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Social Mobility in London: The Role of Higher Education

Dr Graeme Atherton, AccessHE

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Amity University [IN] London

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Executive Summary

- **Higher Education participation in London is high and rising but uneven**
Higher Education (HE) participation in London is significantly higher than the average for England and over 10% higher than in any other region. HE participation amongst those from 'disadvantaged groups' is also higher. Given how learners from low income backgrounds perform so much better than those in the rest of the country higher HE participation in London should not be surprising. There is significant variation in participation though across London which does not appear to relate totally to attainment.
- **Over £100m is being invested by London Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in access to HE work**
The majority of this investment is in financial support. This report includes case studies from 14 HEIs describing activities they deliver to support progression to their own institutions from under-represented groups. The case studies show the diversity and range of activities the HEIs undertake. There is a particular emphasis on work to raise attainment in these case studies. However, this is not likely to imply that the majority of activity overall prioritises attainment.
- **More children and a changing economy means more HE will be needed**
There will be a significant increase in the number of young people in the 2030s. Research also predicts increased demand for those with undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. There is a need to consider now how these twin challenges will be met. There may be the potential for significant upward social mobility as a result of these changes but this is not necessarily so.
- **Who is HE for in London? And who is social mobility for?**
Existing measures used to direct investment in access to HE activity based on the HEFCE POLAR methodology may be missing large numbers of young people from lower socio-economic groups in London. There is also a shortage of detailed data being made available on HE participation by ethnic groups. Who the target groups for access to HE and social mobility work are in London needs to be directly addressed to ensure that we get the best value from the resources invested this work.
- **A 'London Challenge' for HE access**
The HE sector should look to the experiences of schools in the 2000s for a model of system improvement in access to HE work. The London Challenge was underpinned by partnership between schools. The unique landscape of London with its high numbers of schools enabled these partnerships to be effective. London should use the size and diversity of its HE sector as a driver to increase social mobility by instigating a 'London Challenge' for HE access.
- **What is the social mobility investment in London?**
Nearly £500m is being invested in work to improve the life chances of those from lower socio-economic groups in London every year through Access Agreements and the pupil premium alone. This does not include the contributions by employers and through other statutory funding streams. Is it possible to estimate the overall social mobility investment in London and could doing this improve what is delivered?
- **A vision for HE and social mobility in London**
The economic and demographic changes above should act as a catalyst for looking at what and who HE is for in London. It needs to outline how HE can continue to transform lives and connect with a broader vision for social mobility in the capital.

1. Introduction

London has always been a place apart from the rest of England. In recent decades it has pulled away even further. London makes by far the biggest contribution to the economic growth of the country. The GVA (Gross Value Added) per head, which measures the value of the goods and services produced in an area, is over 75% higher for London than the UK average (ONS 2012a). Since 2007 and the start of the economic downturn, the gap has widened. London has produced 48% of the UK's output since 2007 compared to 37% over the boom years of 1997 to 2006 (The Guardian 2013a). It may in fact be more meaningful to compare London not with other cities in England, or indeed England itself but with other countries and global cities. There are only around 20 countries in the world with a GDP higher than that of London and only four cities (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2009).

For a long time the story was different for education as London lagged behind. London experienced dramatic improvements in its educational performance for all pupils and especially those from lower income backgrounds over the 2000s (BBC News Online 2012). This is despite London having more learners from low-income backgrounds than the rest of England (Wyness 2011). It now outperforms the rest of England at GCSE and A Level and has a Higher Education (HE) participation rate 10% higher than the average for England (HEFCE 2013).

But this wealth and opportunity is not available to all Londoners. There has been growing concern around the levels of social mobility in England in recent years, a product of which has been a government strategy on social mobility in 2011 (HM Government 2011) and the formation of a Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty which produced its first report recently (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 2013). London has its own particular social mobility challenge. The level of inequality in London is striking. Over a quarter of children in London live in poverty while 1 in 29 Londoners are millionaires (The Guardian 2013b).

While London may lead the country in terms of income per head, and employment it also leads in terms of unemployment of young people and the concentration of worklessness in families and households. In Inner London 26% of children live in households where no adult is in paid work, the highest proportion in England (ONS 2013). And while London might have 48% per cent of its young people going onto HE, it also has nearly 150,000 young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (DfE 2013a).

As the Mayor's 2012 Education Enquiry also found, for many young people the education system in London is not delivering:

'Overall, 28,000 children left London secondary schools without five good GCSEs including English and maths. When we know that by 2020 half of all jobs in London will require degree level qualifications, what, honestly, can we say these young people are prepared for?'

Mayor of London (2012:13)

This report aims to start a dialogue between those from different sectors on social mobility in London. It begins this dialogue by looking at HE progression in London and the contribution that HE and HE institutions (HEIs) can, and could make to social mobility in the capital. The report will be launched at the first of a series of three conferences from late 2013 to 2015 looking at social mobility in London and what can be done to improve it. These conferences are initiated by AccessHE, which is a network of over 20 HEIs working in London, linking with over 200 schools and colleges to support access to HE for those from under-represented groups.

The focus of this report is progression to HE. But we know that HE progression does not define social mobility. Unfortunately, the idea has become in many minds synonymous with HE progression in recent years and moreover HE progression to a certain group of more selective universities. The recent report from the Commission is a welcome step to a broader, more comprehensive understanding of social mobility. The challenge is how to turn such an understanding into action. There is a distinct need for this work to also combat some of the adversarial thinking that has emerged in recent years. The recent drive to support progression for young people who do not go to university through expanding the apprenticeship programme for example has led to a great deal of negative debate surrounding the merits (or demerits) of alternative progression routes. This is damaging for young people (Sedgemore 2013). It strengthens the case for initiatives that create links rather than divisions between those who have a common goal: the successful economic and social progression especially for those from all backgrounds.

Education alone will not lead to social mobility however. Without changes in the labour market to increase the number of jobs in higher income categories or higher socio-economic groups then significant changes in social mobility are difficult, as upward mobility for some implies downward mobility for others (Goldthorpe 2012). The chances of significant downward mobility are low though. Those in higher income/socio-economic groups fight hard to ensure they and their children remain there. This commitment is evident in London. Over 40% of those in London had received some extra tuition over their school careers, which is 16% higher than the national average (The Sutton Trust 2013). These difficult issues are too easily swept under the carpet where social mobility is concerned. Facing up to them is essential if we are going to offer real, honest opportunities in London.

