The 'London Effect': Literature Review

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Contents

1. Introduction

This paper reviews the existing literature on the 'London effect' i.e. what lies behind London's improvements in educational attainment. The first section summarises four key reports/papers which explicitly set out to explain London's greater success. A feature of these reports and papers is that, in the main, they have sought to identify statistical relationships between factors in the London environment and the levels and changes in attainment over different periods. As we report, they do not reach a consensus about the effects of these factors. Perhaps more importantly, the approach is designed to tell us <u>how much</u> of London's success story can be ascribed to policy and practice, in particular the London Challenge. It does not tell us <u>what</u> can be learned from London's policy and practice experiences. In the second section, therefore, we summarise findings from a more diverse literature which has explored some of these questions about what can be learned. We draw brief conclusions from the body of literature as a whole.

2. Reports and Papers on the Reasons for London's Success

Overview

We cover four reports/academic papers in this section:

Burgess, S. (2014). *Understanding the success of London's schools*. Bristol, England: The Centre for Market and Public Organisation.

Greaves, E., Macmillan, L., & Sibieta, L. (2014). *Lessons from London schools for attainment gaps and social mobility.* London, UK: Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission.

Blanden, J., Greaves, E., Gregg, P., Macmillan, L., & Sibieta, L. (2015). *Understanding the improved performance of disadvantaged pupils in London.* London, UK: Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion.

Baars, S., Bernardes, E., Elwick, A., Malortie, A., McAleavy, T., Mclnerney, L., Menzies, L., & Riggall, A. (2014). *Lessons from London schools: Investigating the success.* London, UK: CfBT Education Trust.

All of these papers take different approaches to the outcomes analysed and the periods covered, as we show in Appendix 1. Mostly of this is quantitative research, although the CfBT report uses a mixed methods approach. The focus has mainly been on secondary schools and KS4 attainment; however, two papers examine attainment prior to that at KS2. Two papers have investigated progression to KS5 and HE. The Early Years Foundation Stage has received the least coverage. The reports covered here have explored the London effect at city region or sub-city region level (Inner/Outer London). Less work has been done at borough level. The reports tend to compare London outcomes to outcomes for the 'Rest of England' – meaning England without London. Comparisons are made by two reports to major urban areas such as Manchester and Birmingham local authorities.

REPORT 1: Understanding the success of London's schools[1]

What is covered?

This report focusses on whether London's unique ethnic composition is responsible for London's education success. The author's argument is as follows. Minority pupils tend to do better in school than white ethnic pupils. This is because recent migrants have greater ambition, hopes and aspirations, and tend to work harder in school. Compared to other areas of England, London's schools have a larger proportion of high-performing ethnic minority groups, and a smaller proportion of low-performing ethnic groups. Thus, Burgess hypothesises that the London effect was driven by the ambition and hard work of ethnic minority pupils, rather than policies taking effect throughout the noughties, such as London Challenge.

Methodology

Statistical analysis of data from the National Pupil Database. To isolate the contribution of secondary schools on a pupil's progress, Burgess takes GCSE attainment and conditions this on (or, 'takes into account') KS2 attainment. This he calls 'pupil progress' – a measure of an individual's progress that is attributable to the effect of secondary school only. The measure of KS4 attainment used is a pupil's total score in their best 8 subjects (A* = 8 points, A = 7, etc.).

What are the key findings?

White British pupils do least well of all ethnic groups in London and in **RoE**
Burgess' analysis shows that White British pupils made the least progress of all ethnic groups throughout secondary school, both in London and in RoE. He highlights that, as RoE is made up of a higher proportion of White British pupils (86%) than London (38%), this gives an indication that ethnic makeup might have played a part in London's higher KS4 attainment.

London's education success can be fully accounted for by London's ethnic mix
The author's analysis suggests that London made more progress than in RoE – 9.77% of a standard deviation higher in London. This difference is statistically significant. Burgess then demonstrates that the 'London effect' disappears once ethnicity is included in the regression. Therefore, according to this analysis, ethnicity can explain all of the progress that London pupils made throughout secondary school.

A 'London premium' does exist when GCSE equivalent qualifications are omitted
Burgess shows that the London effect remains present after including ethnicity to the regression, but only when GCSE equivalent qualifications are omitted beforehand. Therefore, after including ethnicity, and by taking a selection of more academic qualifications, there is an advantage of being a pupil in London. The author shows that London has a smaller proportion of pupils entering into equivalent qualifications than RoE. Burgess suggests it inappropriate to discount vocational

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[1] Burgess, S. (2014). *Understanding the success of London's schools*. Bristol, England: The Centre for Market and Public Organisation. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/cmpo/migrated/documents/wp333.pdf

qualifications because, had they not have been available, "schools and pupils would have made other decisions on subjects and effort levels" (p. 12).

Birmingham made better progress than London

The report shows that Birmingham pupils outperformed London pupils in terms of pupil progress in secondary school between 2004 and 2013. This was not found for two other urban areas, Manchester and Newcastle.

