



Social mix and primary school progress

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Background

- **Conflicting findings re social context effect:**
 1. Different measures:
 - Ability, social class, educational attainment, free school meals;
 - Single or multiple measures
 2. Different statistical methods
 3. Longitudinal versus cross-sectional data
 4. Cross-national variation (Opdenakker and Van Damme 2007)

Background

- **Little clarity over processes at play:**
 1. **School practice variables**
 - Higher SES = Cooperation between teachers, task-oriented focus (Opdenakker & Van Damme 2007)
 - Range of extracurricular activities, nature of homework assigned (Lupton 2004)
 2. **Instructional/pedagogical variables**
 - Higher SES = More academic programmes, more engaged and higher challenging classes, more qualified teachers (Dumay & Dupriez 2007)
 - Impact of number of rigorous courses (Rumberger & Palardy 2005)

Background

- **Little clarity over processes at play:**
 3. Behavioural climate
 - Higher SES = More orderly environment (Thrupp 1999)
 - Lower SES = Unpredictable working environment, more pressurised guidance and discipline systems, lower levels of student 'compliance' (Lupton 2004)
 4. Expectations
 - Teachers adjust teaching to composition of classroom and lower expectations (Auwarter & Arugete 2008)
 5. Peer effects
 - Influence of comparative reference-group processes, student-student interactions (Wilkinson 2002)

Focus of research

Is there a contextual effect in Ireland and the other study countries? What processes account for any such effect?

1. Maths and science test scores
2. Primary schools – grade 4 classes
3. Information at student, teacher and school level
4. Multilevel modelling
5. Draws on the insights of the dynamic model and extends analysis of potential peer effects

Research questions

- Do students in working-class schools make less academic progress in mathematics and science than those in mixed or middle-class schools? Does the size of this difference vary across different educational systems?
- Does a teacher's instructional role, for example, in terms of time management, lesson structuring, use of higher order questioning and assessment methods, vary according to the social mix of students in the classroom?
- To what extent does the behaviour of a student's classmates (in terms of misbehaviour, being late for class and being absent from school) influence their academic progress?
- Does the learning environment created at the school level vary according to the social mix of students in the school?

Measurement of social mix

1. Composition of grade 4 classes

- Cultural capital (e.g. no. of books in the home, involvement in cultural activities)
- Economic capital (possession of consumer goods)
- Migration and language background

2. 'External' measure of social mix

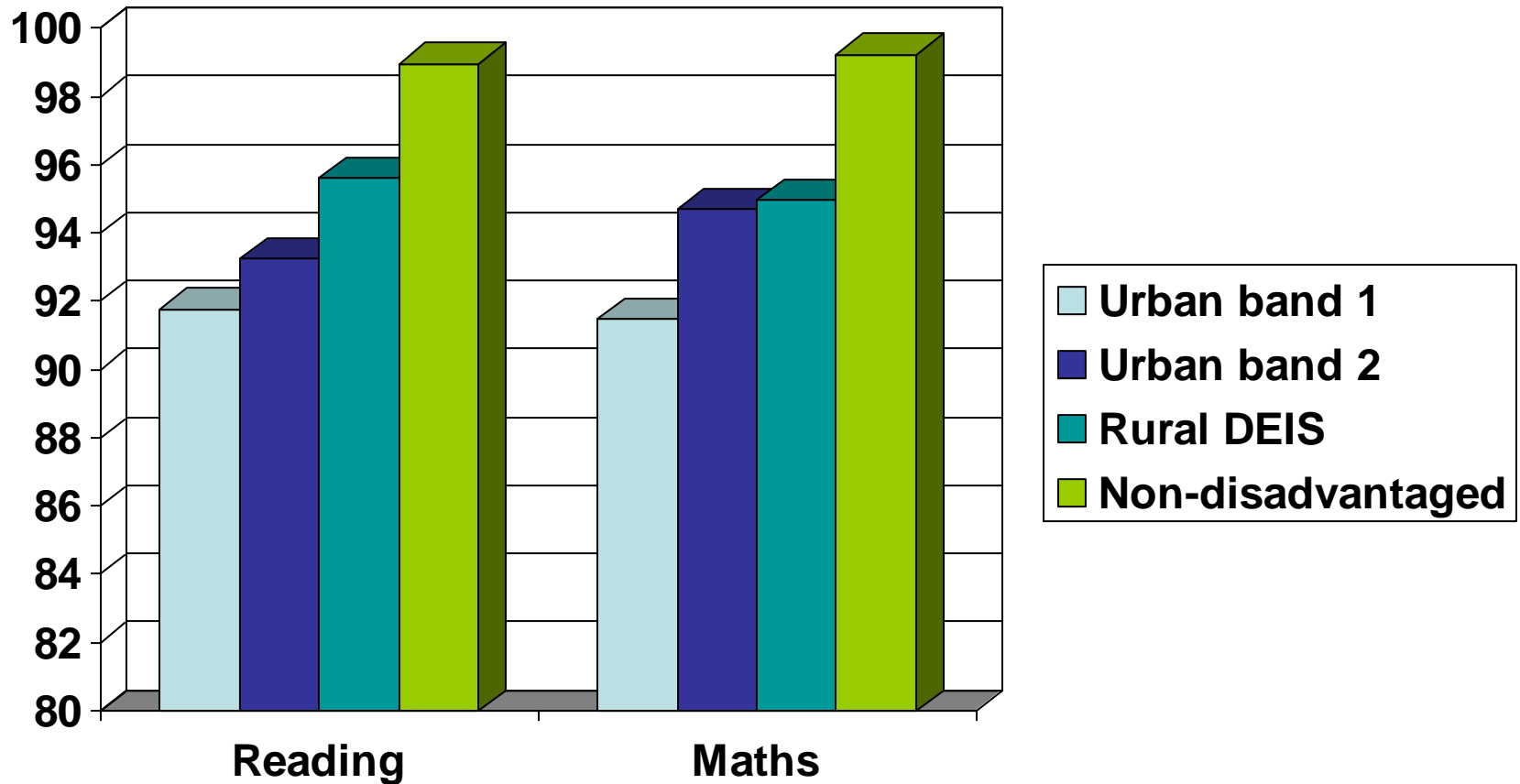
Social Mix in Ireland

- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)
 - Introduced 2005, integrating existing measures
 - Targeting resources towards schools with higher concentrations of disadvantage
 - Schools identified from range of Poverty Indicators (ERIC): including unemployment, local authority housing, free book grant eligibility
 - 674 Primary schools
 - 340 Urban
 - 334 Rural

Social mix (continued)

- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)
 - Main focus:
 - Enhancing literacy and numeracy
 - Increased teacher allocation (particularly Urban Band 1)
 - School planning
 - Access to additional supports – Home-School-Community Liaison Officers, Library resources, ICT

National survey data for Ireland: reading and maths performance



Next steps

- Maths and science tests were carried out in the study countries in September/October 2010
- Sample of 61 schools in Ireland – over-representation of larger schools and DEIS schools
- Maths and science tests at the end of the school year (May); student and teacher questionnaires
- Analysis of the relationship between social mix of the school/class and student performance