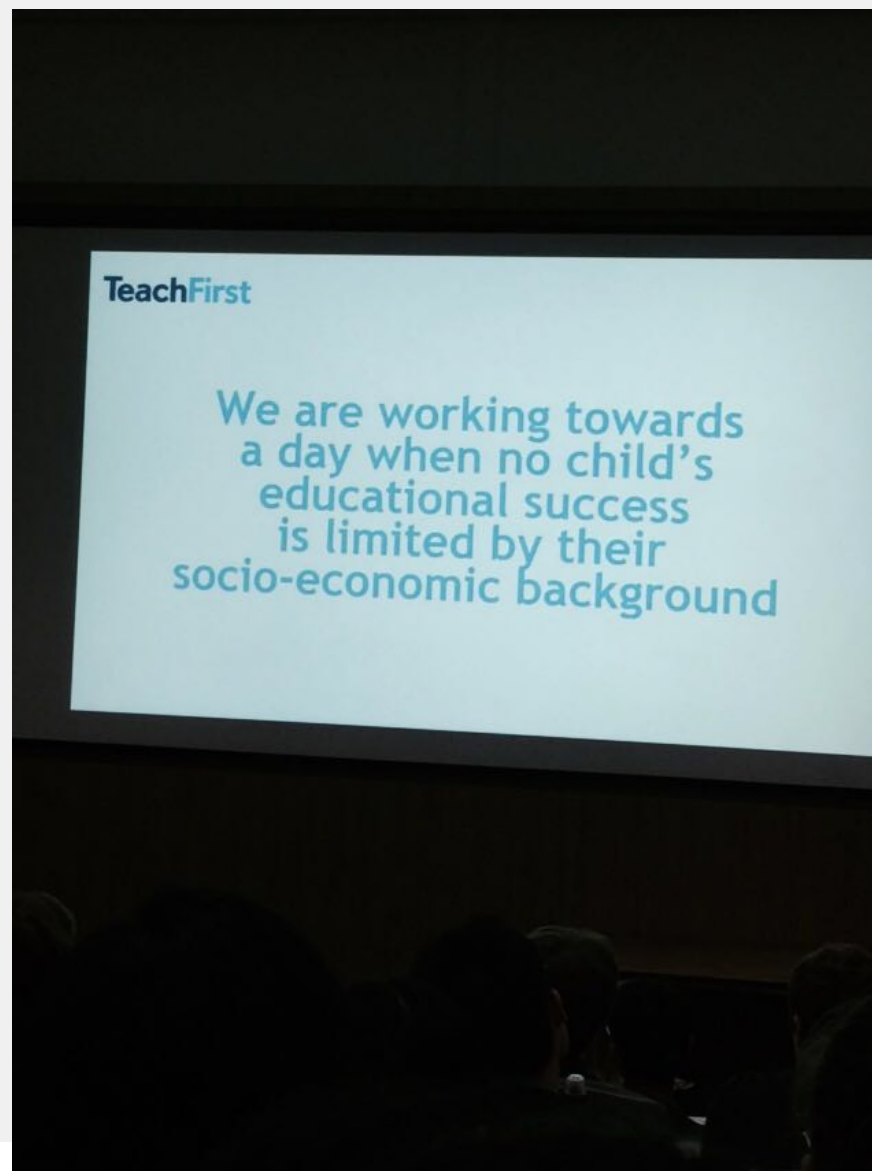# What's worth fighting for in education. . . ?

Tweet at #whatsworthfightingfor

Howard Stevenson

@hstevenson10

howard.stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk

What's worth fighting for in education . . . ?

The hope for British education is not in what governments will do to teachers or for them but in what teachers can do for themselves – not by ignoring government, or even subverting it, but by capturing the public imagination on which government ultimately depends.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:x)
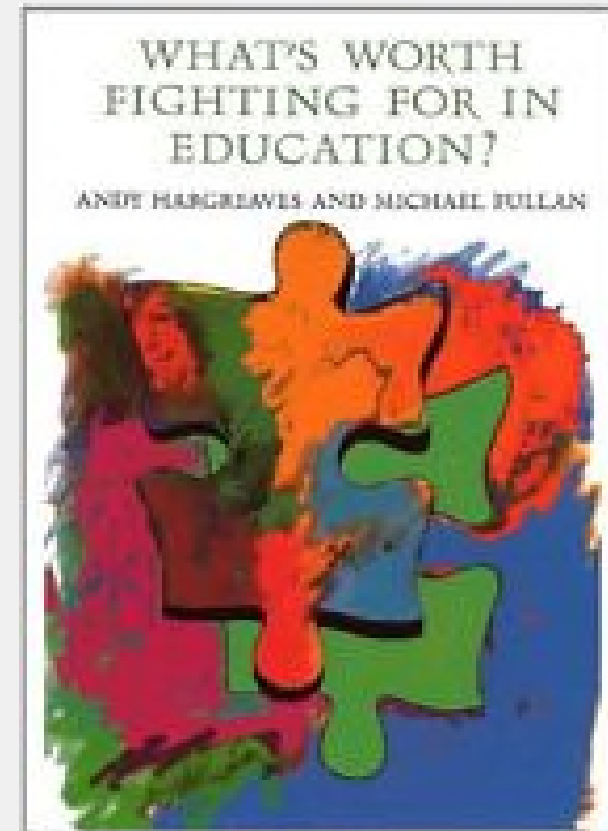
What is education for . . . ?

- Transmission of culture
- Preparation for work
- Preparation for effective citizenship
- Preparation for life/personal development

Listen to Dylan Wiliam on curriculum, design at www.dylanwiliam.net

Education and citizenship - Rwanda

Education *for* citizenship and national identity…

…education is seen as a major tool for transmission of values and socialization towards national identity. Education is vital in social and political reconstruction in that schools can be arenas in which children learn to think critically about a range of view points. Primary and secondary education in war torn countries has the potential to be an important resource, not only for economic development, but also for the pursuit of conflict resolution and social reconstruction. It is for this reason that the government of Rwanda has recognised that schools help shape the collective memory of the nation, remould social identity, and can encourage cross-ethnic affiliation.

John Rutayisire 2004: 12

Education *for* citizenship and national identity…

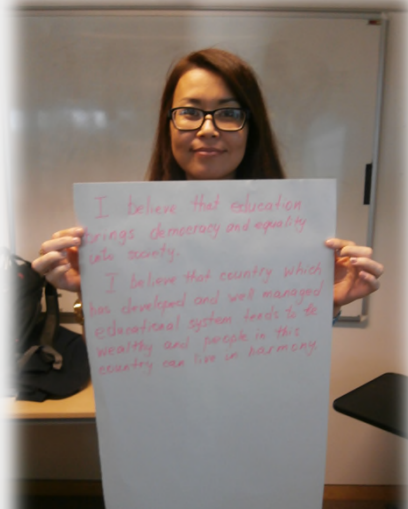Listen to John talking about education in Rwanda before and after 1994 - here