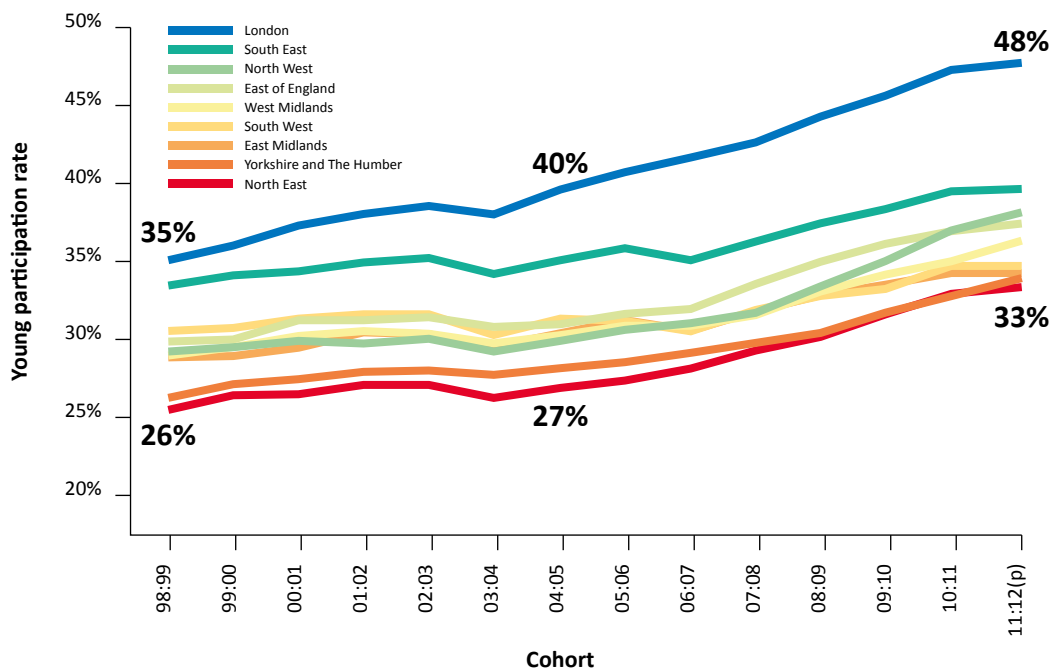
This report begins by looking at HE participation in London overall, concentrating especially on participation amongst those from under-represented groups in the capital. It then draws on the work of HEIs in the AccessHE network to illustrate what HEIs in London are doing to widen access to their institutions. The future challenges for social mobility through HE in London are then outlined looking at both changes in population and the labour market. Finally, the report looks at what can be done to improve HE progression for Londoners from lower socio-economic and other groups and the potential role for a coalition of partners working on social mobility across London in driving these improvements.

2. Progression to HE in London

2.1 Participation overall: High, rising but variable

London leads the way in England on every measure of both HE participation from under-represented groups and HE participation overall. The most recent report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) shows how the gap between London and the rest of the country has grown in the last 10 years. Diagram 1 below illustrates how HE participation amongst young people in London is now over 10% higher than any other area of England.

Diagram 1: Trends in young HE participation rate by region

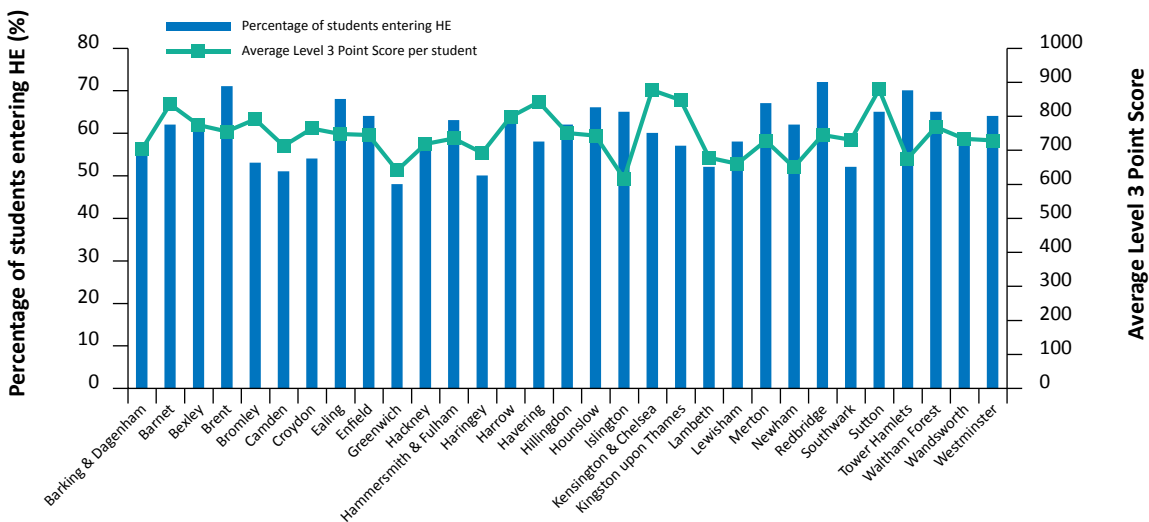


HEFCE (2013:21)

This relatively high level of participation also translates to London having the majority of the best performing schools where HE progression is concerned in the country. It also has the majority of best performing local authorities in terms of HE participation (DfE 2012).

However, this picture of success conceals distinct variations across the city. There are distinct differences between local authorities in London in terms of how successful they are in sending learners to HE. This is not to say that some local authorities are doing 'better' per se for their young people than others. Some may be more successful at supporting their learners in vocational learning, work or apprenticeships. There are though differences in HE progression and they can't be accounted for just by attainment. Diagram 2 compares HE participation rates by local authority with the average point score at Level 3 per student in that authority. It shows that in authorities with similar average point scores different numbers of young people enter HE.

Diagram 2: HE Participation by Local Authority Area in London and Average Level 3 Point Score



These differences occur also where entry to more selective, research intensive ‘Russell Group’ institutions is concerned (the full list of such institutions can be found at www.russellgroup.ac.uk). It is now an official part of the Key Stage 5 destination measures produced by the Department for Education and increasing the numbers attending such institutions was one of the recommendations of the 2012 Mayor’s Education Enquiry in London. The ability of attending a Russell Group institution to confer future labour market advantage is undeniable but it is only a route open to a minority of learners. It is very important that it is open to more learners from lower socio-economic groups and those from different ethnic backgrounds but no more important than the progression of all young people into and through educational pathways that are right for them.

Diagram 3: HE Participation in Russell Group (RG) Institutions by Local Authority Area and Average Level 3 Point Score