Conclusion

"If London had the same ethnic composition as the rest of England, there would be no 'London Effect'." (p. 3)

Burgess finds that pupil progress in London is better than in RoE. However, rather than attribute this to policy, Burgess suggests that most if not all of London's pupil progress can be explained away by its unique ethnic composition; London is made up of a greater proportion of high-performing ethnic minority pupils, and a lower proportion of lower-performing, chiefly White British pupils. "The argument here is that the basis for that success lies more with pupils and parents than it does with policy-makers" (p. 16).

REPORT 2: Lessons from London schools for attainment gaps and social mobility[2]

What is covered?

The main contribution of this paper is evaluating when exactly the London effect started to make its mark. The first section covers this, comparing Inner and Outer London to other regions of England. They examine whether increases in attainment in London are attributable to the pupil characteristics (e.g., ethnicity) of London and other large English cities, and they look at the role of prior attainment. They then investigate the recent growth in attainment of disadvantaged pupils in London, establishing when in time English and mathematics results started to improve at a faster rate than elsewhere in the country. Finally, the authors examine whether higher attainment following compulsory education feeds into increased participation at Key Stage 5 (KS5), and they conclude with suggestions for policy.

Methodology

Statistical analysis of the National Pupil Database.

[2] Greaves, E., Macmillan, L., & Sibieta, L. (2014). *Lessons from London schools for attainment gaps and social mobility.* London, UK: Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission. https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/docs/london_schools_june2014.pdf

What are the key findings?

Attainment of London's disadvantaged pupils is now better and improved more than elsewhere
In line with other findings, the report finds a faster rate of year-on-year improvements at KS4 for London pupils overall compared to all other regions of England, between 2002 and 2012. Inner London's disadvantaged pupils improved at a faster rate than disadvantaged pupils in other regions, year-on-year at KS4. This was found to be true for two measures: 1) what proportion achieved 5 A*-C grades (including English and maths), and 2) a more stringent measure, 8 A*-C grades (including English and maths). Other large cities such as Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham also made year-on-year improvements in KS4 performance, albeit less dramatic than Inner and Outer London.

London's unique demographics explain some but not all of the 'London effect'
After taking into account many pupil and school characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, school type), the authors still find an advantage of London over the RoE. The authors state that part of the explanation of improvements in major cities is down to observable characteristics such as ethnicity; however a lot remains unexplained.

Improvements in attainment at KS4 for FSM-eligible pupils are largely explained by differences in prior attainment, and therefore primary school education is important
London's advantage over England is reduced considerably when controlling for pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 2 (KS2). This is taken as a sign that primary schools, not secondary schools, are ultimately responsible for improved attainment later down the line at KS4. However, the authors say that secondary schools may have played a role in keeping pupils on track to good performance at KS4. Manchester and Birmingham's advantage over the RoE is shown to reduce to almost nothing when controlling for prior attainment.

Disadvantaged pupils in London, Manchester, and Birmingham perform better at KS2 than elsewhere
The report shows that disadvantaged pupils in London, Manchester, and Birmingham are shown to outperform the RoE in both English and Maths at KS2 between 2002 and 2018 (estimated). Inner London shows the highest level of performance. The report identifies large improvements in London in KS2 English scores between 1999 and 2003, which the authors state might be key to why London's KS4 results improved later down the line.

London's disadvantaged pupils are more likely to carry on into Key Stage 5
The report shows that London's pupils are more likely to carry on into KS5 (after taking into account pupil and school characteristics, and prior attainment at KS4). Like London, Manchester and Birmingham were found to have performed better than the RoE at KS4; however, unlike London, their advantage over the RoE does not translate into increased participation in post-16 education. Birmingham and Manchester pupils go on in lesser numbers to KS5, compared with London.

Improvements in KS2 English occurred after rollout of National Literacy and Numeracy strategies
A number of policies are reviewed as potential explanations for the London effect. Many are dismissed, either because of their timing (e.g., London Challenge came too late to coincide with the onset of attainment growth) or their focus (e.g., the Teach First programme initially only targeted secondary schools, which doesn't cohere with their findings regarding the importance of prior attainment in primary school education). However, the authors speculate that the National

Strategies, launched in 1998, were fairly well timed and with the right focus (i.e., primary schools) to match their findings, and therefore they propose that these policies may be important (although, as they mention, these were national programmes, and therefore it is not clear why improvements in London were not followed by similar improvements elsewhere).

Conclusion

The conclusion is that prior achievement at KS2 was key for supporting learning and achievement later down the line, and thus, the report emphasises the role of London primary schools. The authors do however agree that a key role of secondary schools may have been to maintain the good levels of performance; in particular keeping disadvantaged pupils 'on the right track'. In line with this is their finding that a greater proportion of London's disadvantaged pupils continue to KS5 than in Manchester or Birmingham, after controlling for observable characteristics and prior attainment. They suggest that London's attainment gains might be due to policies of the late 1990s and early 2000s, but with a caveat that the National Strategies were nationwide.

REPORT 3: Understanding the improved performance of disadvantaged pupils in London[3]

What is covered?

