



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES

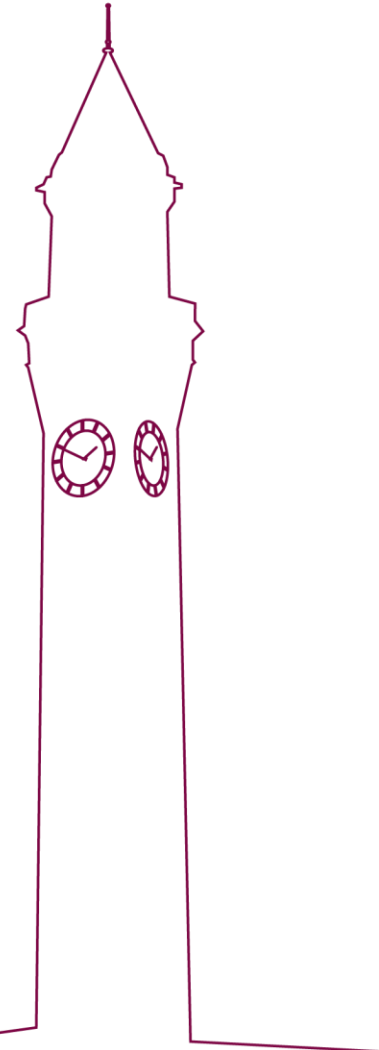
CAGE

Competitive Advantage
in the Global Economy

The importance of education and skills in driving social mobility

Dr Claire Crawford

Policy Briefing at the Social Market Foundation



The outcomes of parents and children are inextricably linked

- For every £100 increase in parental income, children's income at age 30 rises by about £30
- Half explained by differences in education and skills between children from richer and poorer families
 - Source: Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan (2007)
- Suggests improving education and skills of kids from poorer families may be one route to social mobility



Roadmap for today

- Access to elite education institutions . . .
- . . . and the importance of looking beyond these
- Skills that are highly rewarded in the labour market and what we should be doing to generate these