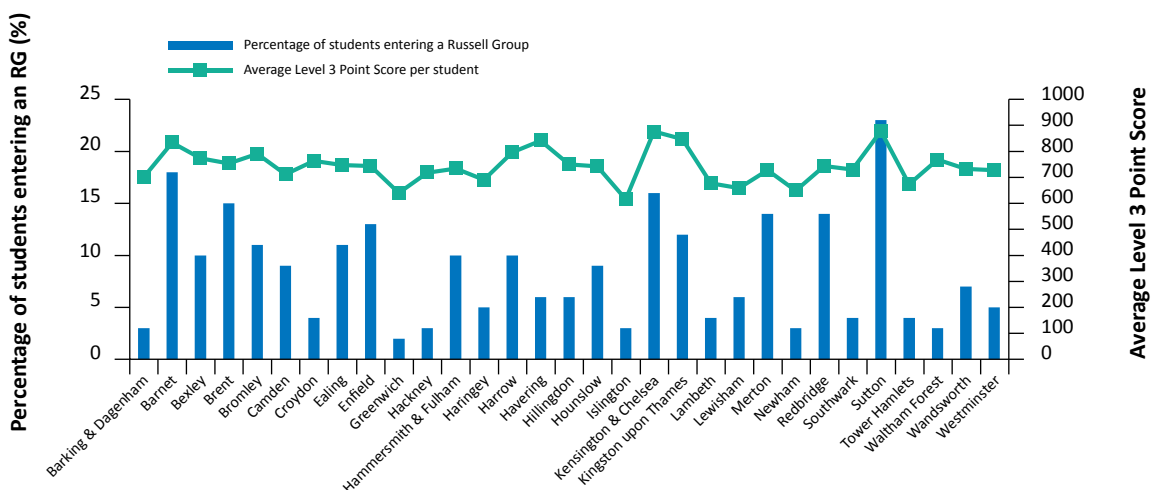


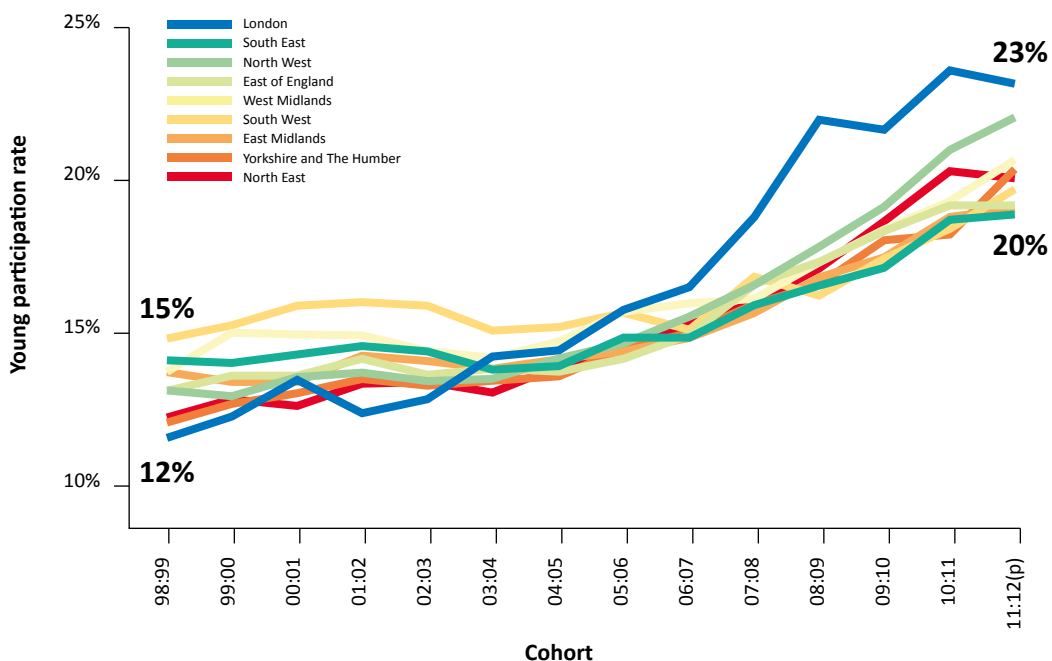
Diagram 2 & Diagram 3: (Author’s analysis of Department for Education Performance Tables and Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils by characteristics: academic year 2010 to 2011)

3. Participation for under-represented groups: Uneven and hidden?

3.1 Participation by socio-economic group

London’s success in overall HE participation is replicated where participation by those from groups under-represented in HE is concerned. HEFCE has created its own measure here based on numbers of young people progressing to HE by geographical area. The Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) measure combines data from the Higher Education Statistical Agency with that from child benefit records to calculate participation at the level of census ward (HEFCE 2013). These are small areas with a population of approximately 6,500 on average (ONS 2012b). After the calculation, it then divides the wards into quintiles on the basis of levels of participation. Diagram 4 below shows how London outstrips the rest of England in participation by those from the lowest participation neighbourhoods.

Diagram 4: Trends in young participation rates by region for young people living in low HE participation areas (POLAR3 classification, adjusted)



HEFCE (2013: 23)

The consequence of this relatively high participation is however to move the majority of London out of the lowest participation quintile. As the HEFCE report from which the above diagram is taken states:

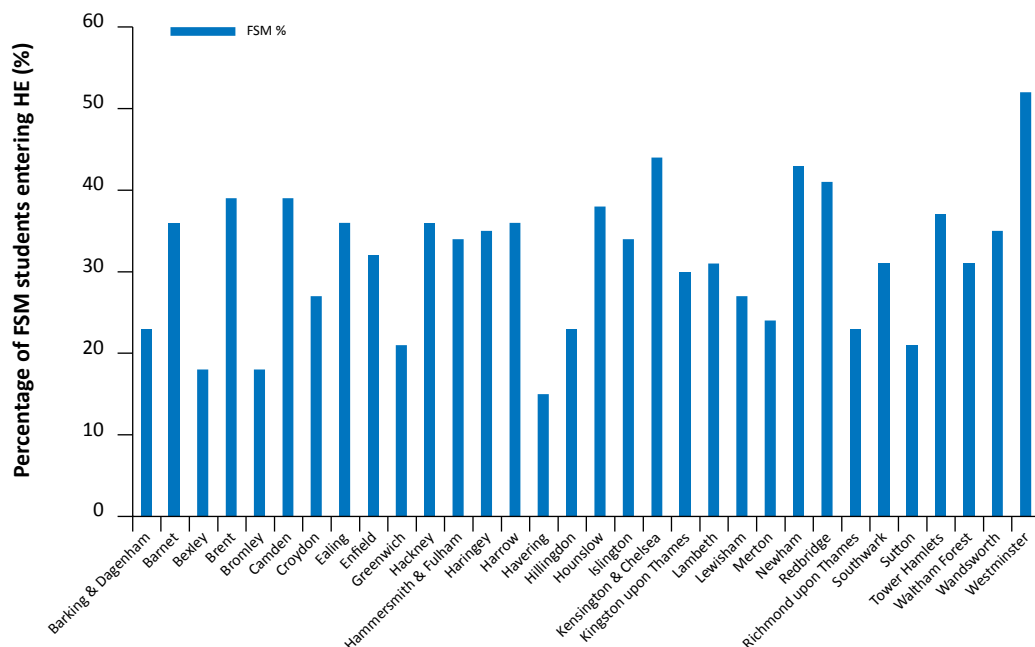
‘The distribution of the most disadvantaged young people varies geographically. For example only three per cent of the young population in London (around 3,000 young people) are in the most disadvantaged group nationally.’

HEFCE (2013:22)

This data is more than a statistical artefact. It has a major potential impact on how HEIs in London target their activities to widen access. All HEIs in England who charge an annual fee of over £6,000 have to submit an annual 'Access Agreement' to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). The Access Agreement outlines how the institution will ensure that financial barriers will not prevent learners from entering their institution and what they will do to encourage greater entry by those from under-represented groups, in particular those from lower socio-economic groups, but also looked after children, mature students and those with disabilities. The Access Agreement regime pushes HEIs toward using POLAR as the indicator of disadvantage that HEIs should use in their targeting. Analysis of these Access Agreements by AccessHE shows that **by 2015-16 over £100m per year will be invested by London HEIs in widening access – much of it in London itself**. If taken literally it is possible that all this money could be chasing just 3,000 young people! In reality, both OFFA and HEIs in London are more nuanced in their interpretation of what 'disadvantaged learner' means but this flexibility can also potentially spill over into confusion. There is a very strong case for revisiting POLAR as a basis for resource allocation in London. 'Trends in young participation in higher education' by HEFCE (2013) also helpfully includes a measure of HE participation by those on low incomes. It also shows that over 40% of young people from such backgrounds are going to HE from London. As importantly, over 47% of young people in London are in the most 'disadvantaged group' by this measure. This is quite an increase from 3%.

Given the limitations of POLAR, alternative measures of HE participation by disadvantage have a role here in illustrating differences in participation across the capital. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) publish an annual data set showing participation by those on Free School Meals (FSM) by local authority (BIS 2012). Diagram 5 is produced by analysing data from BIS and shows how HE participation by FSM students varies significantly by local authority.