The focus of this report is on disadvantaged pupils in London. The report first introduces the London story, and says that improvements by disadvantaged pupils explains most of why London attainment has increased at a faster rate than other English regions overall. The authors discuss the socio-economic advantages that London has over the rest of England, and other important differences, including higher average incomes, higher house prices, and higher levels of immigration. For analysis, the report utilises three databases, employing a range of attainment measures and indicators across its period of focus (1985 – 2013).

Methodology

Statistical analysis of the National Pupil Database, the Youth Cohort Study, and the Millennium Cohort Study.

What are the key findings?

KS4 attainment of poorer children in London has been increasing year-on-year since the mid-1990s
The authors demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils in London performed worse at KS4 than the rest of England throughout most of the 1990s, however, from around 1994, attainment improved year-on-year (shown using two proxies of disadvantage, and four measures of performance).

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[3] Blanden, J., Greaves, E., Gregg, P., Macmillan, L., & Sibieta, L. (2015). *Understanding the improved performance of disadvantaged pupils in London.* London, UK: Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion. http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/wp21.pdf

Characteristics of disadvantaged pupils differ between London and the rest of England, in ways that matter for pupil attainment

Compared to the rest of England, a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils in (particularly Inner) London are of an ethnicity other than White-British. Given that ethnic minority groups tend to perform better than White-British groups, the authors suggest ethnicity might important to the London story. In further analysis, they find that London's ethnic mix explains a great deal of why London's disadvantaged pupils do better than other regions in general; however, ethnic mix only explains a small amount about why *growth* in performance has occurred for disadvantaged pupils in Inner London, since ethnic composition has not changed sufficiently over the period. Blanden et al. do acknowledge that changes in the association between ethnicity and attainment outcomes (either because of changes in the socio-economic position of different groups or because of changes in school practice towards these groups) could explain London's growth in attainment, but they do not investigate this in much depth. It is also possible that there have been changes in ethnic composition within broad ethnic categories which are not reflected in top-line analysis.

Large improvements in performance are found at primary school level, and prior attainment explains much of attainment at KS4

As well as increasing KS4 attainment in secondary school for disadvantaged pupils, the authors find year-on-year improvements at KS2. Prior attainment at KS2 is found to explain around one third of the growth in Inner London at KS4 using 5+ A*-C grades (inc. English and Maths) as an outcome measure. In addition, prior attainment explains one sixth of growth in a measure of high performance (8+ A*- B grades inc. English and Maths). They claim, therefore, that prior attainment may be important for explaining the gains made throughout secondary school, and further down the line during GCSE examinations.

No advantage for London's disadvantaged children compared to rest of England in the Early Years

The authors find no advantage over the rest of England for disadvantaged pupils at the end of reception. This gap appears later at KS2, which the authors claim further highlights the role of primary schools.

Conclusion

The authors suggest that an accurate explanation of increasing KS4 attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Inner London is likely to be complex, and not down to a single policy. They provide evidence that KS4 attainment started to rise for poorer pupils in the mid-1990s, before the policy initiatives that are often attributed for the success (e.g., London Challenge) came to the fore. They suggest that policies of the mid-1990s might be responsible for kick-starting the London advantage, and that these gains were sustained by initiatives operating in the 2000s. The authors show that attainment has grown in both primary and secondary education, and is largest for Inner London's disadvantaged pupils. Ethnic composition explains why the performance of disadvantaged pupils is generally higher in London compared to elsewhere; however, ethnicity only explains a small amount of why attainment has grown faster over time in the capital, relative to other areas of the country. The authors attribute London's steeper growth in attainment to rising school quality in both primary and secondary education, going back to the mid-1990s. Rising KS2 results are put down to better schooling, given that growth is unexplained by observable pupil characteristics, and that pupils aren't generally ahead by age 5 but are at age 11. In secondary school, steeper growth in attainment

at KS4 is attributed to progressively higher attainment of higher performing pupils (unexplained by pupil characteristics, and therefore likely down to schools), and a gradually lesser impact of negative school composition variables to the London effect (they speculate that the key change here might be progressively fewer disadvantaged pupils with disadvantaged peers).

REPORT 4: Lessons from London Schools: Investigating the Success[4]

What is covered?

This report is broader than the others covered in this section. It begins with a short history of education reform in London, followed by an analysis of secondary school pupil attainment and teacher and school performance. The authors then investigate the role of non-educational contextual factors, such as gentrification and ethnicity, and factors related to education, such as school funding and teacher recruitment. The report also considers the effectiveness of policies introduced throughout the period 2000-2014 (e.g., London Challenge, academisation, Teach First). Three broad research questions are investigated. First, has education in London been as successful as people suggest? Second, if so, what might explain these improvements? Third, what can be learnt from London that might apply to other cities in the UK?

Methodology

The report reviews existing literature and provides new insight using a mixed-methods approach. Secondary analysis of quantitative data – from a range of sources, including the National Pupil Database, Office for National statistics data, Ofsted school inspection data – was carried out to track change in London as whole, inner and outer London, and at local authority (LA) level, and comparisons of performance are made between London and England, and other English regions. Interviews and focus groups are conducted with key figures in London's education system, including politicians, senior LA directors, headteachers, civil servants, and those involved in leading education reforms.

