

Contextualising Disadvantage Policies

Centre for Teaching and Learning Research

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Dr Louise Gazeley



US
UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX



Braun et al. (2010)
on theorising
school contexts

- Situated
- Professional
- Material
- External



Gazeley et al. (2017)
Overcoming Barriers
research: four 11-18
schools in South East
England

- Town
- Rural
- Coastal
- Urban

School contexts

Thrupp and Lupton (2011, p.290) suggest that different institutional contexts can be located on a continuum that stretches from the “*cumulatively advantaged to the cumulatively disadvantaged.*”

“If you went to different schools... you would get a different picture.”
(Town 3)

“This sort of side of town, this is the sort of family that we get, the poorer kind of families and the ones that haven’t been to university and things.”

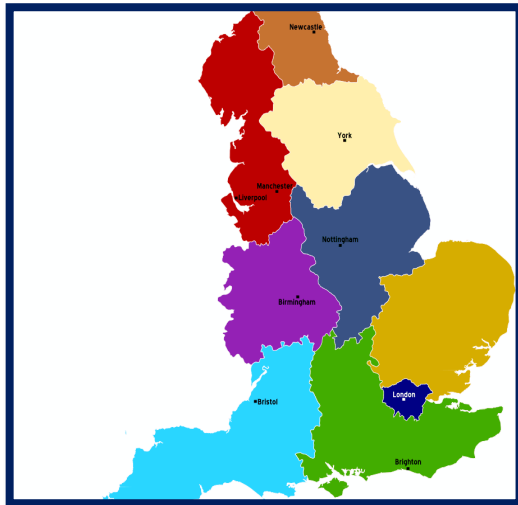
(Town 4)

“We have no looked after children in the sixth form at the moment... and yet there are students lower down in the school... so what barrier is there to coming to our sixth form for those students? And very few Pupil Premium... A handful who have had free school meals in the past five years.” (Rural 3)

Context 1: Situated

“We do have some working class children who don’t stay on and complete the Sixth Form because actually financially that’s really difficult for the families, particularly with the loss of the Education Maintenance Allowance.” (Coastal 2)

“We kind of dip in and out of what we need which is great for us.”
(Town 2)



“We have some ... whose home life is pretty dire, there is no money so going to an open day that’s far away they’re probably not going to go which means that then they may be choosing that university without even having been there.” (Coastal 4)

Context 2: Professional

“I’ve asked her if she can write me a biography and have a picture done so that we can put it... on our [subject] board... to inspire them that you can come from [Town school] and move on further, you can do these things.”

(Town 4)

“So life is a competition if I’ve got more students to take up the number of places available for anything it’s first come first served... That’s the bit I don’t like and I’m in a way playing god ”

(Coastal 4).

“For a long time we were only a building in the community, we weren’t part of the community .”

(Town, 3)



Context 3: Material

"We've never really targeted Pupil Premium students whereas now it's a case of I think we should be looking at supporting those students."
(Town 2)

"Some of your Pupil Premium students may... actually have been on free school meals for a very short period of time when someone in a reasonably affluent job was made redundant and had perhaps 6 months out of work... There will be other children who will go right through their schooling... needing that sort of financial support."
(Coastal 2)

"We have some ... whose home life is pretty dire, there is no money so going to an open day that's far away they're probably not going to go which means that then they may be choosing that university without even having been there." (Coastal 4)

Some of our children we give vouchers for the Food Bank, for example, we've got children who are as hard up as that.

(Coastal 2)

Context 4: External

“You have to be very different for different schools. My last school was... very similar to this, rural, middle class, lovely kids, same sort of Pupil Premium percentage but again we did different things there to we do here... I think it's so individual for each school.” (Rural 2)

“I've also got friends who have just paid for all their children's university up front. Well that thought is not going to enter their head is it that... you come out with £45,000 debt before you've stepped your foot through the door of your first job... It's going to be more of a worry for low income families.” (Town 1)

Summarising thoughts....

- Situated contexts are very specific and there are differences but all have Pupil Premium eligible young people – and others in need
- Material issues – particularly resource distribution are important – but uneven and unequal: for example, no policy or system to ensure that will reach those in most material need – either in most or least materially disadvantaged contexts
- Professional decision-making is influential – and shaped by experience and role
- External policies are influential – including in shaping practices - but little evidence of a joined-up approach
- Considerable space to do more to reach those most likely to derive the greatest benefit

For discussion

What connections can be drawn between the situated, professional, material and external dimensions of context and your own concerns about poverty and its implications for professional practice in educational settings?