We believe . . .
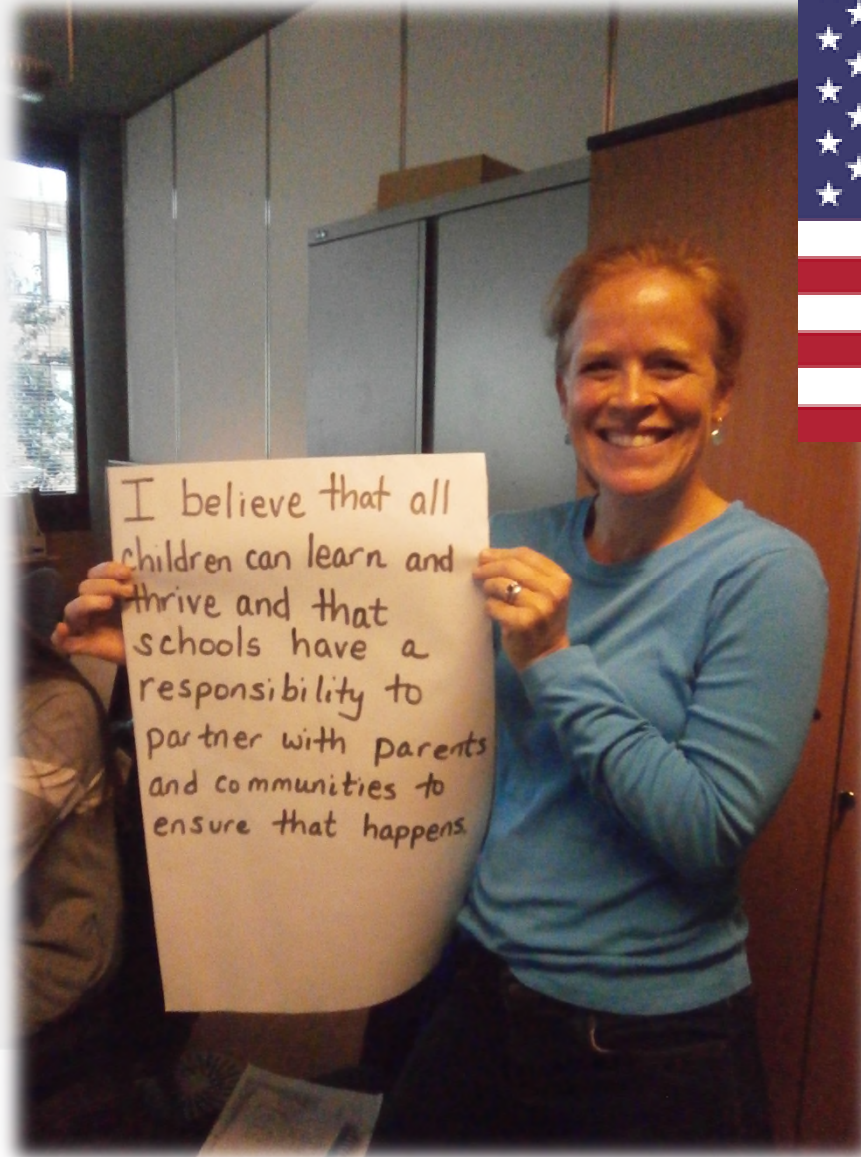
MA Educational
Leadership and
Management
2014-15

Gulnara
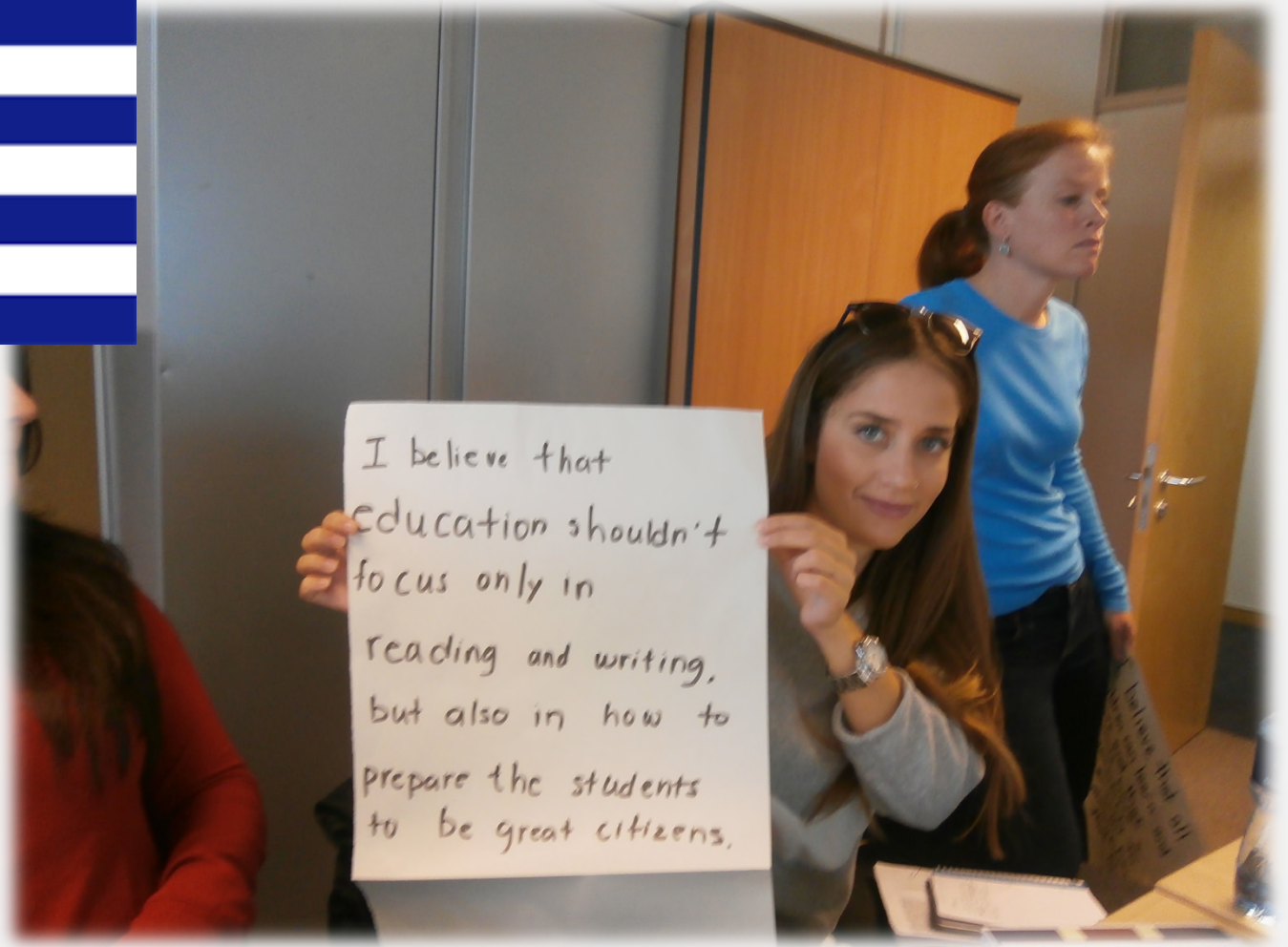
I believe that education brings democracy and equality into society.

I believe that country which has developed and well managed educational system tends to be wealthy and people in this country can live in harmony.

Ingrid

I believe that all children can learn and thrive and that schools have a responsibility to partner with parents and communities to ensure that happens.

Stellina

I believe that education shouldn't focus only in reading and writing, but also in how to prepare the students to be great citizens.