What are the key findings?

London education improved
The report finds that pupil attainment at Key Stage 4 (KS4) has increased between 2005 and 2012 in all regions of England. However, London – and in particular, inner London – has seen the most improvement of all regions, and this is especially the case for its disadvantaged pupils (i.e., those eligible for free school meals). In addition, between 2000 and 2013, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership have improved more rapidly than national figures. Between 2005 and 2013, a greater proportion of London's schools improved their quality (as assessed by Ofsted) than

[4] Baars, S., Bernardes, E., Elwick, A., Malortie, A., McAleavy, T., Mclnerney, L., Menzies, L., & Riggall, A. (2014). *Lessons from London schools: Investigating the success.* London, UK: CfBT Education Trust. https://www.centreforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Lessons-from-London-Schools.pdf

in the nation as a whole. Disadvantaged schools improved the most. Interview accounts supported these findings.

Non-educational and educational contextual factors did not cause, but enabled change

The report states that improvements in London's educational outcomes cannot be attributed to any one non-educational contextual factor. They identify a small positive relationship between the level of LA gentrification and attainment at KS4. They find that KS4 attainment of all major ethnic groups in London increased year-on-year between 2005 and 2012, including for pupils from a white ethnic background. The report considers whether the high level of economic and cultural opportunities in London might account for the London effect through raising pupils' aspirations. They find pupil aspirations to be higher in London than the RoE, but they speculate that this is not sufficient for explaining London's steeper growth in attainment.

The report also looks at what it calls 'educational context' such as funding and teacher supply. They suggest that higher levels of funding in London compared to other English regions may have been an "important threshold or precondition for transformation" (p. 56). Teacher vacancy rates are found to have decreased, shifting London from being behind national figures in 2002, to being more in line by 2007. The report suggests that lower teacher vacancy rates were another 'enabling factor' for London's success. No direct effect of building new schools and improvements to existing ones was identified, however improvements to school buildings were seen by some interviewees as a 'symbol of renewal', and a positive motivating factor.

The impact of London Challenge, Academisation, Teach First, and local authorities

It is not possible to isolate the causal effect of policies around this time, given that there is no randomised controlled trial data. However, evidence from interviewees suggest that the London Challenge had a positive impact (for reasons that we explore in more detail in the next section). Evidence for the effectiveness of the academies programme (prior to their expansion in 2010) on KS4 attainment is mixed, with other authors finding evidence that the programme failed to benefit the least able pupils. The report finds Teach First to have been effective at improving attainment in underperforming secondary schools, with many interview accounts crediting the programme with bringing fresh energy into the teaching profession. The report highlights that some LAs in London were more effective than others in bringing in changes and improvements – Tower Hamlets did especially well. Overall, the report does not attribute the London effect to one policy programme, but rather emphasises the combined impact of these four initiatives in stimulating performance.

Conclusion

Attainment at KS4 has risen in all regions of England. London's improvement has been most marked, and London attainment in secondary school is now above the national average. KS4 attainment has improved most year-on-year in Inner London, for disadvantaged schools in particular. The quality of teaching and effectiveness of leadership in London schools has improved, and at a faster rate than England overall. Educational and non-educational contextual factors (such as schools improvements and ethnicity) are said to be 'enabling factors'; therefore, important elements of London's success, but on their own insufficient to explain the London story. Based mostly on interview and focus group data, the report suggests that the combined impact of London Challenge, Teach First, and academisation played positive roles in transforming London schools, and raising grades at KS4. The

report suggests that data was used effectively for performance management, and that strong leadership at every level of the education system was key to success.

Summary

Four key points can be drawn from these reports as a whole.

First, they confirm that London has had faster improvements than the rest of the country (without London) as a whole, and that attainment (and progress where this is looked at) is higher than for the country as a whole. Inner London made the largest improvement in KS4 attainment, and this is largely due to more rapid year-on-year improvement made by disadvantaged pupils. At primary school level, Greaves et al. find that disadvantaged pupils in London have performed consistently better than the rest of England in KS2 English and mathematics since the early 2000s. In addition, Blanden et al. finds that Inner and Outer London hold an advantage over the RoE in KS2 performance, and that this gap has increased between 2002 and 2016. Much of the work does not look at specific other places. However, Burgess' paper found that Birmingham students outperformed London students in terms of secondary school progress (although not attainment at KS4) and Greaves et al. also show that Manchester and Birmingham have performed consistently better than the Rest of England at KS2. This could imply that there may be a 'big city' or other effect which is obscured somewhat by an exclusive focus on London.

