



## Deprivation and Educational Achievement: Exploring Anomalies

**Ruth Leitch, Joanne Hughes**

School of Education, Queen's University Belfast (UK)

[r.leitch@qub.ac.uk](mailto:r.leitch@qub.ac.uk)

### Abstract

Previous studies carried out within the UK and globally have concluded that there is a positive correlation between deprivation and educational underachievement [1], [2], [3]. Many of these studies have utilized large-scale, quantitative methodologies which have produced overall, 'broad brush', macro results. Notwithstanding the above correlation, our analysis of Northern Ireland data suggests that the factors involved in educational achievement within deprived areas may be more complex than is suggested by quantitative analysis. Identifying various examples of significant anomalies and trends which challenge existing assumptions and beliefs and which appear to be counterintuitive, this study aims to understand in-depth patterns and influences on educational performance that go beyond multiple deprivation alone. Although not without its critics [4], the use of social capital as a tool of analysis is adopted to examine its explanatory value in understanding differential educational outcomes in the various case study sites. The study focuses on seven areas of Northern Ireland identified because they illustrate patterns of differential educational achievement which appear to be anomalous and counter-intuitive in relation to the widely-accepted 'low educational achievement is linked with deprivation' equation. Specific key research questions include: (i) Why do young people in these areas with high level deprivation perform well educationally, relative to their counterparts in similar or less deprived areas? (ii) How can differential educational attainment be explained between areas that are very closely matched as regards multiple deprivation and, (iii) What contributory factors may be identified to help explain any differences in educational achievement across the seven case study areas?. This paper reports on qualitative findings arising from year one of the study presenting some in-depth, comparative, interpretation of views and experiences arising from Phase 1 consultation with groups of key community stakeholders across the seven case study areas in relation to the issue of educational achievement and multiple deprivation and how we might account for anomalies.

### References

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