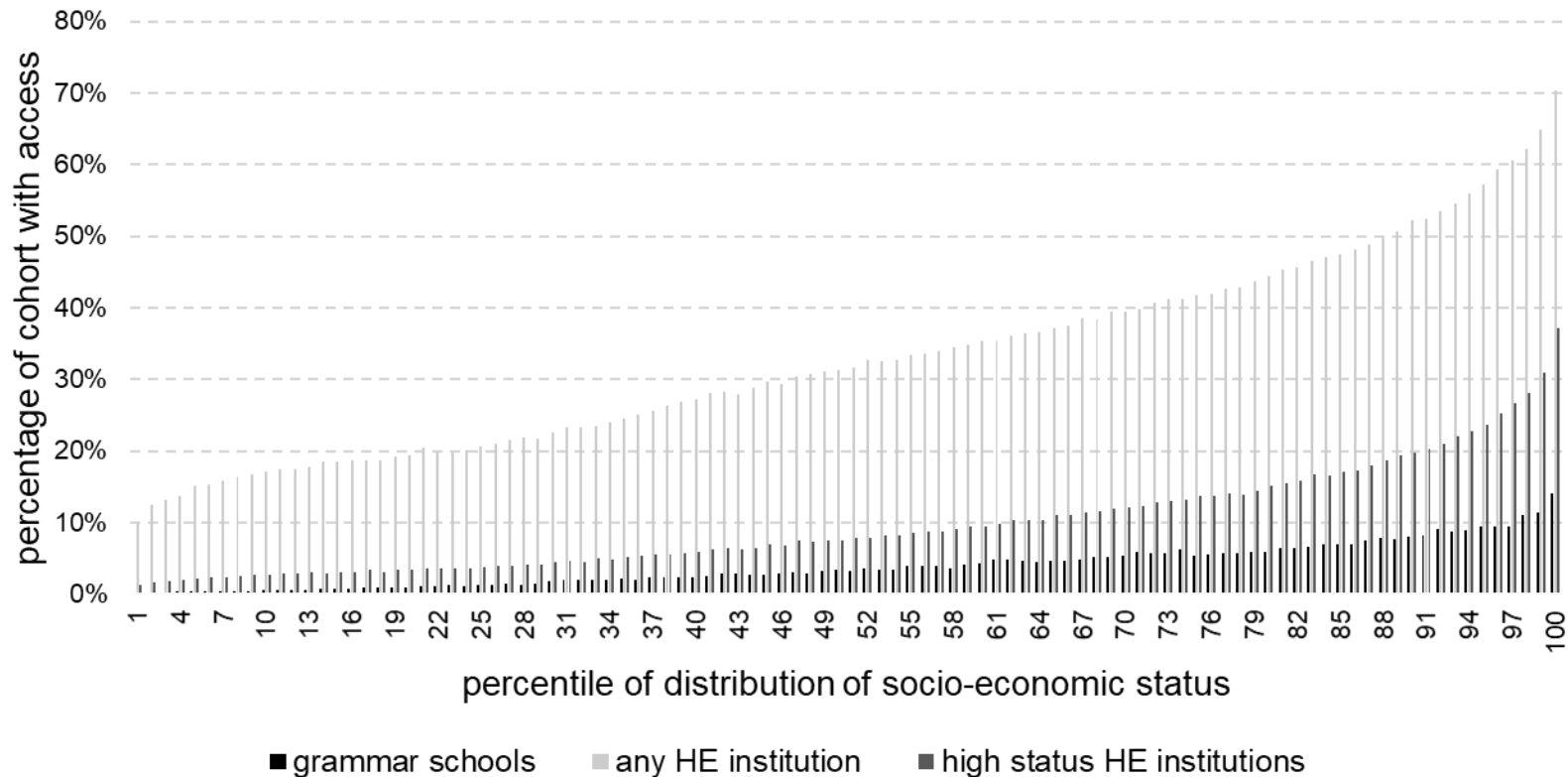


UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES



Much policy discourse focuses on access to elite education institutions



Are such large differences likely to hinder social mobility?

- Yes if there are benefits to accessing such institutions
- For example:
 - Belfield et al. (2018) shows strong average returns to a degree, including significant variation by institution
 - Evidence is less clear cut in terms of grammar schools . . .