Yedil
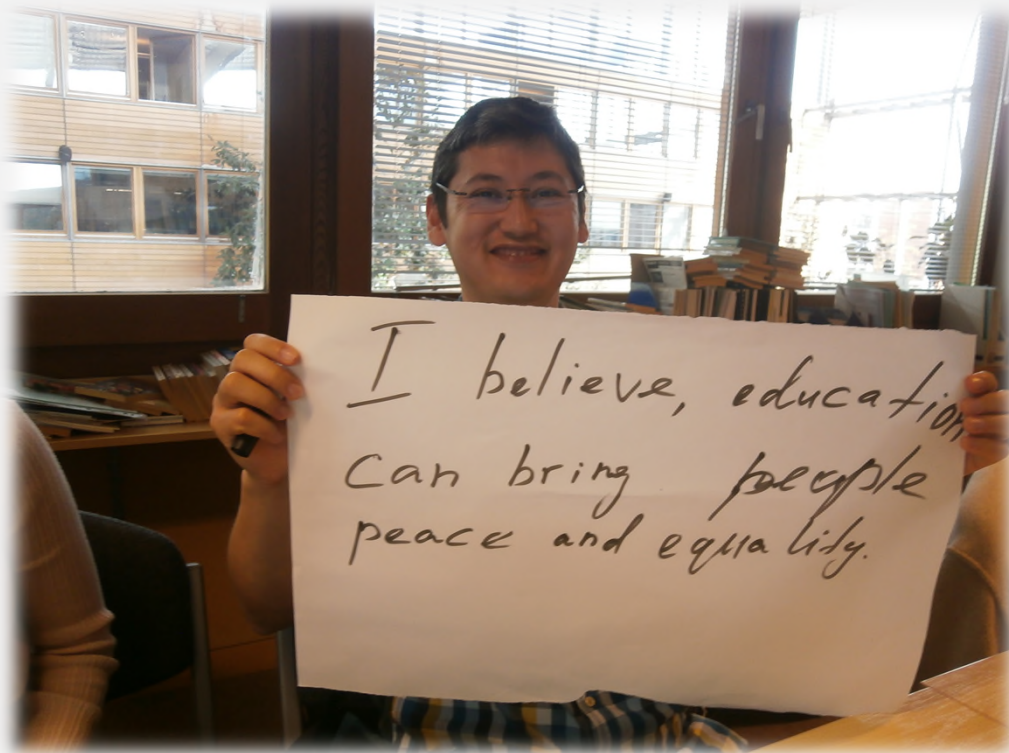
What does inequality look like?
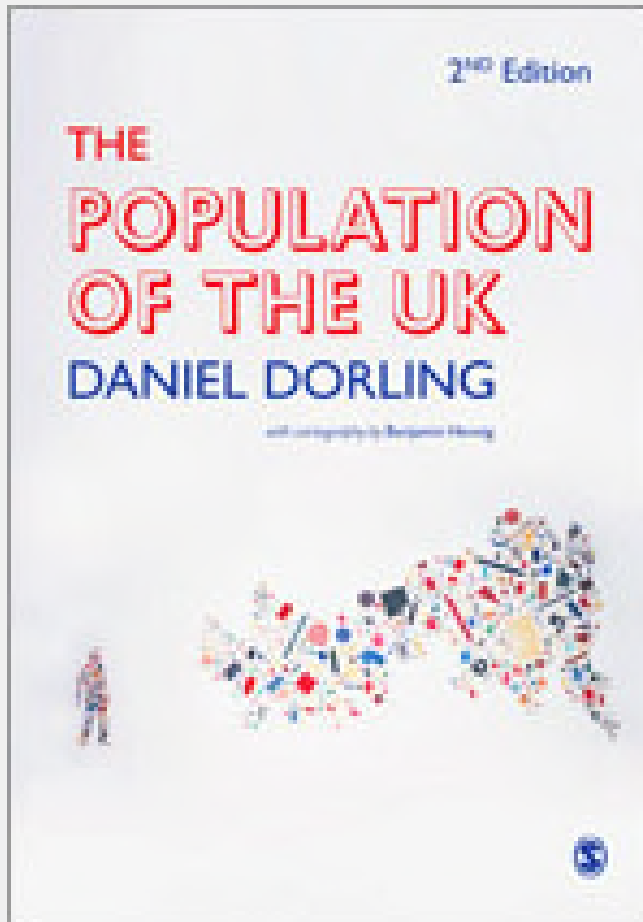
Following data and visuals from Dorling (2013)

Levels of poverty by UN definitions, 2000

- Data source: A component of the UNDP Human Poverty Index, see Appendix in Seymour , J. (for UNED-UK) (2001) Poverty in Plenty: A Human Development Report for the UK, London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., Northern Ireland data from Democratic Dialogue Report 16 (2003)

Levels of poverty in Britain by UN definitions 2000
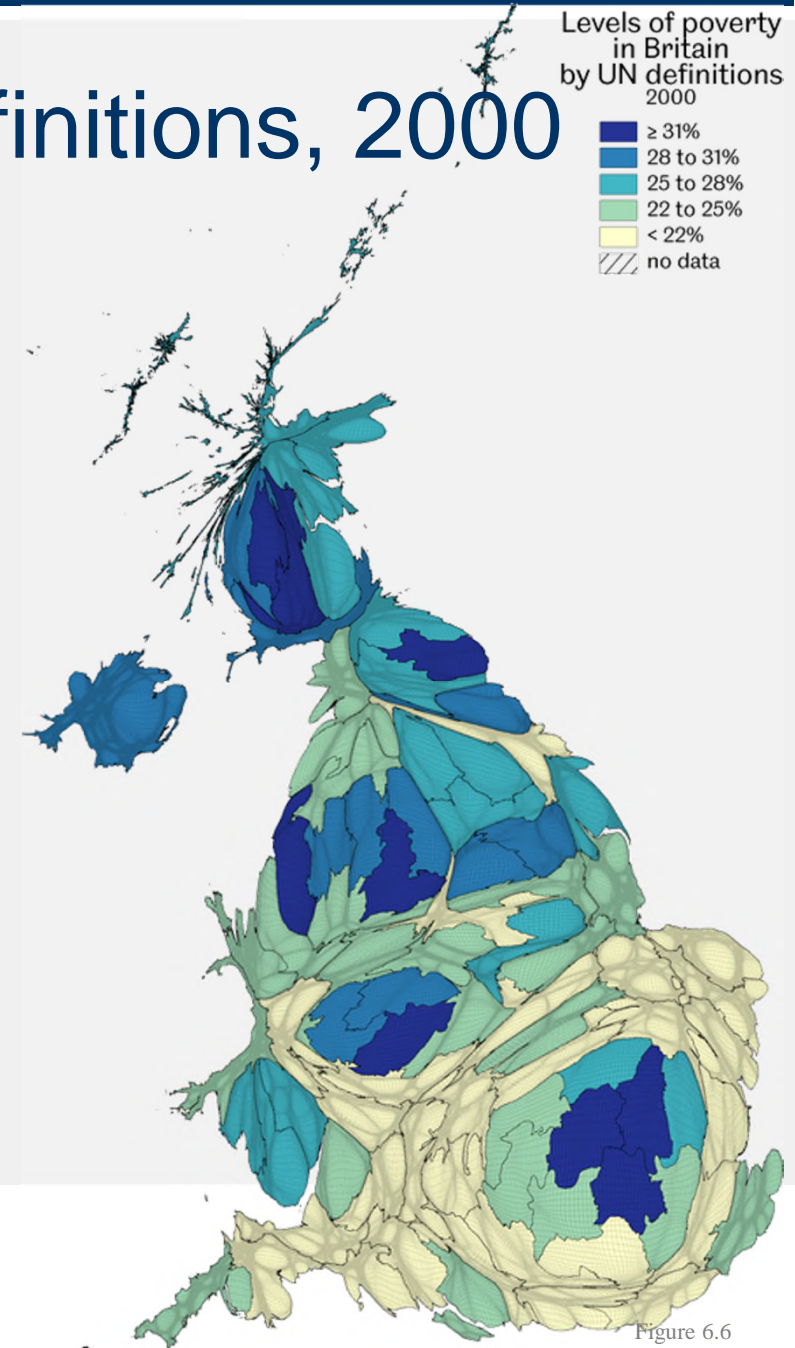
- ≥ 31%
- 28 to 31%
- 25 to 28%
- 22 to 25%
- < 22%
- no data

Children doing well at age 11

- Ratio of numbers achieving a score greater than four to those achieving less than four in 1998