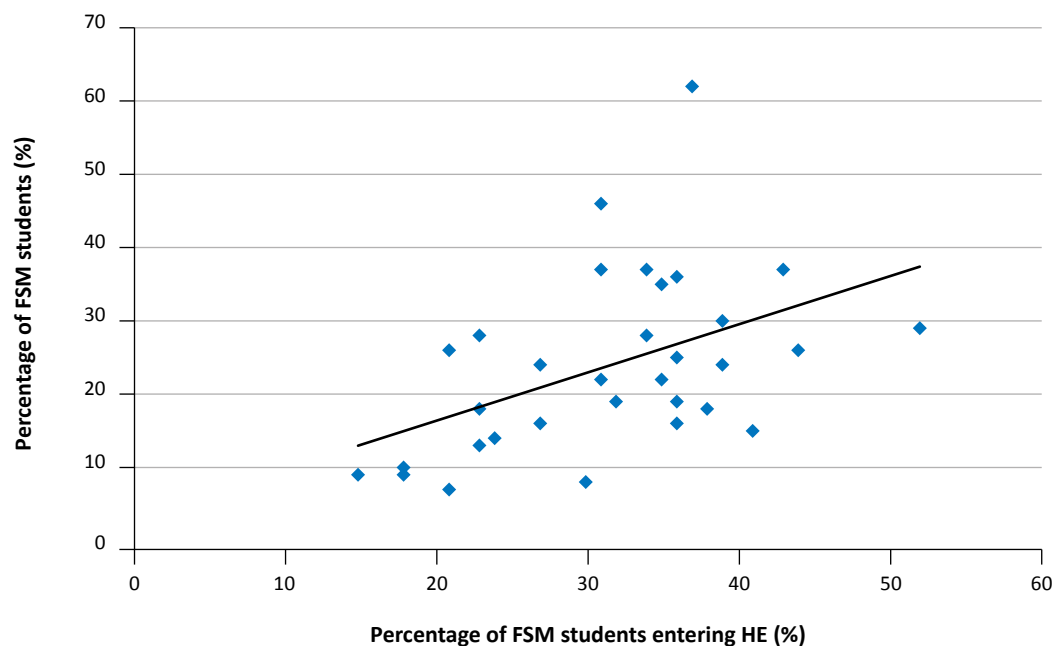
Diagram 5: HE participation of FSM students by Local Authority



Analysis of BIS (2012)

Diagram 6, also produced by analysing data from BIS, shows that contrary to what might be thought, the more FSM students there are in a particular borough the higher chance of such students going onto HE.

Diagram 6: HE participation of FSM students in the Local Authority vs numbers of FSM students in the Local Authority



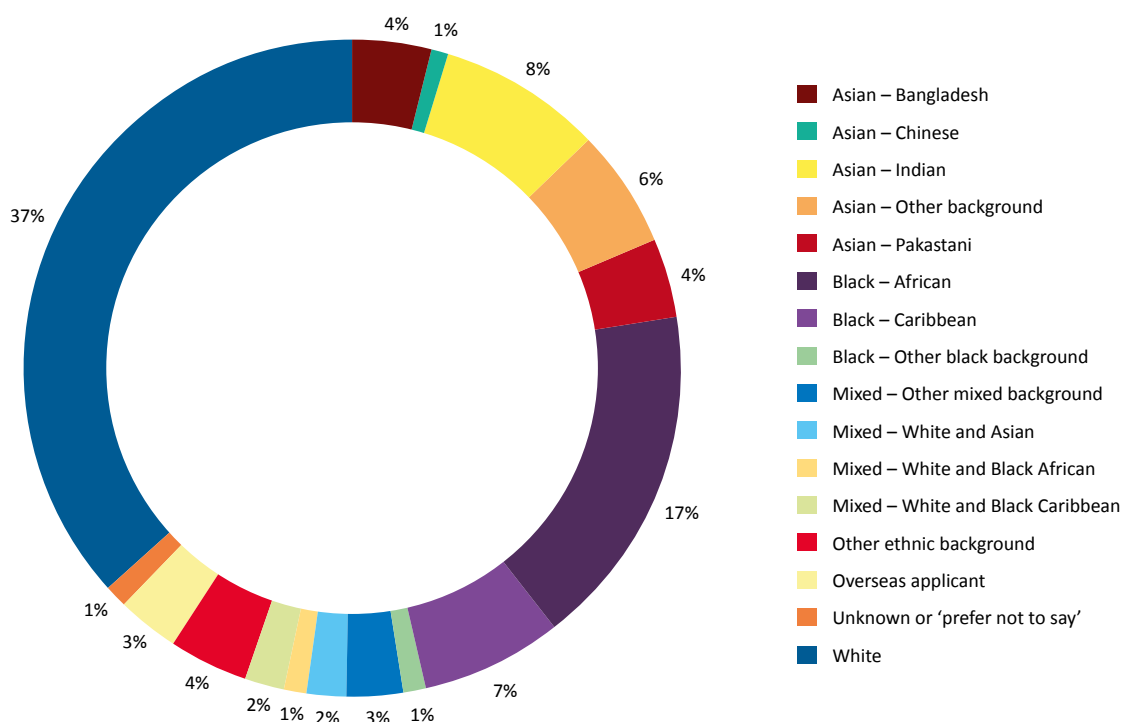
Analysis of BIS (2012)

Some of the areas with the highest numbers going onto HE by other measures, have the lowest numbers progressing by the FSM measure. The drawbacks of using FSM as an indicator are well documented (Kounalia et al). But it does add to what could be described as a 'data mosaic' where HE participation is concerned in London. It appears that in more than one way some of the greatest un-evenness in HE participation in London is hidden - either by the way in which data is collected or through pockets of low participation nested in areas where overall participation is high. How to identify where the cold spots in the capital are and ensure that resources reach them is one of the undoubted challenges that widening access work faces in London.

3.2 Participation by ethnicity

The multi-ethnic nature of the capital is another factor differentiating London from the rest of the country. It is estimated that there are over 50 different ethnic communities in London (The Guardian 2005). This diversity feeds through to HE participation. Diagram 7 breaks down all applications to HE by young people from London in 2010 by ethnicity. It shows that those from white backgrounds are the minority and the majority is made up of students from 15 other ethnic categories.