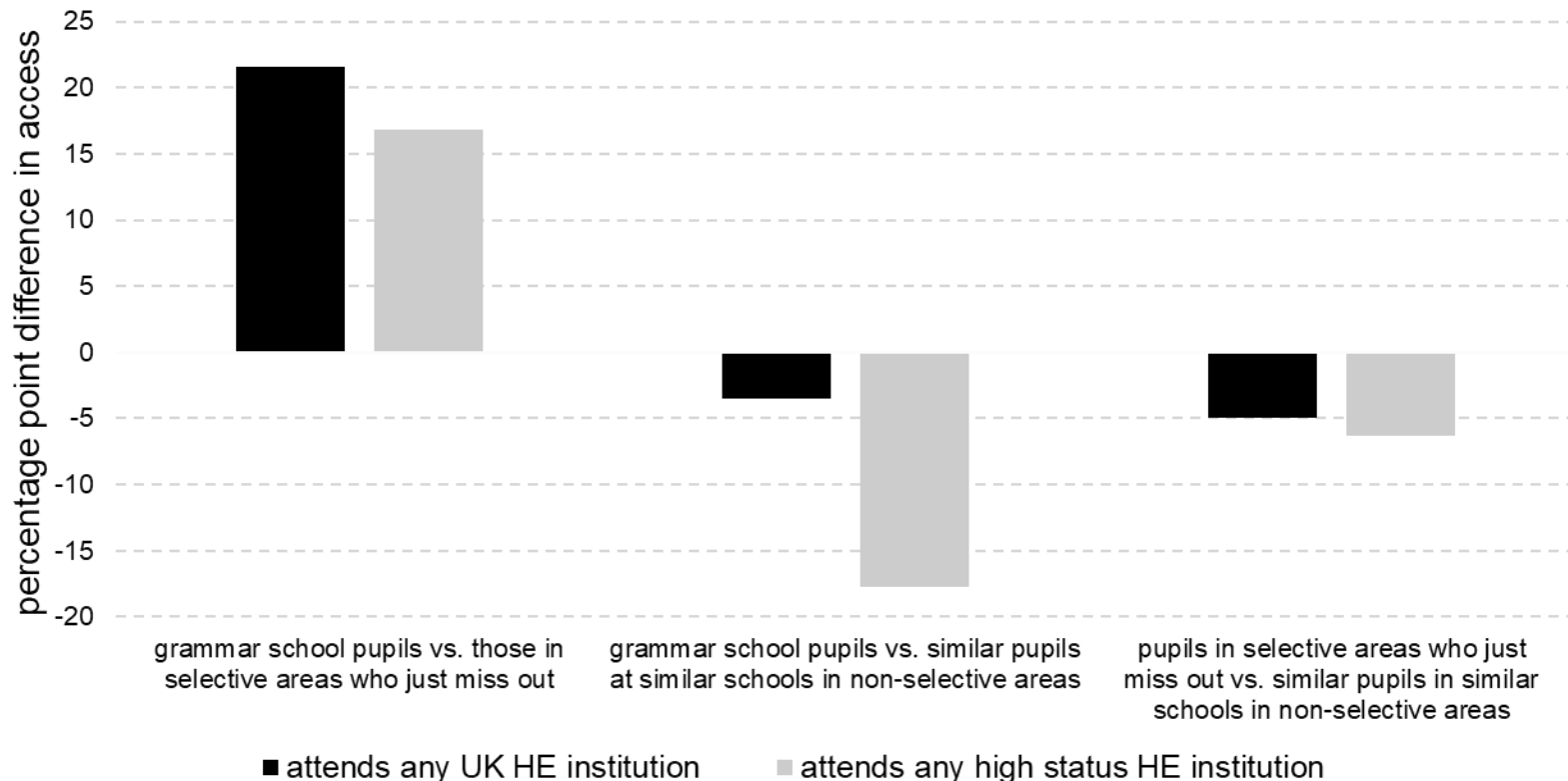


Is selective education good for social mobility?