- Data source: Key Stage 2 results from neighbourhood statistics website

Children doing well at age 11 per child doing poorly 1998

≥ 0.8
0.7 to 0.8
0.6 to 0.7
0.5 to 0.6
< 0.5
no data
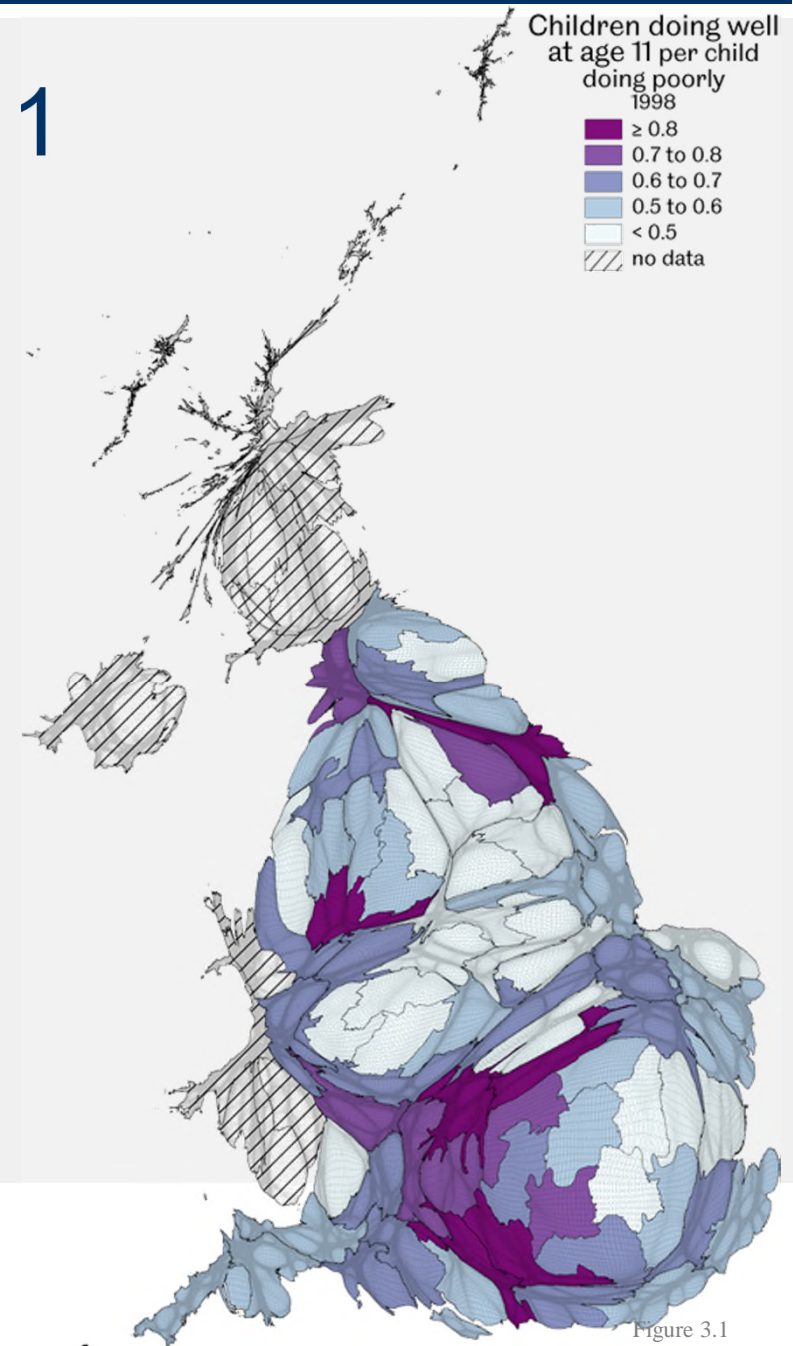
Figure 3.1

Children achieving no qualifications by age 15/16, 1993-1999

Children achieving
no qualifications
by age 15/16
1993-1999

≥ 8%
7 to 8%
6 to 7%
5 to 6%
< 5%
no data

- The proportions of children receiving no GCSE results are shown

- Data source: Analysis of national school league tables for Britain 1993-99
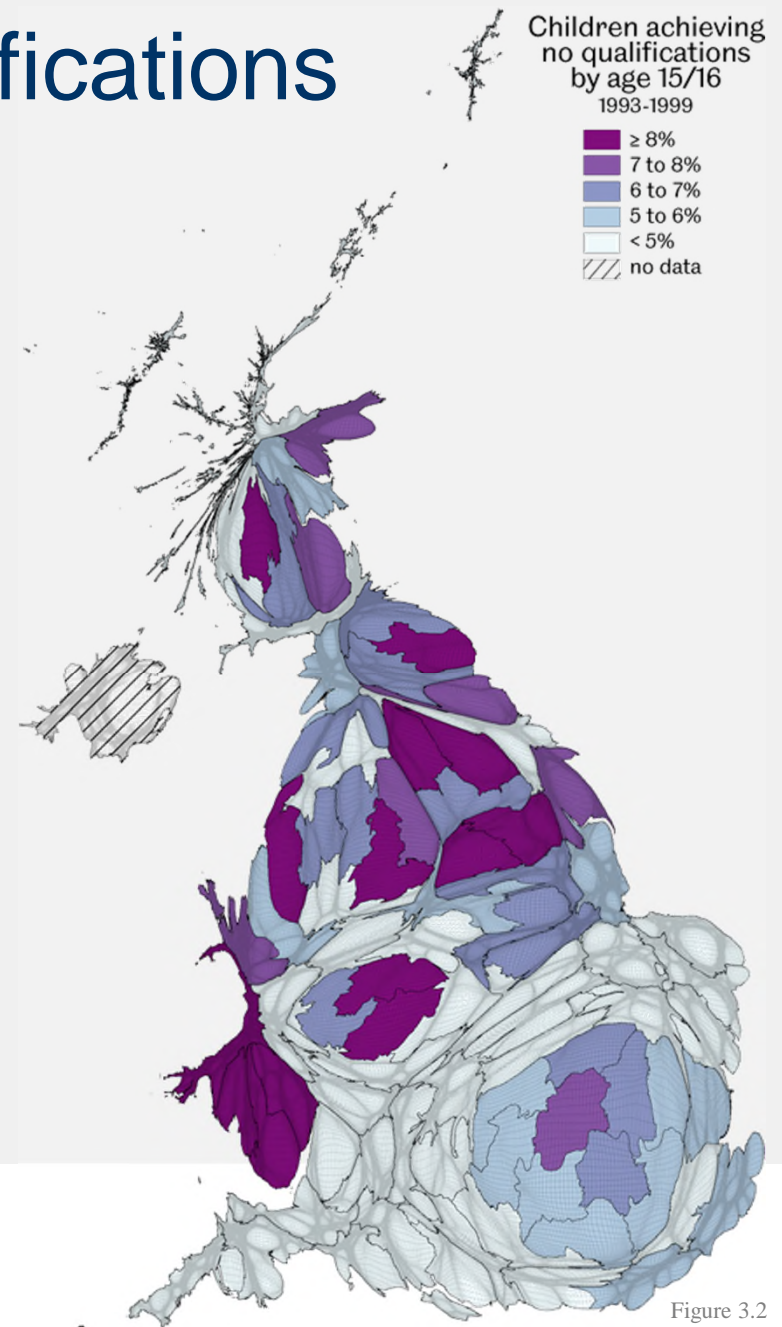
Figure 3.2

Children achieving few qualifications by age 15/16, 1993-1999

- ## The proportions of children receiving less than five GCSEs at level A-G are shown