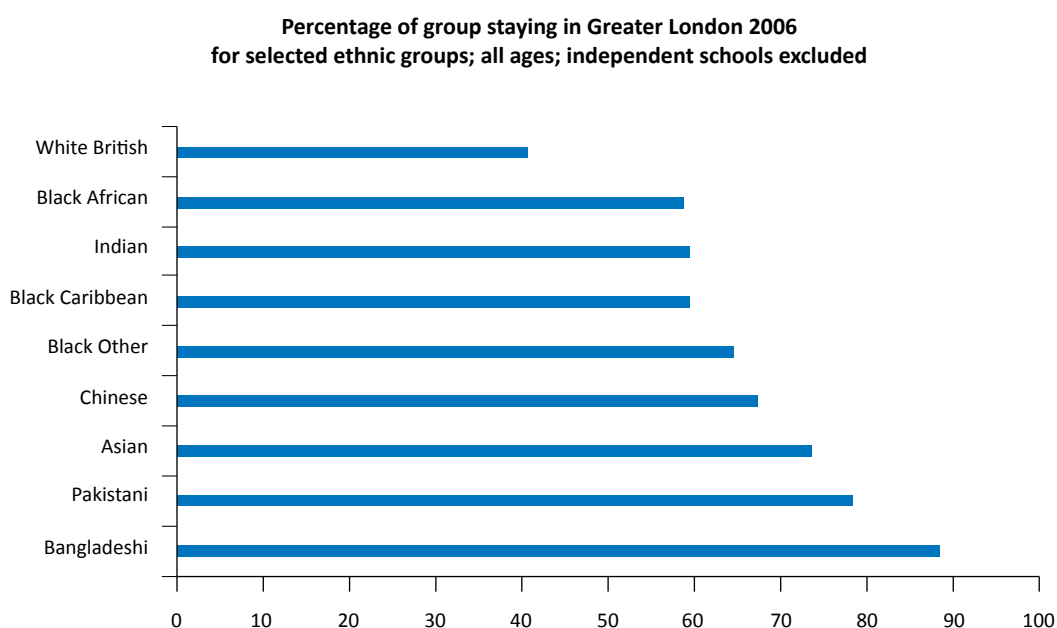
Diagram 7: Application to higher education institutions from London by ethnicity 2010



Unlike in the case of economically driven difference there is not regularly released data at regional level and it cannot be analysed at the more granular local authority level (lower numbers would affect the analysis here of course). Neither do existing categorisations by ethnic group capture the variations in experience by ethnic community. There are growing communities in London who do not really feature.

There are some features of HE participation by ethnic group we know more about. For instance, there is a greater tendency for students from certain London ethnic communities to study in the capital. Diagram 8 below is based on analysis of data that was in the late 2000s available from UCAS at regional level (Atherton & Hall 2007). This detailed data is unfortunately not available now. The unwillingness of UCAS to provide or produce such data now is a potential barrier to understanding HE participation per se, but especially in the case of ethnicity.

Diagram 8: Studying in London by ethnic group



Atherton and Hall (2007:16)

However, while the more granular data is not available there is a weight of evidence to show that HE participation nationally differs considerably by ethnic group and many non-white groups do relatively well here (UCAS 2013). It is possible to hypothesise from this data that to some extent the higher overall HE participation rate in London is being driven by its multi-ethnic population. It would be very useful to know however by exactly how much.

The preponderance of data at regional level focuses on younger learners pursuing mainly 'academic routes'. It is possible though via focused and funded work to get a fuller picture of HE participation. Research commissioned by the Linking London Network in 2013 and undertaken by Joslin & Smith looked at the progression to HE of college students and apprentices over the 2004 to 2010 period (Joslin & Smith 2013 [a], [b]). It shows that there are significant numbers of learners taking vocational qualifications who progress to HE. Amongst full time students taking BTEC courses 47% went onto HE. The progression rate for apprentices may be low at 7.6% but this is 3% higher than at the start of the research period. The research shows that vocational learning and HE go together. It reinforces the case for greater dialogue between those across the educational landscape in London.

3.3 Why is HE participation so high in London?

A number of factors combine together to explain the level of HE participation in London. The first point to remember of course is that the comparatively high level of participation is the product of significant variation within London. There are several things that one can point to that could explain London's strong performance overall. These include high performing schools, the presence of ethnic groups with strong relative commitment to education, large numbers of HE provision and 'initiative concentration' in the 2000s with national programmes like Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Networks, having significant footprints in London and other projects such as the School and Higher Education Links in London (SHELL) initiative which was part of London Challenge quite unique to London. However, these factors only combined together to lead to relatively high participation for some people in some areas.

We need to know more about how these factors link together where HE progression and educational achievement overall are concerned. The work of Hodgson and Spours (2013) into local learning ecologies which attempts to understand how the different factors affecting the progression of young people through education at local level interact could provide the best framework in which we can advance understanding of why HE progression differs so significantly across London. They describe these ecologies as producing a continuum from both 'low opportunity progression equilibria' and 'high opportunity progression eco-systems'. Localities in London appear to be positioned at a range of points across the continuum where HE progression is concerned. Further research may be able to tell us why this is the case.

4. What are London HEIs doing to widen access?

There is no systematic study of the widening access work of all London HEIs. The Access Agreements that HEIs submit to OFFA do contain within them a certain amount of data regarding what HEIs intend to do which is amenable to analysis and publicly available. But there is less detail that brings to life what HEIs actually do to widen access. In late 2012/early 2013 AccessHE undertook a survey of its members to identify what they perceived to be the projects they felt were already, or had the potential to have, the greatest long term impact on access to their institutions. Case study examples of different projects were received from 14 institutions. These projects cover a broad range of activities and span different target groups.

4.1 Raising attainment

As argued above, there could be a number of reasons why London fares so well in HE participation terms. Attainment is the driver of HE participation and much of the success has to be down to London's performance here. It is harder for HEIs to focus on supporting attainment, as opposed to 'raising aspirations' or improving information, advice and guidance. It requires longer term commitment, marshalling academic staff as well as students/specific widening access staff, implies working with fewer learners and proving impact is hard. However, the most robustly evaluated and strongest projects submitted in this survey are attainment-focused. They are described below. They show that while it may be more challenging for HEIs to work with schools/colleges on raising attainment, it can be done.

How London HEIs are raising attainment

The Horizons programme at UCL began in 2009 to work with 100 Year 10 students through to the point of application to university aiming to raise their academic attainment and HE aspirations. The programme consists of a Saturday school from November to June in Year 10 followed by a Summer School. In Autumn of Year 11 there is a Careers Conference held in September, followed by four Saturdays of workshops in academic skills and information, advice and guidance for careers and study. Over Year 12 and Year 13 students choose from a menu of activities including UCAS Information Evenings, a Challenge programme, work experience placements at Year 10, Saturday Schools and Summer Schools and a personal statement review service in Year 13. At entrance to the programme the majority of students (50%) had an average performance of level 6 at KS3. On exit from the programme, the majority of students were high achieving in English Literature and English Language.

The Upward Bound programme at London Metropolitan University provides an alternative learning environment within a university setting, addressing the academic, social and cultural needs of the cohort to ensure that students complete secondary school with a minimum of 5 GCSE *A-C including Maths and English. The project was established in 2006. Upward Bound and the schools mutually identify a cohort of 100 x Year 10 students who have the potential to gain at least 5 A* – C GCSEs, but are currently under-performing and under-achieving due to personal circumstances. It runs on Saturday mornings for 28 weeks at the University as well as a residential programme. In 2012 78% of participants achieved % A* to C at GCSE which compares to the average score for the borough of Islington whether the pupils were educated which was 53%. The project has also won 2 London Education Partnership Awards.

The CHOICE programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) provides up to 180 London students from under-represented groups with an academically rich experience and the opportunity to develop their interest in and understanding of the social sciences. The programme runs for a seven-month period, beginning with a one week summer school in August and 16 subsequent Saturday morning sessions between September and March of Year 13. Between 160 and 180 learners participate in LSE CHOICE each year. In 2011-12 90% of students felt their general academic skills had improved substantially and 95% of students felt they had significantly improved and thereby felt more confident in their academic ability in the subject(s) they studied.

Animate Orchestra at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance offers young musicians in school Years 5 to 10 opportunities to play together and create their own music in a 'Young Person's Orchestra for the 21st Century'. Members experience the musical teamwork of playing in an orchestra, while bringing their own ideas to how orchestras of the future might look and sound. It is a partnership project with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the music services in Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham & Southwark. Approximately 300 learners participate each year and on average receive 6 days contact time with professional musicians from Trinity Laban, the Music Services and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO).