Second, while the policy interest has mostly been focused on explaining the apparent turnaround in London's secondary schools, higher attainment in primary school is shown to be feeding into this. Blanden et al. found that prior attainment at KS2 played a role in the KS4 performance of London's disadvantaged pupils. This was found both for a standard and a more stringent measure of KS4 attainment. The authors suggest that "… a focus on secondary school interventions will miss part of the picture" (p.27). Greaves et al. find similar results: after controlling for attainment at KS2 (and a host of school and pupil characteristics) the advantage that Inner and Outer London have over other large cities and the rest of England reduces substantially, suggesting that the advantage of London pupils at KS4 is dependent on primary schools and the standard of education that pupils bring with them following KS2. In addition, Manchester and Birmingham's advantage over the rest of England is shown to almost disappear when controlling for prior attainment. The authors suggest that "improvement is more likely to be due to the increase in attainment at primary school over time for disadvantaged pupils in London" (p. 36), rather than interventions targeting secondary schools. An important caveat is that progress needs to be sustained in secondary schools.

Third, ethnic composition is likely a significant part of the story, although the reports disagree on this. Burgess' asserts that the progress made by London pupils throughout secondary school can be explained fully by their ethnic backgrounds: "if London had the same ethnic composition as the rest of England, there would be no 'London Effect'" (p. 3). The CFBT report (based on a borough level not a pupil level analysis) concludes that non-educational contextual factors such as ethnicity do not explain the more rapid progress London made compared to the nation. The two other reports occupy the mid-ground between these two positions. Greaves et al. find that London maintains its advantage over the Rest of England in KS4 attainment between 2002 and 2012 even once the effect of ethnicity is controlled for, and Blanden et al. find that London's ethnic composition explains a

large proportion of why London's disadvantaged pupils perform better overall at KS4. Blanden et al. claim that ethnicity cannot explain London's improvement over time, although, as mentioned above, their analysis has some limitations and there are further questions to be answered. Overall, it would appear that ethnicity is at least to some extent implicated in the London story but does not account for everything.

Fourth, policy interventions have played a role. Even in these reports, which have not focused particularly on policy interventions, there is some suggestion that: a) policies in London's primary schools in the later 1990s laid the foundations for later successes; and b) the London Challenge in particular and other policies including Academisation and Teach First also contributed something to London's changing trajectory. It is a common finding in educational research that patterns of school attainment are a result mainly of factors outside the school, but that school policies and practices can make a difference. In the next section, therefore, on the understanding that they are not responsible for all of London's success, we summarise findings from reports which have examined these policy and practice developments in more detail.

Finally, it is noticeable what has not been so fully explored in the London context. One issue is the reason for London's stronger performance in the early years, and the effect of this on primary school attainment. Another is the broader London context: its strong labour market, cultural resources and global flows of capital and people. Academic literatures suggest that context has material effects (on out of school opportunities, work experience and exposure to different careers and employers) and effects on educational identities, aspirations and expectations. These are hinted at in the Children's Commissioner's recent report on 'Growing Up North'[5], but they have not been explored as variables in quantitative studies, in the same way that ethnicity has. The nature of disadvantage (i.e. what lies behind and within the category of 'FSM eligible' of 'Pupil Premium') has also received little interrogation, although Treadaway (2018)[6] has begun to explore this in recent analysis. He finds that pupils who have been eligible for FSM for 90% of their time in school ('long-term disadvantaged') achieve less on average than those eligible for FSM for less than 30% of their time in school. While the proportion of such pupils is similar in London and the North, London has far fewer students in groups where FSM status is highly correlated with attainment (the 'high impact of disadvantage group' – mainly white students). This suggests that what appear to be similar challenges for schools and regions may in fact be very different, demanding different resources and strategies. These patterns also change over time. While this cannot explain London's improvement in the period covered by these reports, it is striking that there has been a sharp fall in the proportion of pupils in London eligible for FSM since 2012, suggesting changing school composition in the capital in ways not seen elsewhere.

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[5] Children's Commissioner (2018) Growing up North. Look North: a generation of children await the powerhouse promise. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner
[6] https://educationdatalab.org.uk/2018/02/long-term-disadvantage-part-six-measuring-disadvantage-in-the-north/

3. Learning from Policy and Practice in London

Overview

In this section we review material from a range of publications that have offered evidence on policy and practice change in London. These include the CfBT report mentioned above as well as government-commissioned and independent evaluations and shorter sections of reports that have analysed or conjectured upon parts of the policy mix. Some of these sources offer detailed accounts of policy implementation that offer very rich learning about what was effective and why. We only offer a brief summary here. It will be clear that we have not conducted a systematic literature search, instead drawing on known publications and limited searches. Some of the issues identified would certainly benefit from more comprehensive review to strengthen the evidence base.

