)

... the class gap in university participation ... disappears completely once pupils have attained A-levels. It does not matter if you were eligible for free school meals or not, or indeed what results you achieved earlier on in school, if you get A-levels you are as (highly) likely as any other pupil subsequently to enrol on a degree course. The main problem is getting to A-levels in the first place.

Participation in HE at age 18 by A-level point score and parents' SEG



Source: DfES. Calculated from Youth Cohort Study data.

Source: Bahram Bekhradnia, Widening Participation and Fair Access: An Overview of the Evidence, HEPI, February 2003

New research from IFS

H Chowdry, C Crawford, L Dearden,
A Goodman and A Vignoles

Widening Participation in Higher Education: Analysis using Linked Administrative Data

www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r69.pdf

statistical study based on school and HE records of 153,221 individual students

IFS headlines on WP

- The socio-economic gap in HE participation .. comes about because poorer pupils do not achieve as highly in secondary school
- Focussing policy interventions on ... disadvantaged pupils in post-compulsory education ... is unlikely to have a serious impact on ... HE participation

IFS headlines on school performance

- Deprived students who do catch up and perform well at KS4 have a similar probability of attending university to that of their more advantaged peers
- Part of the explanation for the relatively low achievement of disadvantaged children in secondary school is likely to be rooted in school

IFS headlines on fair access

- There are large socio-economic and ethnic gaps in the likelihood of attending an HE institution with high status
- Once we take account of prior attainment, we find that the impact of material deprivation [and ethnicity] on the likelihood of attending a high-status university largely disappears

The big opportunity

- HEIs to contribute to raising school standards
- For the 55% who don’t go on to HE as well as the 45% who do
- Dealing with the causes of educational inequality instead of coping with the consequences
- More than Widening Participation, though will contribute to WP

Resources

- Universities are already committed to putting resources into widening participation, so put them into the most effective programmes (*and OFFA encourages this*)
- Universities are not being asked to solve the problem on their own.
- Academy or Trust sponsorship **is** a significant resource commitment – needs a strategic decision

The challenges

- Affecting existing school partnerships
- Political controversy
- Reputational risk
- Stretch of managerial resources

Do universities really have a role in school improvement?

- leadership, governance and change management in education
- curriculum development
- continuing professional development
- initial teacher education
- school improvement specialist experts
- raising pupils’ enthusiasm and ambitions? – or is this among the core professional skills of the excellent schoolteacher.