Brunel University's Urban Scholars Programme (USP) was devised in 2000. It assists potentially high achieving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve their potential. It aims to increase engagement with learning, academic achievement, aspirations, HE orientation and understanding of self and life-world. The scholars (100-150) per year attend 2, 3 or 4 year programmes on the Brunel University campus during term time, one Saturday a month. A typical annual programme consists of eight Saturday sessions on campus (including one Families and Friends day). Scholars start the programme at different stages of their school career, between the ages of 12 and 16 years (school Year 8 to 12). Overall, scholars who attended the four-year programme achieved above what their schools predicted for them in their GCSE exams.

Skills for Independent Learning (S4IL) at the University of Greenwich has been developed in response to a growing concern that students may have the aspirations to attend university but are still not achieving the grades that will secure a place in a more competitive HE market. It aims to deliver higher level thinking, writing and independent learning skills over a 10 session programme. It also works with teachers and academics to create a wider dialogue around teaching and learning and how best practice can be shared, especially at Level 3, to prepare students for success.

4.2 Improving Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on HE

Improving the level of knowledge and understanding that learners have regarding HE, is perceived to be part of the responsibility of HEIs. It also fits better with recruitment, which is what all HEIs do and take seriously. The restructuring of careers provision in the last four years has also greatly exacerbated what was already a fragmented and partial offer to young people in England. Giving schools the statutory responsibility for careers guidance without the funding to deliver on this responsibility has been heavily criticised. OFSTED found that in 2012:

‘Only one in five schools were effective in ensuring that all its students in Years 9, 10 and 11 were receiving the level of information, advice and guidance they needed to support decision-making.’

OFSTED (2013:5)

There is a pressing need in this context for HE to make a contribution to ensure that those who need support from statutory sources most receive it. What may be worth noting here is that none of the case studies focus specifically on IAG in the area of student finance. This is not to say that they do not do projects of this nature, nor that it is not something that features heavily in the general work they do with schools. However, there may be potential for specific work, possibly of a collaborative nature that concentrates on student finance.

How London HEIs are supporting IAG for HE

A Taste of Central has been developed by the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama to demystify some of the stereotypes of who studies at a ‘drama school’, what they study and to also show that it’s not just for acting. The five day ‘Easter school’ was delivered over the Easter break (8 – 12 April 2013) and it is intended to offer a similar scheme as a summer school.

The Courtauld Institute of Art delivers the Animating Art History (AAH) summer school in partnership with Central St Martin’s, University of the Arts London (UAL). It is a Year 12 programme working with 70 students which raises awareness of The Courtauld amongst state schools and colleges and clarifies both the recruitment process and the high level of coordination that is required.

A-level Conferences have been offered at Heythrop College for almost 10 years. The aims of these conferences are to provide A-level students and their teachers the opportunity to explore areas of their A Level syllabii in Religious Studies/Philosophy with academic staff who are specialists in these subject areas. Over 750 learners per year participate in these one-day events.

This week-long project by London South Bank University (LSBU) works with up to 24 learners each year. Its aims are two-fold: to raise the aspirations of care leavers to HE and to familiarise them with the opportunities on their doorstep. This project was chosen for submission because LSBU believe that it has a significant impact on the participants. This is not always easy to prove on paper, but as organisers, LSBU see the change in participants as they go through the week, and hear from them on the Friday afternoon how they feel it has made a difference to them, often expressed through such comments as ‘it has made me feel more confident about myself.’ This effect is tremendously important for care leavers whose experience of care can severely damage their belief in their ability to take control of their lives. Follow-up advice and guidance sessions are offered on a voluntary basis.

The City University London summer school programme has expanded from three summer schools in 2003 to 10 in 2012 and reaches 350 learners. Overall City works with 10,000 students per year via its widening access work. They are subject-specific week-long events consisting of practical sessions, lectures, discussion groups and seminars along with external visits to locations including City trading floors, Inns of Court, the BBC Television studio and Thorpe Park where students find out the science behind how the rides work. Evaluation of the 2011-12 summer schools showed that 76% of pupils felt that attending a summer school would help them get to university; with 100% reporting that they had both enjoyed the activities and found them informative. A follow-up study completed in 2010 showed that of the 226 summer school students tracked, 218 are currently at or have completed their university studies.

4.3 Progression and Transition

Any contribution that HE attendance can make to the economic progression of a learner is inevitably truncated to some extent if they do not complete their course and/or achieve results commensurate with their potential. Several HEIs submitted examples of activities designed to support the transition into HE.

How London HEIs are supporting progression and transition into HE

The Study Skills Summer School at the University of West London targets thirty applicants who had been given unconditional or conditional offers for full-time undergraduate courses at the University of West London starting in October 2012, and who had made the University their firm choice. Although there was a dramatic increase in confidence in academic and budgeting skills between the start and end of the Summer School, confidence ratings dipped slightly five weeks into the start of term, suggesting that learners were perhaps a little overconfident at the end of the Summer School, or that the realities of term time have reduced their confidence slightly. Learners were offered 4 days' of support from 10am-9pm.

Ravensbourne began a project in 2011 focusing on the application and interview process into HE, specifically in art and design and TV and broadcasting. Nearly 300 students from 33 different partner schools and colleges attended a series of interview technique workshops, personal statement writing and portfolio and showreel surgeries. Attendees were then offered a pre-UCAS interview which 231 attended with 109 gaining an offer.

Get Set for Success is a residential two day pre-entry programme for targeted first year St Mary's University College students that aims to provide increased information, guidance and support for non-traditional entrants to the University College in order to support their retention and enhanced attainment. The Programme was evaluated in terms of the change in the participants' confidence relating to various academic and social questions and they were also asked to fill out an evaluation of the sessions.

4.4 Raising aspirations

The work that HEIs do to support the progression of learners from under-represented groups into HE has often been described as being designed to raise aspirations. While some of the projects described here do include this as one of their aims, it is not the sole objective of any project. The assumption that young people from lower socio economic backgrounds and their families lack aspiration has come under increasing challenge in recent years. Work from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation looking at over 170,000 studies into aspiration argues that the extent to which those from lower socio-economic backgrounds value education is under-estimated and the parents from these backgrounds hold high aspirations for their children (Gorard et al 2012). Research for the Department for Education by Atherton et al in 2009 looked at the views of the future of over 600 Year 7 pupils from three different areas of the country. It found that over 80% of children in London wanted to go onto HE: a higher percentage than either of the other two areas.

This is not to say that aspirations are static. Increased tuition fees may lead to a downturn in the desire to enter HE amongst London young people. This is a more complex issue however, than can be assessed by looking at headline figures alone. Nobody wants those with the desire and aptitude to benefit from HE to be discouraged by a poverty of ambition. However, there is an issue of managing expectations. It is not feasible for the 80% of Year 7 in the study above to go onto HE. The challenge is presenting different pathways, both through HE and not through HE, to enable all young people to achieve realistic aspirations.

4.5 Where to next?

The case studies described above show the diversity in how HEIs in London are supporting widening access work. They also reveal some challenges however. Capturing the impact of this work is a major one. Some of the activities described above are in their formative stages. It is crucial that all of these activities have in place robust plans that clearly demonstrate as far as possible how they benefit learners, and they then communicate it to a broad range of stakeholders and not just OFFA.