The London Challenge

The London Challenge was a secondary school improvement programme[7] initiated by central government which ran from 2003 to 2011. At its peak it had a budget of around £40m per year, funding support for underperforming schools, leadership and professional development programmes, borough-wide school improvement plans in key areas and a range of other initiatives including a student pledge to make London's cultural and sporting assets more available. From 2008, the Challenge was extended to primary schools. In the same year, it was also extended, as the City Challenge (CC) to Greater Manchester and the Black Country (from 2008), which adopted similar approaches. Success was more limited in Greater Manchester and the Black Country, which had only three years of operation, but all three challenges saw some success in terms of improved inspection ratings and greater than average increases in attainment (Hutchings et al 2012).[8]

The work of the London Challenge has been very fully described in a number of publications and very positively evaluated. Some consistent points emerge from this literature. One of these is about the kinds of lessons we should be looking to draw. Ogden (2014) and Husbands (2014) agree that other areas should not think of copying the London Challenge in the sense of reproducing the same set of initiatives[9]. A crucial element of the success of the Challenge was that initiatives were developed in response to the particular context(s) of London. Learning can be derived from specific programmes that worked, but it should not be assumed that the same set of things would be needed, or would work in the same way, in another place. Many of the key lessons are about how regions or city-regions can get beyond having 'pockets' of excellent practice and mobilise whole-system reform.[10]

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7 London Challenge began as a secondary school initiative but in 2008 was extended to primary schools.
8 Hutchings, M., Greenwood, C., Hollingworth, S., Mansaray, A., Rose, A., Minty, S., & Glass, K. (2012). Evaluation of the City Challenge programme. London, UK: Department for Education.
9 Ogden, V "The London Challenge: A Regional Model of School System Reform and Improvement" and Husbands, C. "Lessons from London: What does the London Challenge Tell Us About School Improvement and Reform?" in Woods, D. and Brighouse, T. (2014) The Story of the London Challenge, London: London Leadership Strategy
10 There is a wider literature on urban school reform capturing lessons from other cities internationally, which may also be of interest in GM but is beyond the scope of this review.

In this respect a number of key success features are repeatedly mentioned:

- A "Tri-level" approach with the alignment of national, local and school level drivers of improvement (Husbands op. cit) and close working between officials, ministers and advisers (Kidson and Norris 2014)[11]
- 'Figurehead leadership' to provide vision and inspiration and galvanise support from practitioners and policy-makers (Odgen, op. cit)
- A powerful sense of moral purpose and a positive framing (Kidson and Norris op cit, Odgen op cit, Brighouse 2007[12], Hutchings, op. cit, CfBT op. cit)
- Effective coordination, brokering, matching, deployment (Odgen, op. cit)
- Use of system-wide data to identify key priorities and to link schools into similar 'families' as a basis for collaboration (Hutchings, op. cit, Kidson and Norris, op. cit). CfBT (op. cit) found 'virtual unanimity' in interview accounts that data literacy and the use of data was important to the success of each intervention, and London's success overall. Underperformance in schools could be identified early and managed, which according to many interviewees encouraged a culture of accountability towards pupil performance.
- Engagement of experienced school leaders as advisors, working with schools in a bespoke way (Hutchings et al., 2012) or as Kidson and Norris put it, "the appointment of credible professionals to play a challenge and support role to their peers".
- Fostering of school-to-school collaboration, such that by the end of the Challenge, the London Leadership Strategy was able to carry on as a school led approach. However as Husbands points out, the system was not school led at the start. It need the shared vision, the coordination, the intelligence systems and the professional development to become a successful 'self-improving school led system'.
- A focus on disadvantage and narrowing attainment gaps, and on 'Keys to Success' schools and key boroughs facing the deepest challenges (Cfbt, Hutchings op. cit). These schools and boroughs were seen as key to driving improvement across the whole system.

Mel Ainscow, Chief Adviser to the Greater Manchester Challenge, has also written a book about that experience in which he captures the nature of the Challenges as mobilising collaboration across school systems in order to address key issues[13]. Key principles include some of the same ones that emerge in the London Challenge literature: national government creating the conditions for local action, system leadership from within schools, coordination and brokerage to match schools who could help each other. He emphasise tapping the potential that school systems have to improve themselves, which starts with knowing where those assets are and creating networks across social and administrative boundaries to move ideas and expertise around and stimulate experimentation. Ainscow also emphasises the importance of complementing school focused efforts with those involving the wider community, agencies and employers, although he suggests that the GM Challenge had not developed this aspect as fully as it might have.

More specific elements of the London Challenge are also explored in these reports. There were many and we do not intend to reproduce them all here, only to emphasise that the London

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11 Kidson, M. and Norris, E.(2014) Implementing the London Challenge. London: Institute for Government
12 Brighouse, T. (2007) The London Challenge: A Personal View: in Brighouse and Fullick eds (2007) Education in a Global City: Essays from London. London: IOE Press
13 Ainscow, M, (2015) Towards Self-Improving School Systems: Lessons from a City Challenge

Challenge was not just about school to school support and a team of specialist advisers. It was also about building system capacity in strategic and coordinated ways. Bubb (2014)[14] describes some of these, including:

- Changes to Inner London pay scales which increased the threshold payments for experienced staff to encourage them to stay on.
- Use of Teach First to reduce vacancy rates.
- Use of the key worker living scheme which gave interest free loans of up to £100k for house purchases – this helped 5,000 London teachers.
- The Chartered London Teacher (CLT) scheme (for which over 40,000 teachers registered). This was another retention measure, since teachers could not achieve it until they had worked in London for four years. However, Bubb notes that it helped unify the profession around the same standards and "was a way of bringing a coherent approach to an individual teachers' professional development and integrating it with a school's process of professional review and performance management". In some schools and clusters of schools, all the teachers were registered.
- Attention to context in teaching practice. The CLT was strongly linked to context. Teachers had to understand diverse needs and develop appropriate and inclusive practices, identify and use the knowledge that pupils, families and communities could bring to enrich curriculum development and teaching practices, and draw on opportunities and resources in London, for example. Kidson and Norris write that research was commissioned into the distinctive characteristics of teaching and leadership in London, and bespoke professional development programmes were designed and delivered, for instance around ethnic and cultural diversity and conflict management.
- Making good use of Advanced Skills Teachers, who worked four days a week in their own school and one in other schools. Some of these became London Commissioner's Teachers who were deployed in groups to work in the most challenging schools.
- Developing school to school support for professional development, including in an Outstanding Teacher Programme and an Improving Teacher Programme, in which groups of three teachers per school would review different aspects of practice.
- Physical and virtual teacher networks such as a pan-London EAL group.

Woods and Brighouse describe the development of partnerships with higher education institutions. The Vice Chancellors of London universities appointed a Higher Education Champion for London, who chaired a new group named SHELL (School-Higher Education Links in London). The vision was that every school and FE college could access coordinated outreach and support. A menu of partnership activities was developed. In addition 1000 FSM eligible year 10 students were supported through a four year university access programme, with £400 per year to spend on relevant activities.[15]

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14 Bubb, S. (2014) "The London Teacher" in Woods, D. and Brighouse, T. (2014) The Story of the London Challenge, London: London Leadership Strategy
15 Woods, D. and Brighouse (2014) "The London Challenge and Partnership Working" in Woods, D. and Brighouse, T. (2014) The Story of the London Challenge, London: London Leadership Strategy

Other Policies and Interventions

Other policies and interventions have been covered in much less depth than the London Challenge. However, various reports provide evidence of or suggestions about other factors.

One is **Academies**. Kidson and Norris (op. cit) note that Labour's early Academies policy ran alongside the London Challenge, and early Sponsor Academies were heavily concentrated in some of London's worst performing Boroughs. Eyles and Machin (2015)[16] found that these early Academies did raise pupil attainment, and they also began to take more mixed (less disadvantaged) intakes. It is impossible to know what would have happened had other strategies for dealing with persistently struggling schools had been followed. However, as Kidson and Norris note, the relaunching of (and investment in) a significant number of the most problematic schools at the same time as a programme of support and improvement across the system may have had a combined effect.

Weller's review of Northern Schools[17] (2016) focuses on academisation and multi-academy trusts (MATs). His report shows that the proportion of schools that converted to or were sponsored as academies increased more rapidly in the South since around 2010 compared to the North, and that London schools were more likely to be in MATs, leading Weller to conclude that "accelerating growth of MATs is key to driving up standards in the North" (p. 24). This conclusion is not supported by the research of Andrews and Perera (2017)[18] who note that unlike the early sponsor Academies, converter Academies do not produce any discernible increase in pupil attainment and that there is very wide variation in the performance of MATs. MATs per se do not necessarily improve pupil performance. It does appear to be the case that stronger MATs are overrepresented in London[19,20] although it is not clear whether these are more successful because they are so located (because of demographic factors) or whether London has been fortunate to have more effective MATs.

The strength of **school-to-school support mechanisms** does, however, arise more generally than in relation to MATs. Clifton et al. (2016)[21] point to evidence that in London, just one local authority has more than 2,000 pupils per secondary-phase teaching school, whereas this is the case for nearly half of Northern authorities.

> "This means that England is in danger of creating a system where high-performing areas are able to work together and improve, while those with fewer outstanding schools are left behind. In some places, this will be because other sources of support are available and there is no need to create new ones. But as the push towards a school-led system continues, the absence of teaching schools and other new forms of support in some areas will become an increasing concern" (p. 36).

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[16] Eyles, A. and S. Machin (2015): "The Introduction of Academy Schools to England's Education", Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper 1368.

[17] Weller, N. (2016). *A Northern Powerhouse schools strategy.* London: DfE.

[18] Andrews, J. and Perera, N. (with A. Eyles, G. Heller-Sahlgren, S. Machin. M.Sandi and O. Silva) *The Impact of Academies on Educational Outcomes*. London: Education Policy Institute

[19] Tate, S. and Greatbatch, D. (2016) *Review of evidence on education in the north of England.* London, DfE

[20] Hutchings, M., Kirby, P and Francis, B. (2016) *Chain Effects.* London, Sutton Trust

[21] Clifton J, Round A and Raikes L (2016). *Northern schools: Putting education at the heart of the northern powerhouse*, IPPR North. Northern Schools: Putting education at the heart of the northern powerhouse

It is widely recognised that schools in London have consistently received more **funding** per head than schools in other parts of the country (see CfBT, op. cit; also Perera et al., 2017[22]). As CfBT suggest, the disparity in funding cannot account for the widening gap in attainment between regions, since funding differentials remained the same, but it may have put schools in a better position to improve. We are not aware of any systematic analysis of patterns of spending in London schools compared with others to investigate if/how additional funding translates into practice. However Lupton et al. (2016)[23] report that the proportion of primary pupils taught in large classes has been consistently exceptionally low throughout the period reported here. Lupton (2005)[24] has also argued that pupil-based funding loaded towards disadvantage (e.g., the Pupil Premium) does not necessarily produce a funding distribution responsive to need, since the organisational and pedagogical challenges faced by schools with similar levels of disadvantage may vary according to their context. For example schools in highly disadvantaged white working class neighbourhoods typically report greater difficulties with engagement of pupils and parents, absence and behaviour problems than schools in similarly disadvantaged ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. This relates to the earlier point about the nature of disadvantage, which is underexplored in the literature.