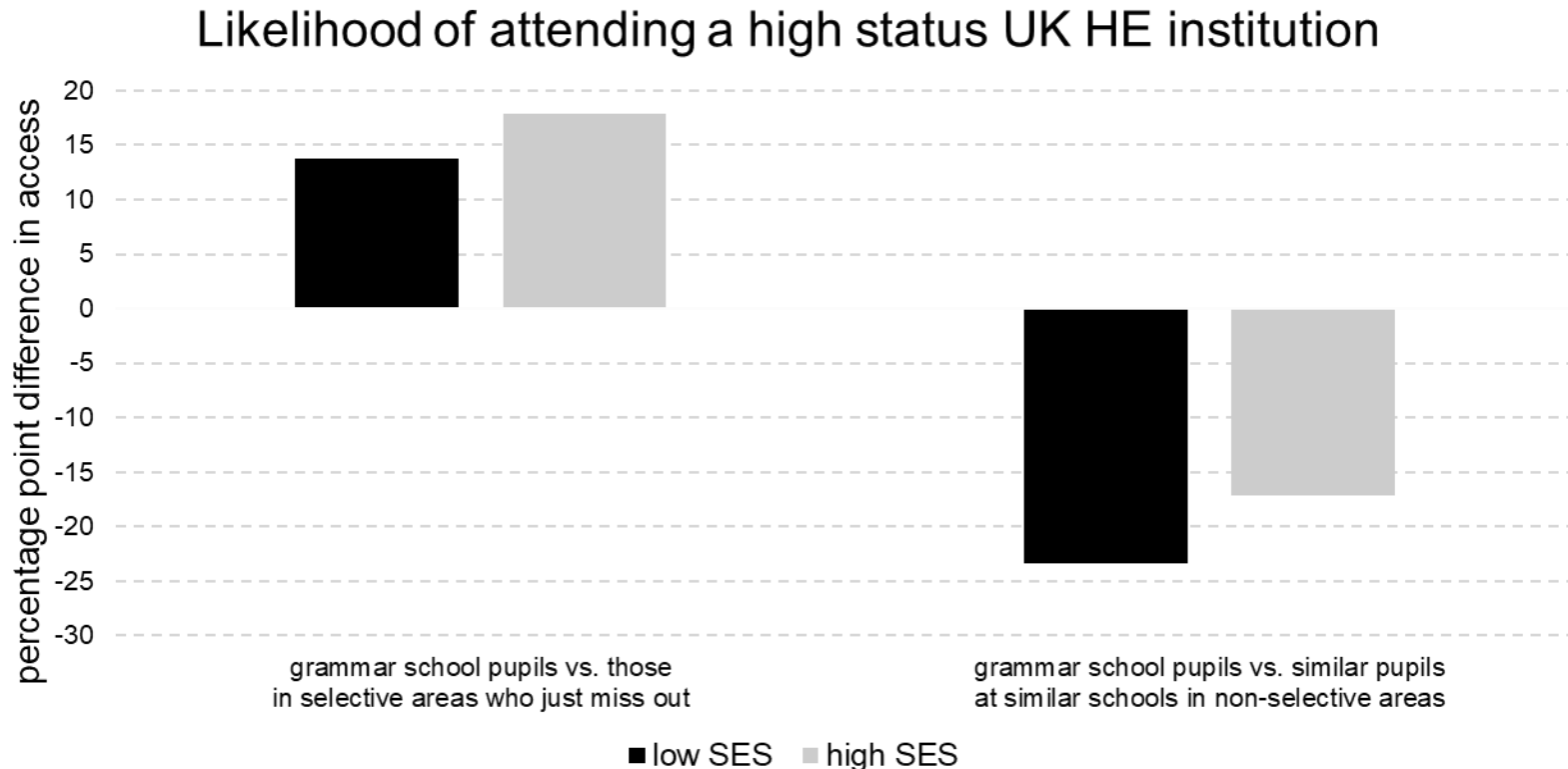
- Burgess, Crawford and Macmillan (2017) investigate
- Compare pupils attending grammar schools in selective areas with:
 - Other pupils in selective areas
 - Pupils at schools with similar intakes in non-selective areas
- Also compare those who just miss out with similar pupils at similar schools in non-selective areas



Is selective education good for social mobility?



Is selective education good for social mobility?



Is selective education good for social mobility?

- Pupils attending grammar schools in selective areas do better than pupils in these areas who just miss out
- But . . .
 - Grammar schools are very socially segregated
 - Low SES students seem to benefit relatively less
 - Pupils in selective areas – whether in grammar schools or not – seem to perform worse than similar pupils in non-selective areas
- Suggests selective education isn't great for mobility



How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Increasing the attainment of pupils from poorer backgrounds, especially at GCSE, should help