Secondly, mechanisms to continually improve quality and performance in access work need to be in place if the maximum benefit is to be derived from the £100m investment London HEIs are making in this work. The best way of doing this is regular and consistent exchange of practice and knowledge to foster systems of mutual learning. AccessHE aims to create such an environment but it only includes some of the HEIs in London and the primacy of individual institutional targets in the present regulatory structure mitigates against this kind of collaboration.

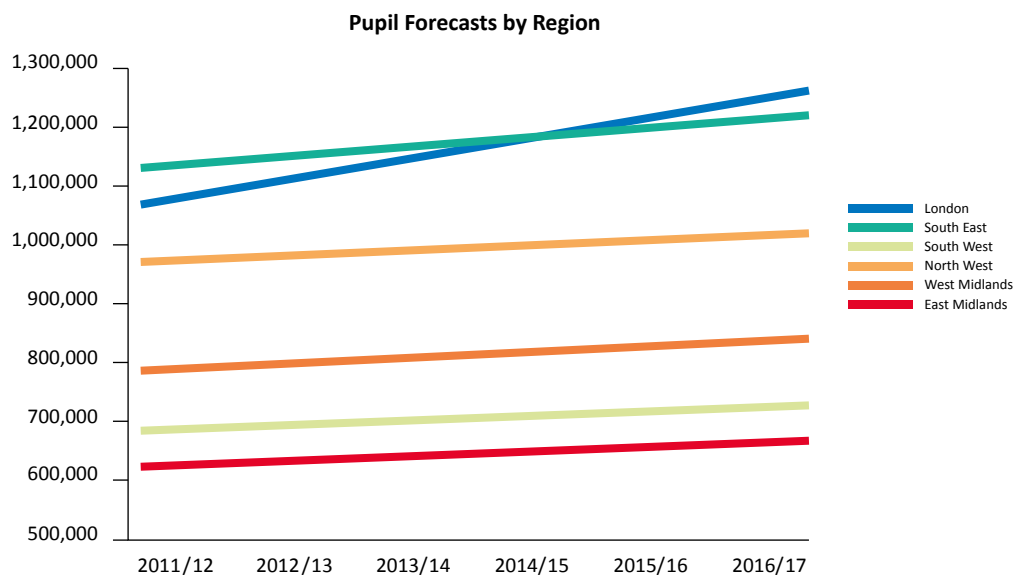
Finally, the examples above focus entirely on the HEI, school and college nexus. The two sectors where there may be potential for significant added engagement here are employers and students. Learners will increasingly ask what HE is for when the costs are higher and the returns more uncertain. It is only by actively linking with employers that these questions can be answered fully. The skills that students in the labour market need to make HE attendance worthwhile are best obtained by HE and employers working together. The engagement of students as partners in widening access work would be another advance worth experimenting with here. Students feature heavily in these case studies and in widening access work overall but mainly as delivery staff working on projects conceived and designed by HE staff. There may be significant untapped potential in enabling students themselves to have greater input into what is delivered and how.

5. More HE, more graduates?

5.1 Demographic change and HE capacity

The 2010s will see a downturn in the number of 18 year olds in the UK and London is not immune to this. However, the 2020s and 2030s will be very different. The London birth-rate will accelerate in comparison to the rest of England. Diagram 9 draws from a recent report by London Councils. It shows how the number of primary school pupils will increase into the 2020s.

Diagram 9: Increases in pupil numbers by region



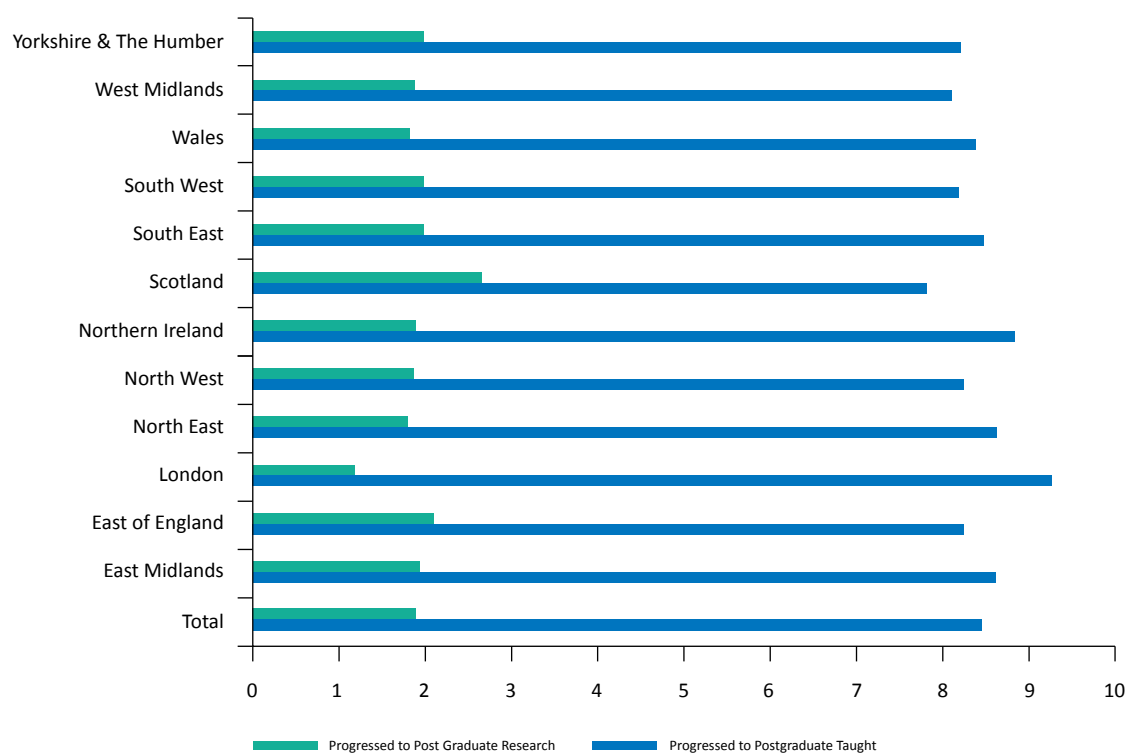
London Councils (2013:5)

The most recent data shows that just over half of young learners go onto HE in London. Therefore, unless there is a significant downturn in HE participation rates in the next 20 years there will be a real capacity issue where HE provision in London is concerned. These demographic changes should be a catalyst to look at some more fundamental questions regarding HE in London. If there is going to be significant increased demand for HE in London, what should the provision to meet this demand look like? Should it be 'more of the same' or be qualitatively different? And finally, could the increase in numbers of young people provide the opportunity for a greater rapprochement between HE, employment and the academic/vocational in the area of social mobility?

5.2 The skills that London needs

The post-£9,000 tuition fee era has seen growing concern expressed regarding the impact of higher undergraduate fees on postgraduate HE participation. The possession of postgraduate qualifications is becoming advantageous if not essential in a growing range of occupations and also brings with it a significant earnings premium (Lindley & Machin 2013). The lack of a state backed loan or grant system has led some to question whether students from lower income backgrounds will be willing to go onto further study and describe postgraduate participation as the next frontier in social mobility. Recent research from the Higher Education Academy shows that as with undergraduate participation London leads the way in rates of participation in taught postgraduate courses as Diagram 10 below shows.