- Data source: Analysis of national school league tables for Britain 1993-99

Children achieving
few qualifications
by age 15/16
1993-1999

≥ 20%
16 to 20%
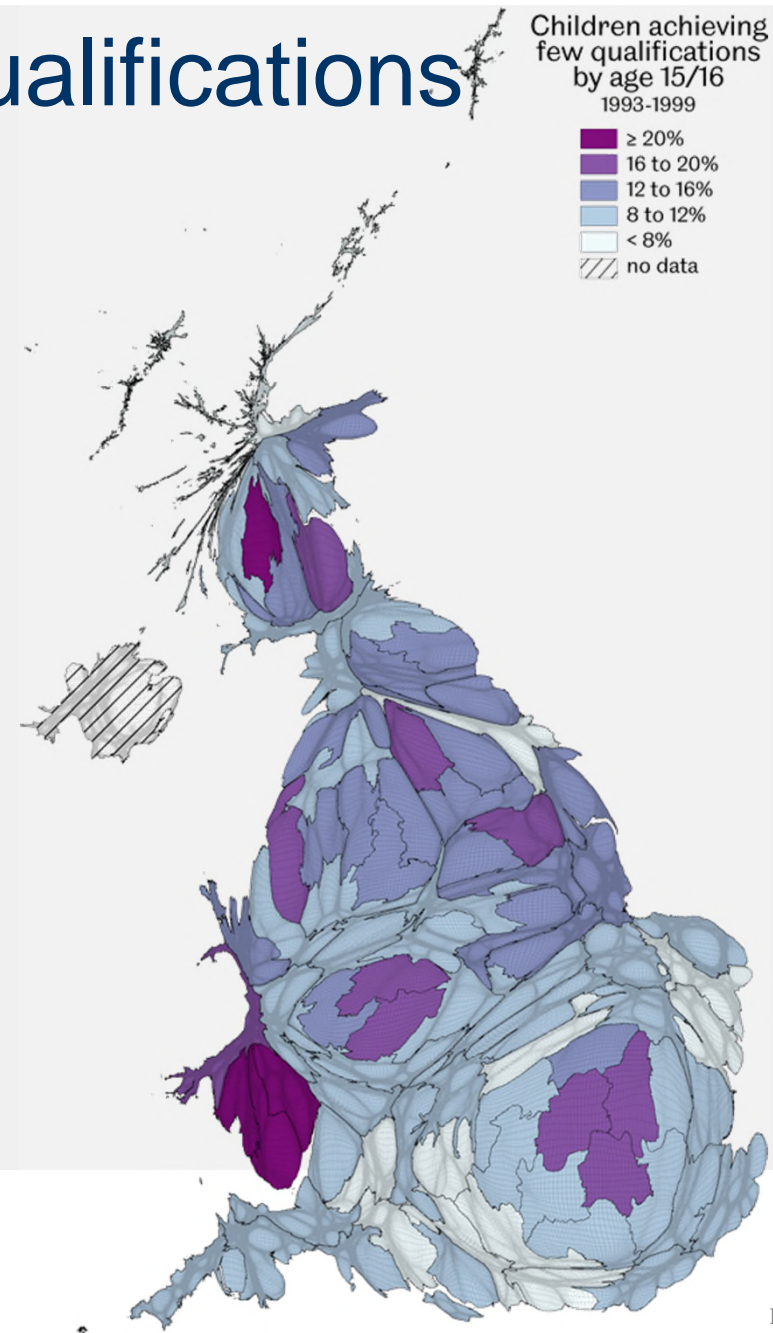12 to 16%
8 to 12%
< 8%
no data

Figure 3.3

Children achieving low qualifications by age 15/16, 1993-1999

- The proportions of all children receiving fewer than five A-C GCSE results are shown

- Data source: Analysis of national school league tables for Britain 1993-99

Children achieving low qualifications by age 15/16 1993-1999

- ≥ 65%
- 60 to 65%
- 55 to 60%
- 50 to 55%
- < 50%
- no data
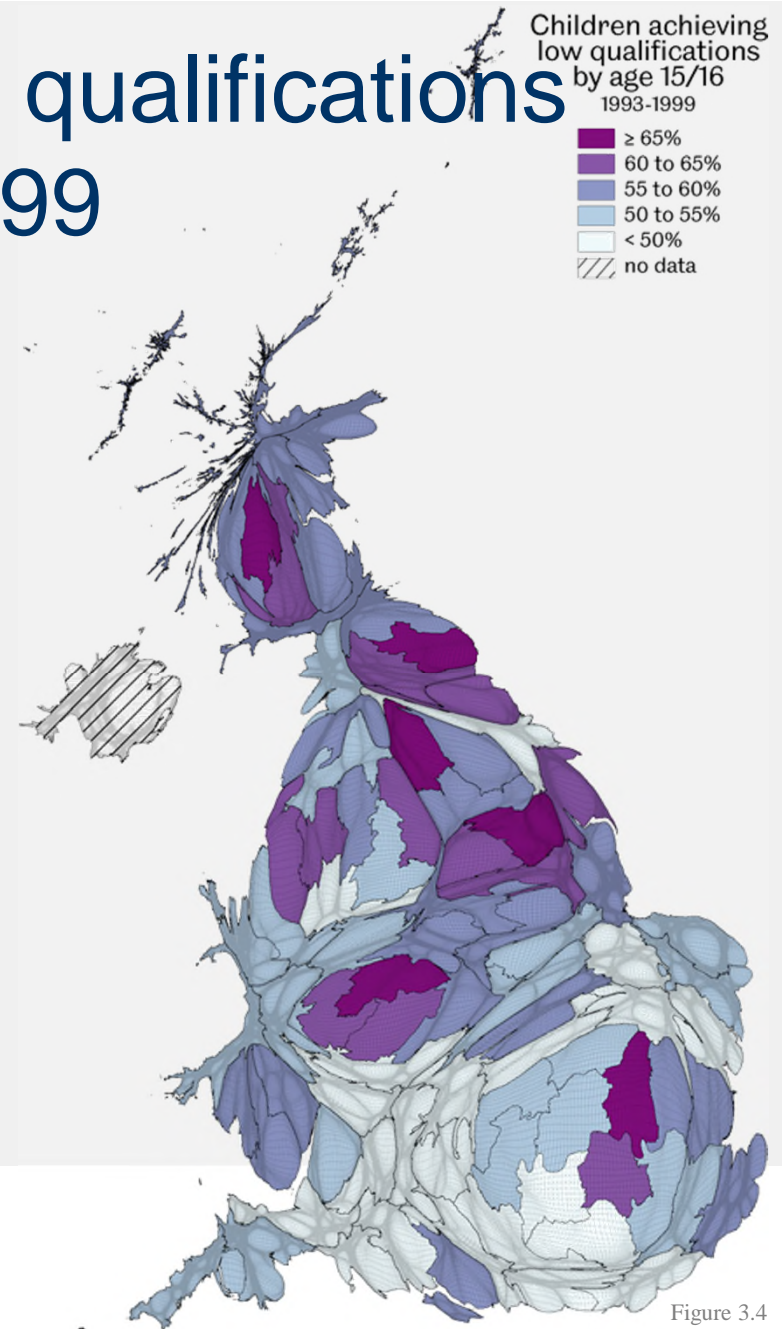
Children attending private schools at age 15, 1993-1999

