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Poverty, Education, and Cultural Wealth in Welsh Schools and Communities

BSA Conference 2018

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Investigation of the factors which effect poverty in rural education

- Commissioned by the regional educational consortia ERW and GwE
- Eighteen month project (completed October 2017)
- 32,831 pupils, teachers, school managers and local authority officers
- Mixed Methods, Twelve local authorities, Five Phases



Phase 1

Qualitative study- school managers perceptions of rurality, poverty and educational attainment (emergent themes)

Phase 2

Quantitative investigation which adopted a multi-level framework to examine predictors of educational attainment in Key Stages 2 and 4 (787 schools – KS2 and 154 secondary schools, across 12 local authorities)

Phase 3

Stakeholder consultation with 140 children and young people, using 'Plickers' rapid response classroom polling app – perceptions of poverty (KS2 and 4)

Phases 1 -3

Phase 4

Stakeholder consultation with local authorities; focused questionnaire on a range of issues relating to anti-poverty themes, education planning and evaluations within their local authority

Phase 5

Extended consultation using Hwb Cymru to host an on-line survey as a method for gathering the views of school managers 107 from mixed primary and secondary schools across 12 Welsh counties.

Final phases

Community bonds, divisions cultural aspirations

Substance mis-use service, we bring councillors into work with pupils that we have identified as having an issue, and we use the sexual relationships team from the local authority which is made up of nurses, [...], the youth service to come in and deliver a programme in Year 9, a full day programme so we do a lot on smoking, dealing with alcohol issues, that is all in PSE, but that is a general theme within the area because we know the community has health problems you know we've got high rates of heart disease in this area, type II diabetes, obesity, hypertension, there are all sorts of issues.... (School manager)

Brief explanation of the major findings

Community Pride: parents (rural in particular) were reluctant to make an FSM application, this was against their 'anti-benefits' beliefs. Single parents would rather struggle on with three jobs than take a hand-out from the Welsh Government.

Inadequacy of FSM: as a measure of poverty 'ever free school meals' (eFSM) seen as a better measure of those who should be entitled to extra opportunities within the Welsh school system


Need for a **close relationship** between the parents and the school for the child's full potential to be reached.

ALN status is compounded by experiences of poverty.

Release from poverty may have a positive effect on attainment but that any experience of poverty in the formative years appears to have a substantial negative impact.

Rurality does not appear to compound the effects of poverty in Wales (at KS4)

Yosso – CULTURAL WEALTH (as part of Critical Race Theory) . . .

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- Cultural capital defined by white middle-class values –as ‘valuable knowledge’
 - Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)- ‘forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth ... which draw on the knowledges Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom’ (2005, 69)
 - Applicability to other marginalised groups
 - CCW- aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant

SOCIAL CAPITAL

‘networks of people and community resources, which ‘provide support to navigate through society’s institutions’ (2005, 79)

School managers described schools as key to supporting the development of social capital

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL

‘the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers’ (2005, 77)[...] to ‘possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals’

We found that many schools were particularly aware of the need to create opportunities to match the aspirations of the local community and individuals

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

‘includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style’ (2005,78), e.g. when bilingual children translate for parents or other adults, or use of creative arts

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

At one-point school considered withdrawing her from the course, but she was allowed to stay after she and her parents wrote a letter explaining the positive impact of the course on the parents' mental health ... improvement in self-esteem and confidence and decrease in depression and her parents' increased ability to address the basic need of her family & confidence in talking through her thoughts and feelings through her native language (Welsh), which aided stress relief and gave her confidence to attend the Community advice service when required and able to deal with issues/ stress more positively

A child's progress in a school referred access to homelessness prevention and children services signposting advice services, which helps her parent with complex needs.

FAMILIAL CAPITAL

‘engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship’ (2005, 79), including a sense of community, shared history, community resources and kinship

FAMILIAL CAPITAL

We found that schools were aware of the community's pride as a valuable asset, even if there was a limited range of creative strategies of community involvement, based on such knowledge

we are not allowing being in a rural area to be an excuse, But, what we tend to find in this area, is that everybody is – it's a proud community, rural communities are proud

Parents found education to be of key importance

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL - Parents

‘the skills of manoeuvring through social institutions ... not created with Communities of Color in mind ‘(2005, 80), and ‘individual agency within institutional constraint’, is also applicable to poor and rural communities in this case

Parents have insufficient time, knowledge and status/agency to navigate social institutions and (ill-fitting) policies and regulations

Access to information and advice needs improvement.

Access to resources including money is also low

Capacity of families, and of teachers to support them...

we've got parents who can't get up in the morning, and who have got no purpose or direction themselves, who were badly served educationally when they were in school, and they are not transmitting to their children the importance and value of education, and I don't think that there is a great deal that schools can do about that, and that is the motivation is that, that interest in education and the willingness for them to do better than they did
(School manager)

RESISTANCE CAPITAL

‘refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behaviour that challenges inequality’ (2005, 80), including ‘cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures’ (2005, 81) also applicable to structures of classism in this case

Poverty and the sense of stigma lowers potential resistance to poverty, especially rural

Senses of community pride work against recognition of rights and entitlements to more

School support with stigma and poverty...

Many schools try to help:

‘it’s a proud community, rural communities are proud.
They may be entitled to claim, but they don’t’
(School manager).

Other Important findings – Free school meals as a poor measure of poverty

The pity here I feel is that more parents and more children are worthy of free school meals, but due to the restriction of eligibility criteria if you like? What you are allowed to have, in terms of benefits if you like, that it prevents parents from getting on the list, and there is some pride also belonging to a lot of parents, where they said "no, I do not want, for my child, or I do not want my child to be seen as a child from a family who have free school meals". And I feel strongly here, that in rural Wales, that, that is a major reason why the figures are small and are falling, you will see in some areas, the number of claims from children in urban areas are going up! And there is a different pattern in the rural areas, the numbers and percentages are going down while in the towns and cities they are going up! And it is, it is my definite view, that this is true of our area
School manager

School location and policy discrimination

Other Important findings

As we are a school with significant numbers of free school meals, that is, helpful, but unfortunately, due to the funding formula within our local authority, we do not receive sufficient funding to pay for all our teaching staff. So what we find is that we have to look at using or deploying some of the Pupil Development Grant to support to the teachers that we require in front of the pupils in the classroom. And that's quite significant because Pupil Development Grant there should be an extra source of funding, for extra work and it's not necessarily the case, because insufficient funding coming from the local authority

School manager



CONCLUSIONS

- School staff are often aware of community and other resources which could be harnessed to raise aspirations and build on community wealth and individual strengths
- The heavy workloads of staff, under-resourcing and policies /regulations(e.g. measures a of poverty) mitigate against a valuing and utilisation of community wealth
- Hunger was a prohibitive factor in concentration levels of pupils at primary schools which lessened at secondary schools, exacerbating all dimensions of community wealth

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