Diagram 10: Percentage of first degree qualifiers by progression status to taught higher and research degree by region of residency: 2009-10 & 2010-11 combined



Wakeling & Hampden-Thompson (2013:27)

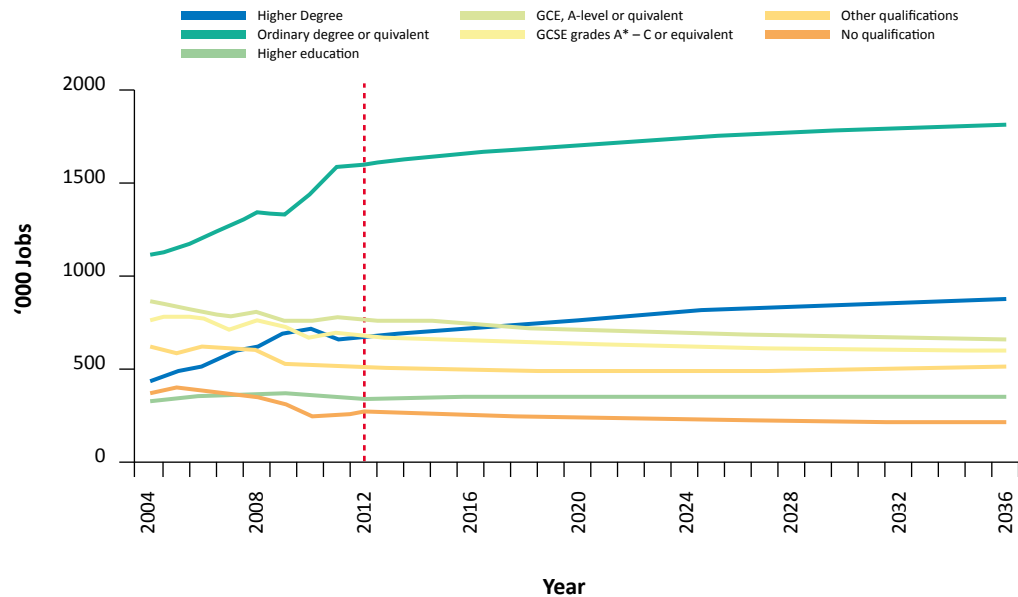
Research from the Greater London Authority (GLA) produced in 2013 emphasises the importance of postgraduate but also undergraduate education for the economic future of London. *London Labour Projections* predicts that:

‘(the) development of London’s industrial structure is projected to increase the demand for professional occupations significantly in London (an increase of over half a million professional occupations is projected by 2036). Managers and administrators are also projected to see a large rise in numbers (increasing by 222,000 over the same period). These two occupation groupings are projected to account for around 45 percent of all jobs in London in 2036’.

GLA Economics (2013:6)

Diagram 11 below shows the projected increase in demand for those with higher and ordinary degrees up to 2036 as a result of the evolution of the city's industrial structure.

Diagram 11: Changes in Qualification Demand in London (2001 to 2036)



GLA (2013:28)

The GLA report predicts that the demand for ordinary and professional degree occupations is expected to increase by over 800,000 up to 2036 and the proportion of jobs requiring no qualifications will fall to under 5%. Labour market projections always need to be viewed with a degree of caution and the report itself makes that caveat. Nevertheless these predictions do present some interesting scenarios for social mobility. The changing nature of the labour market does satisfy the conditions for upward mobility described by Goldthorpe in the introduction: a growth in the number of jobs in higher socio-economic groups. But it cannot be assumed that they will therefore be filled by Londoners from lower socio-economic groups. They may well be filled by skilled economic migrants from both inside and outside the UK. Research produced by IBM in 2010 estimates that there will be an increase in the migration flows of highly educated workers globally of 234% from 1990 to 2029 to reach nearly 100m such people (IBM 2010). London is a city now driven by migrants and it may well be the case that even in the context of the present febrile climate regarding immigration in the UK, London as is so often the case goes a separate way.

6. The challenges

Access for whom?

Who the target group is for access to HE work in London and for social mobility work per se, are issues where progress is necessary. But it is possible. The drawbacks with the HEFCE POLAR methodology as a sole way of directing resources needs to be recognised and addressed in a more transparent way. There also needs to be concerted efforts to make existing data more readily available. This report has also focused on only some of the groups that make up those under-represented in HE. Looked after children and those with disabilities are two distinct groups whose progression to HE is relatively low. Many London HEIs are doing work to address the challenges in both these areas, but again the data available to assist in this work needs improving.

Building system improvement: A London Challenge for HE Access?

Collaboration and exchange of practice amongst schools was the mechanism to drive improvements in organisational performance in the 2000s. Much of the success was attributed to the London Challenge initiative, a package of policies that included academisation of schools, extra investment, improvements in the supply of teachers and also partnership working between schools who were grouped together by similarities in their characteristics (OFSTED 2010). The package was unique to the time of course but the partnership working stands out. The large numbers of schools in London enabled such a partnership approach to really work.

But collaboration can also be the mechanism to drive improvements in HE organisational performance in access and social mobility work. While section 4 contained excellent examples of individual practice, there is still work to do in identifying exactly how HEIs will improve and develop these projects and the rest of their work. We can learn from London Challenge here and use the unique context that London offers in terms of the number and diversity of HE providers as a driver to widen access to HE.

We can also go further and identify where it is more efficient to actually pool resources and deliver a combined single service rather than replicate effort e.g. in delivering HE IAG to learners from access backgrounds pre-16 and in working with other stakeholders such as London Councils here to look at the whole careers offer for London.

Maximising the Social Mobility Investment

This report has focused on what HEIs in London are doing to widen access to HE. It could be argued though that much if not the majority of such work goes on in schools, certainly if it is taken to include activities designed to raise attainment. Through the 'pupil premium' London schools receive over £344m per year, which is over 20% of the monies invested by the government nationally in this programme (DfE 2013b). Schools receive a pupil premium allocation based on the number of learners receiving free school meals in the school, and it is meant to be used to raise the attainment of these learners. This figure dwarfs the £100m invested by HEIs. Much of this is in the form of financial support anyway. This is not, as pointed out earlier, all that HEIs invest. They do more. The recent opening of a £33m campus in east London led by Birkbeck, University of London catering for many mature and part-time learners could be seen as an investment of sorts in social mobility, albeit not in the form of IAG support of course (Davies 2013).

The broader issue here is whether it is possible to look at the size of the overall investment in social mobility in London and who makes it. We know for example that many employers are making significant financial and in-kind investment in activities to drive social mobility in London. Can this be estimated and accounted for? Looking at the overall social mobility investment in London would enable discussion on what the best uses of the resources available are and where their impact could be multiplied by innovative collaboration.

A vision for HE in London

The rise in the number of young people in London in the 2020s and the demand for graduate skills described above should lead to much needed thinking in developing a vision for HE in London. This means examining what and who HE is for and who should be providing it. London Higher is initiating this debate in 2014 and as the organisation representing over 50 HE providers in the capital is well positioned to do so. The task is to ensure that access to HE is central to this debate at the most strategic level. Concern over higher fees and the economic returns to a degree mean there is a risk that the power of going to HE to transform lives is being or has been forgotten. HE can and does do this, but to do so has itself to adapt and change and there is a need for a vision that can capture this.

Finally, this vision of the transformative power of HE also needs to connect to a broader vision for social mobility in London. It is contributing to the creation of this vision that is the over-riding aim of this report and our activity up to 2015.

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