- Data source: Analysis of national school league tables for Britain 1993-99

Children attending
private schools
at age 15
1993-1999

≥ 20%
15 to 20%
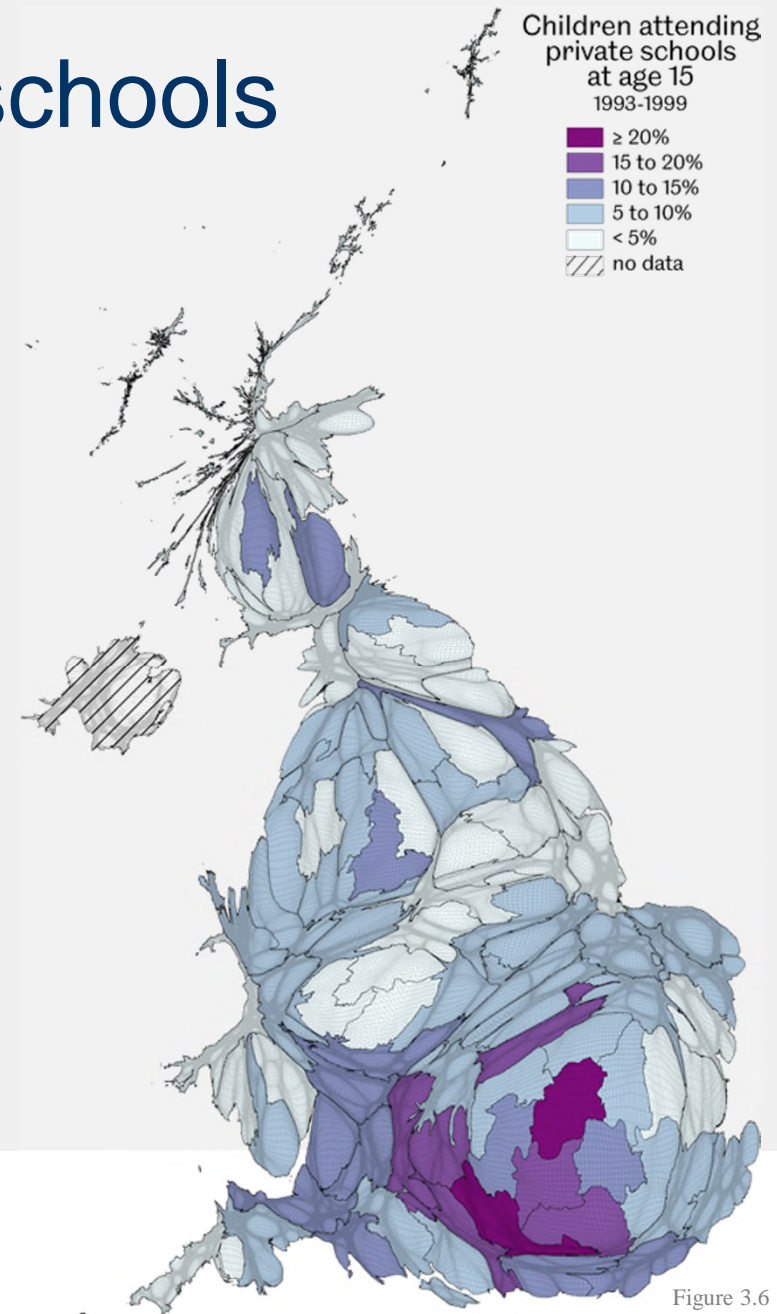10 to 15%
5 to 10%
< 5%
no data

Figure 3.6

Students aged 16+ in education

- ## Absolute counts in 2001 by European Constituency area

  - Data source: Analysis of the 2001 Census Key Statistics by local authority

Students aged 16+ in education in 2001 (numbers)

- ≥ 45,000
- 40,000 to 45,000
- 35,000 to 40,000
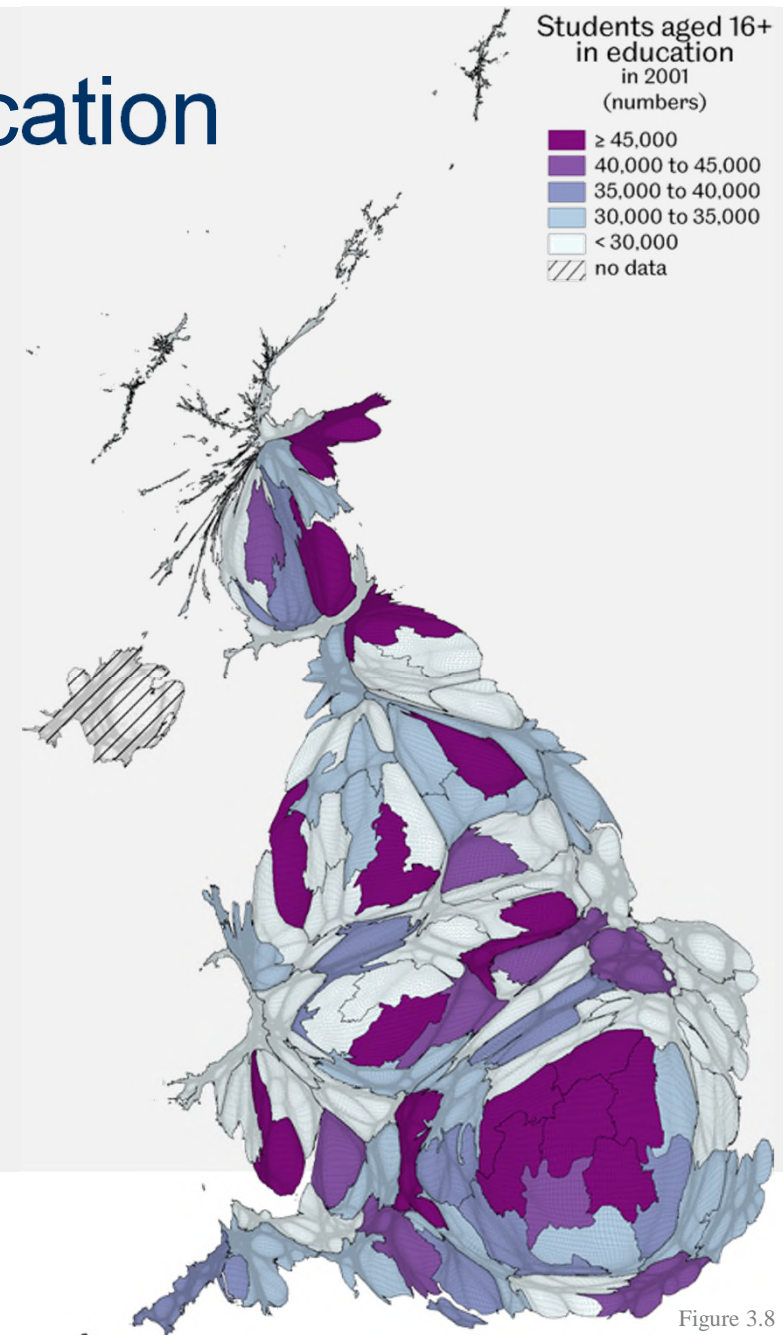- 30,000 to 35,000
- < 30,000
- no data