Teacher supply (both numbers and quality) is hinted at in some reports but we have not seen any systematic regional analysis. Tate et al. (2016) observe disparities in types of training provision across the country; for example, there are more providers of salaried routes into teaching in London and the South East than in the North and elsewhere, restricting the choice of those who would like to train near home in other parts of the country. The recent Northern Powerhouse Partnership[25] report, however, cautions that not all regions will have the same issues with teaching. They suggest that while London's problem at the time of the London Challenge was teacher supply, for the North it may be teacher quality – they suggest that Ofsted ratings for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are higher in London and Southern regions. Thus, teacher retention and professional development may be a more appropriate focus than teacher supply.

Weller (2016) suggests that there are differences in curriculum, pedagogy and social relations between London and Northern schools, with many schools in the North tending to offer a less academic curriculum. Weller is also an advocate of models of strong classroom routines, strict behaviour policies, extended school days and so on which he notes are more prevalent in London (Ark, Harris and Mossbourne are cited as examples). This is, however, a contested view.

[22] Perera, N., Andrews, J. and Sellen, P. (2017) *The implications of the national funding formula for schools*. London: Education Policy Institute

[23] Lupton, R., Thomson, S. and Obolenskaya,P. (2016). *Schools*, in: Ruth Lupton, Tania Burchardt, John Hills, Kitty Stewart, Polly Vizard (Eds.), Social Policy in a Cold Climate: Policies and Their Consequences since the Crisis. The Policy Press, Bristol, pp. 59–80.

[24] Lupton, R. (2005) Social Justice and School Improvement: Improving the Quality of Schooling in the Poorest Neighbourhoods. *British Educational Research Journal* 31(5) pp 589-604

[25] Northern Powerhouse Partnership (2018) Educating the North: Driving Ambition Across the Powerhouse.

4. Conclusion

The literature on what can be learned from London schools is abundant but also patchy, with many omissions.

The available evidence certainly suggests that London's unique demographic characteristics probably account in a number of ways for its higher attainment levels.   Policy interventions on their own do not explain London's success. Higher achievements in early years and primary school also go a long way to explain secondary school success.

Nevertheless, there appears to be no doubt that the London Challenge was a very positive contributor to the performance of the London secondary education system in the 2000s. The lessons from this programme have been very clearly set out and should be a primary resource when considering a city-region approach to education in GM.

What is not suggested by the literature is that Greater Manchester should 'just copy London' and that if it did so, it could replicate these results. Partly this is because of the demographic factors just mentioned. Partly this is because one of the key features of the London approach was the development of a programme bespoke to the London context. Partly it is because it is still poorly understood how key enabling factors such as teacher supply and funding are operating in GM, and to what extent national policies are adequately responding to need. As in the London case, an alignment of policies at national and local levels will be needed to achieve the system transformation that is desired.

Appendix 1: Summary of coverage of 'London effect' papers/reports

		CFBT Education Trust (2014)	Greaves et al. (2014)	Burgess (2014)	Blanden et al. (2015)
Years covered:		2000 – 2014	Mid-1990s – 2012	2004 – 2013	1985 – 2013
Research design:		Quantitative & qualitative	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative
Education stages	Early Years	No	No	No	Yes
	Key Stage 2	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Key Stage 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Key Stage 5	Some	Yes	No	No
	Progression to Higher Education	Some	Some	No	No
Scale of analysis	London	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Inner and Outer London	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Borough/local authority	Yes	Some	Some	No
Comparators	England	Yes	Some	No	No
	Rest of England (i.e., excluding London)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Other regions of England	Yes	Yes	Some	No
	Manchester	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Birmingham	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Newcastle	No	No	Yes	No

Variables included	Disadvantage	Yes (FSM eligibility)	Yes (FSM eligibility)	Yes (FSM eligibility)	Yes (FSM & hhld worklessness)
	Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Prior attainment	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Academisation	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Immigration status	No	No	Yes	Yes
	London Challenge, Teach First, and other policy	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Gentrification	Yes	No	No	No
	Economic/cultural opportunities	Yes	No	No	No
	School funding	Yes	No	No	No
	Leadership	Yes	No	No	No
	Teacher vacancy rates	Yes	No	No	No
	Pupil intake	No	Yes	No	No
	School resources	No	Yes	No	No
	School competition	No	Yes	No	No
	Gender	No	No	Yes	No
	Month of birth	No	No	Yes	No
	School characteristics	No	No	No	Yes
	Parental characteristics	No	No	No	Yes