Figure 3.8

University graduates aged 21+

- Absolute counts in 2001 by European Constituency area

  - Data source: Analysis of the 2001 Census Key Statistics by local authority

University graduates
aged 21+
2001

- ≥ 150,000
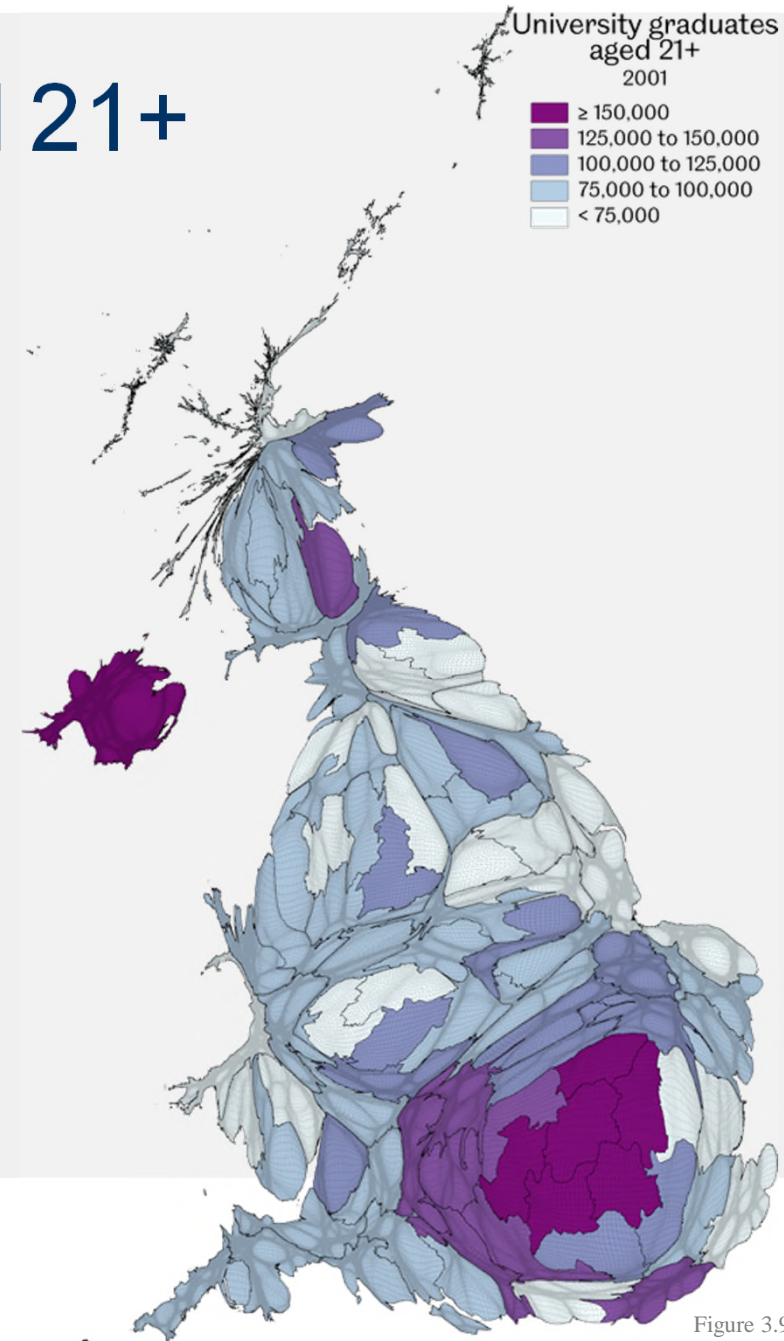- 125,000 to 150,000
- 100,000 to 125,000
- 75,000 to 100,000
- < 75,000

Key Point Summary

- Most children in Britain either fail at school or are labelled second class at university

- The type of school a child in Britain attends has a huge influence on his or her exam results

- Getting high exam results is more about social sorting than about being clever

http://www.dannydorling.org/

Plural conceptions of social justice . . .

- Distributive justice
  - absence of exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation
- Cultural justice
  - absence of cultural domination, respect and non-recognition
- Associational justice
  - absence of structures and networks that deny some people access to decision-making processes that impact their lives

Gewirtz and Cribb (2003:502-503)

Bourdieu on Capital…

… is what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle. Roulette, which holds out the opportunity of winning a lot of money in a short space of time, and therefore of changing one's social status quasi-instantaneously, and in which the winning of the previous spin of the wheel can be staked and lost at every new spin, gives a fairly accurate image of this imaginary universe of perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity, a world without inertia, without accumulation, without heredity or acquired properties, in which every moment is perfectly independent of the previous one, every soldier has a marshal's baton in his knapsack, and every prize can be attained, instantaneously, by everyone, so that at each moment anyone can become anything.

Bourdieu (1983) in Halsey et al (1997) p 46

# Bourdieu and the forms of capital . . .

- Economic

- Cultural

- Social
  – membership of a group 'which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity' (ibid, p51)

Pedagogies of hope: *Learning without limits* . . .

Teachers (perhaps in some numbers) see through and reject the prevailing discourse of fixed 'ability' and its enforcer-cum-seducer, differentiation. They refuse to badge each child with an identity based on determinist assumptions. They recognise how a system predicated on testing, 'ability'-labelling and grouping, and deficit-models of children, routinely fails large numbers of those it is supposed to serve.

Drummond and Yarker (2013) *Forum* 55 (1) p3
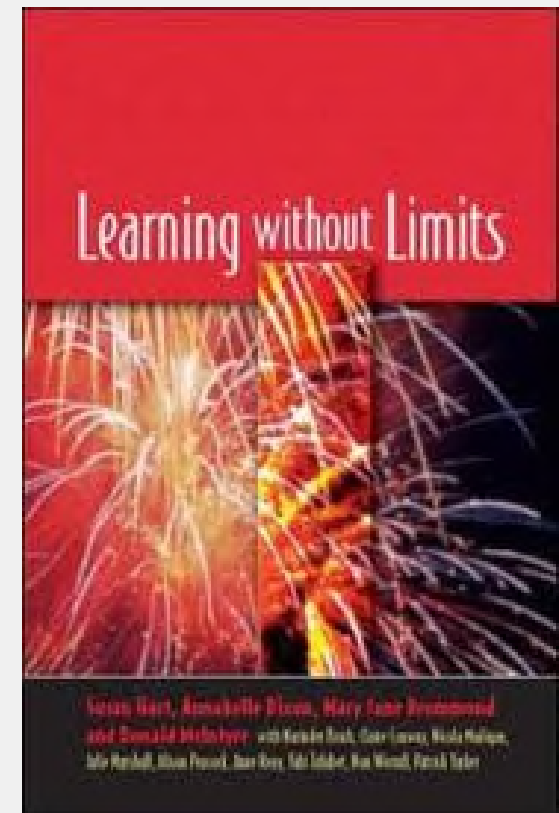
The ideological move to construct education as a market place holds both systemic and economic implications for schools, teachers, children and parents and may involve policies . . . based on 'educational' values being marginalized in favour of those lodged in market imperatives. Significant amongst them is the necessity for schools to promote a positive image of themselves in terms of performance indicators of product/output.

(McNamara *et al* 2000:475)

A talking head . . .
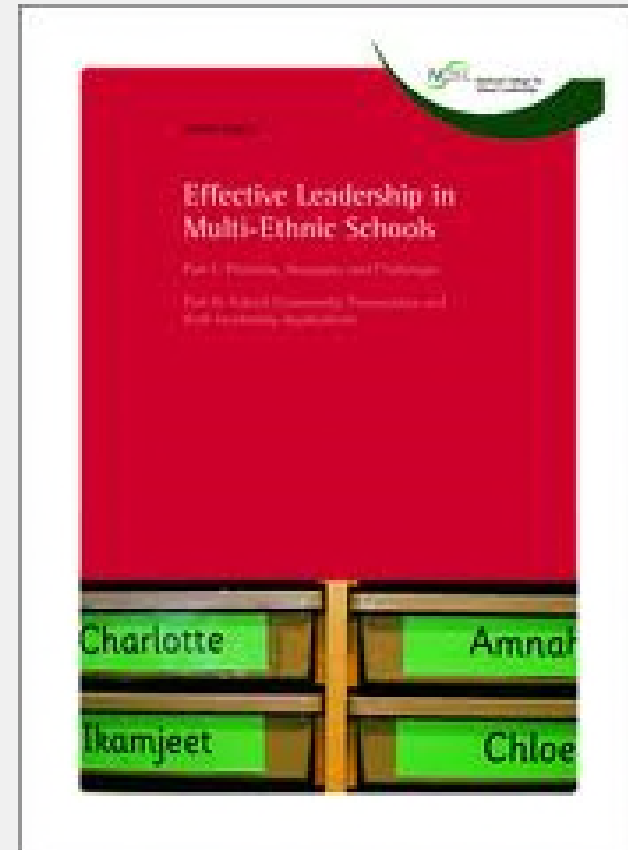
Dimmock *et al*, (2005)

We have few students because parents are understandably concerned about the low level of GCSE results – we're bottom in the county, and therefore we receive very few students at the 'top end'.

It's absolutely essential to keep sight of the individual, because even within minority ethnic groups there is huge diversity. You cannot lump groups together. As a school we've learned you've got to treat people as individuals. There are sensitivities about how you put in place strategies for groups, when actually you are concerned about individuals.

That is a hard thing to manage when you are being hammered for your exam results and you're telling staff to get the results, get the value-added, but if you get refugee children then they often come for six weeks then they're re-located. You put all that effort in, you get to know a child – and then they move on.

I make no bones about it – teaching is hard. Teaching seven lessons a day, especially in a school in challenging circumstances is hard work and anything that makes it harder is not going to be welcomed with open arms. It takes as long to prepare a lesson in these types of schools as it does to deliver it.

People despair – that is not too hard a word a for it. You get someone in your lesson who hardly speaks any english, and you have to meet those needs. You get support, but it is yet another need in an already needy situation. A lot of staff will run with it, but convincing them is a permanent sales job – 'this is good for the children . . . this is what we are here to do'.

Social inclusion is a misnomer – what you get is parental preference driving social division. It's not academic division – it is social division. You've got 'I don't want my child going with that type of child'. Parental preferences increase division – that gap is getting wider.

We co-operate as local heads very well, but actually when it comes to the survival of your school would you rather have my agenda or would you rather have a settled, over-subscribed totally supportive population of white parents? I get rung up by other heads in the town who say 'we're having difficulty with this difficult child, you've got some spare places – would you like them?' If it went to appeal we couldn't say no anyway

I'd like to see the first school on 93% 5 A-Cs going into special measures for a lack of inclusion. I'd love to see the government bite that bullet. Some schools select out people and won't include them when the OFSTED Framework clearly says inclusion is a priority – but they won't do that.

I have some personal friends, nice people, they play cricket with my husband and when I asked them if they would send their children to my school they would say 'No – you've got that mix of children there' – *and we're going to send them somewhere else because we're not sure about the ethnic mix* – that is what they were *really* saying. They had stereotyped views and they did not see it as appropriate for their child. It is interesting how rigid the majority population's views are about minority ethnic groups because they don't know. They have very fixed stereotypes.

Interviewer: Do you think you have been penalised for being an effective inclusive school?

Headteacher: I wouldn't say penalised, because I love what we do. But I have no doubt in my mind, having gone down the inclusion route that affects people's perceptions of what we are, and we do not get the 'top end'. I do think that is a consequence of how the school has chosen to present itself, to welcome everybody.

Does this really happen?

My headteacher says we have too many children with special needs . . .

Tough choices are, typically, those that pit one right value against another. The *really* tough choices don't centre upon right versus wrong. They involve right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in . . . core values.

(Kidder 1995, quoted in Duignan and Collins 2003:283)

Acting with passion . . .

… is not for the faint-hearted; it requires commitment, courage and determination. This kind of work involves high levels of emotional energy, it demands that participants believe strongly in their convictions and have the best interests of the group clearly in mind.

Sachs (2003:149)

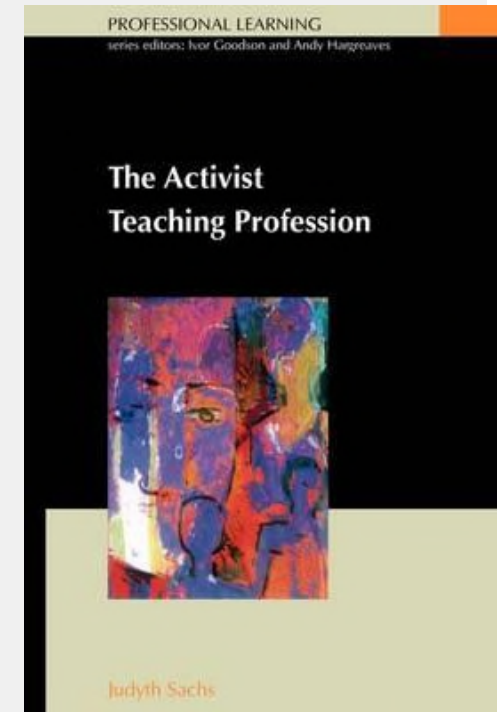*Courageous teaching* (Stevenson et al. 2014)

Dispositions of resistance . . .

- Understand and critique . . . . (the present)

- Re-frame and articulate . . . . (the alternative)

- Organise and challenge . . . . (challenge the present
to create the future)

Stevenson (2014)

The activist professional . . .

Activist teacher professionalism is in essence about a politics of transformation. Its spheres of interest are concerned with changing people's beliefs, perspectives and options regarding the importance of teaching, the social location of teachers and the role of competency and intelligent teachers in various education institutions. A politics of transformation is not self-interested; its concern is with wider issues of equity and social justice.
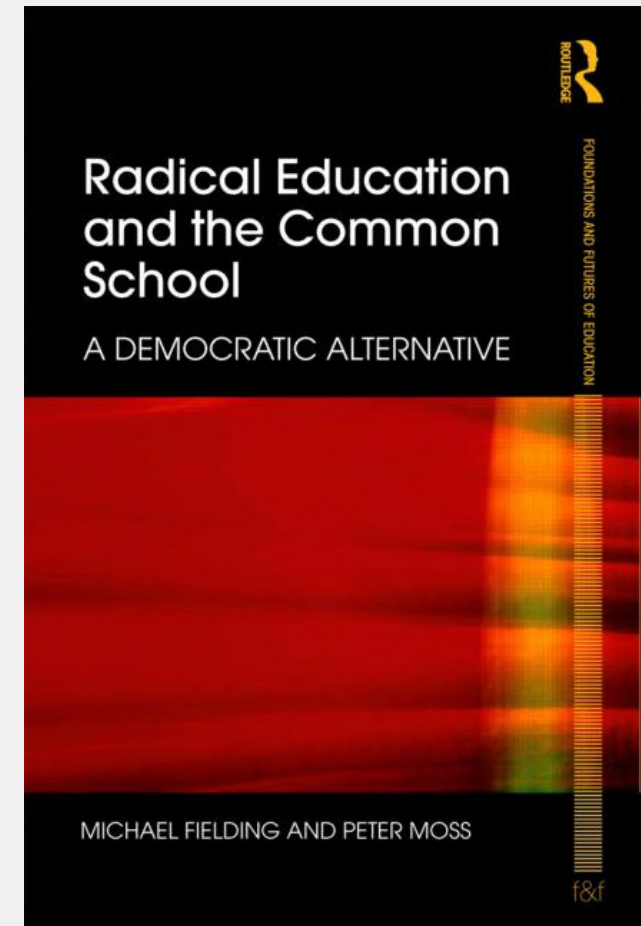
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
series editors: Ivor Goodson and Andy Hargreaves

The Activist Teaching Profession

Judyth Sachs

Sachs (2003:146)

The dictatorship of no alternative cannot be overthrown without ideas.

(Fielding and Moss 2012: 2)

Five things to think about . . .

- 'What is education for?' – you can never ask this question too often.

- All students can exceed our expectations – open up, don't close down (educability)

- Your professional judgements reflect your values – do (you do) what you believe in (?)

- Work inside, and outside, the classroom.

- You make a difference every day – but you make more difference when you work with others.

Three things to remember . . .

- Children start school unequally . . .

- Schools often reproduce inequalities, and sometimes increase them . . .

- 'Teachers affect eternity; they can never tell where their influence stops.' (Brighouse and Woods, 1999:105)

One final thought . . .

Democratic educators seek not simply to lessen the harshness of social inequities in school, but to change the conditions that create them.

Apple and Beane, 1999:13

… and don't forget Billy McBone . . .

Billy McBone
Had a mind of his own,
Which he kept under his hat.
The teachers all thought
That he couldn't be taught,
But Bill didn't seem to mind that.

Billy McBone
Had a mind of his own,
Which his teachers had searched for years.
Trying test after test,
They still never guessed
It was hidden between his ears.

Billy McBone
Had a mind of his own,
Which only his friends ever saw.
When the teacher said, 'Bill,
Whereabouts is Brazil?'
He just shuffled and stared at the floor.

Billy McBone
Had a mind of his own,
Which he kept under lock and key.
While the teachers in vain
Tried to burgle his brain,
Bill's thoughts were off wandering free.

(by Allan Ahlberg)