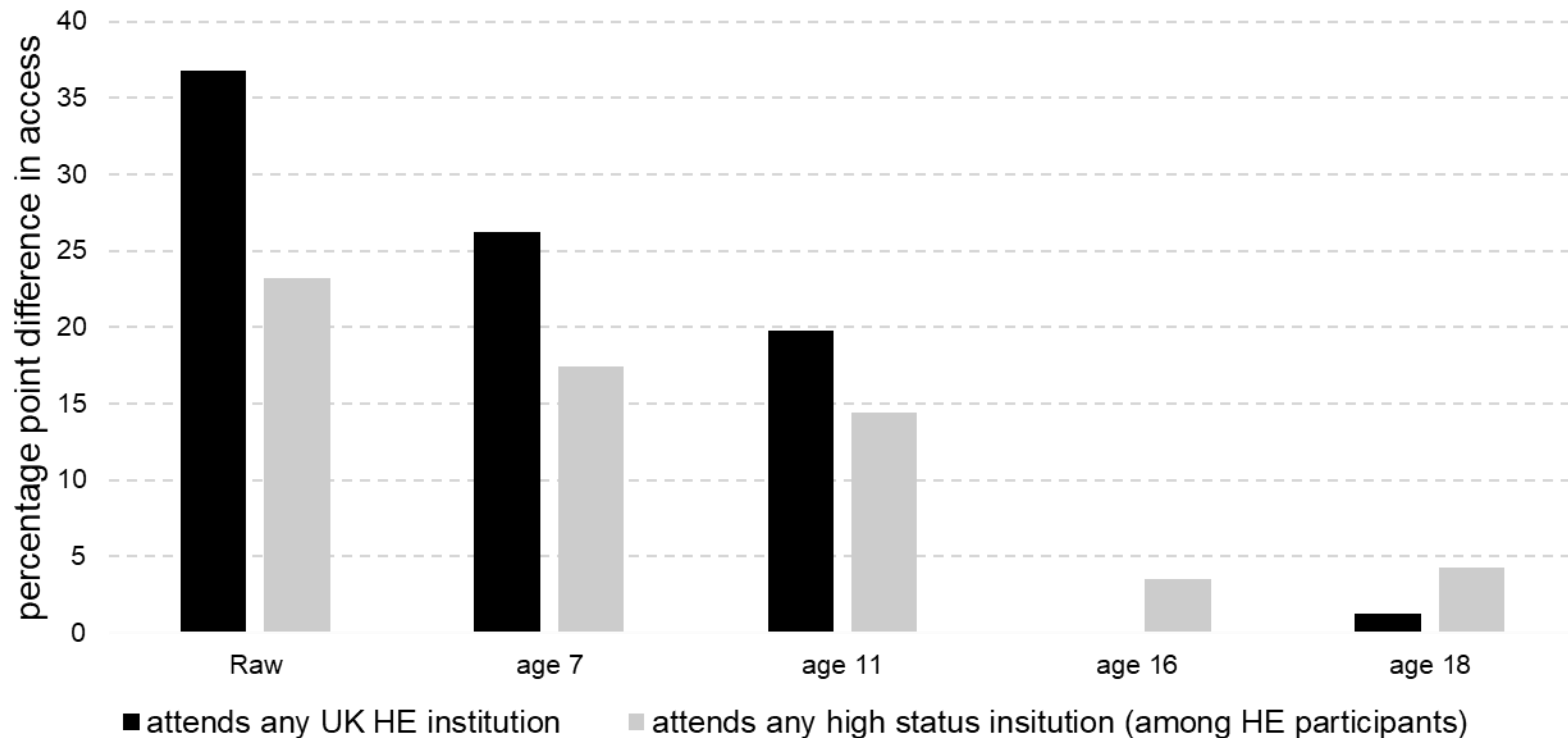


UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES

CAGE
Competitive Advantage
in the Global Economy

How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?



Source: Crawford et al. (2016)



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES

CAGE
Competitive Advantage
in the Global Economy

How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Increasing the attainment of pupils from poorer backgrounds, especially at GCSE, should help
- Know a lot more than we did about how to do this
- The EEF toolkit suggests there are low-cost but effective strategies that help kids to learn more
 - e.g. self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, effective feedback, and language/comprehension interventions
- There are also effective but expensive interventions
 - e.g. early years interventions or one-to-one tuition



How can we ‘widen’ access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- But attainment is not the whole story . . .
- Differences in attainment explain **all** of the gap in participation at any HE institution, but not quite all of the gap in participation at high status institutions
- Suggests more is needed to encourage students from low SES backgrounds to apply to these institutions
 - And applications are the key margin, not offers

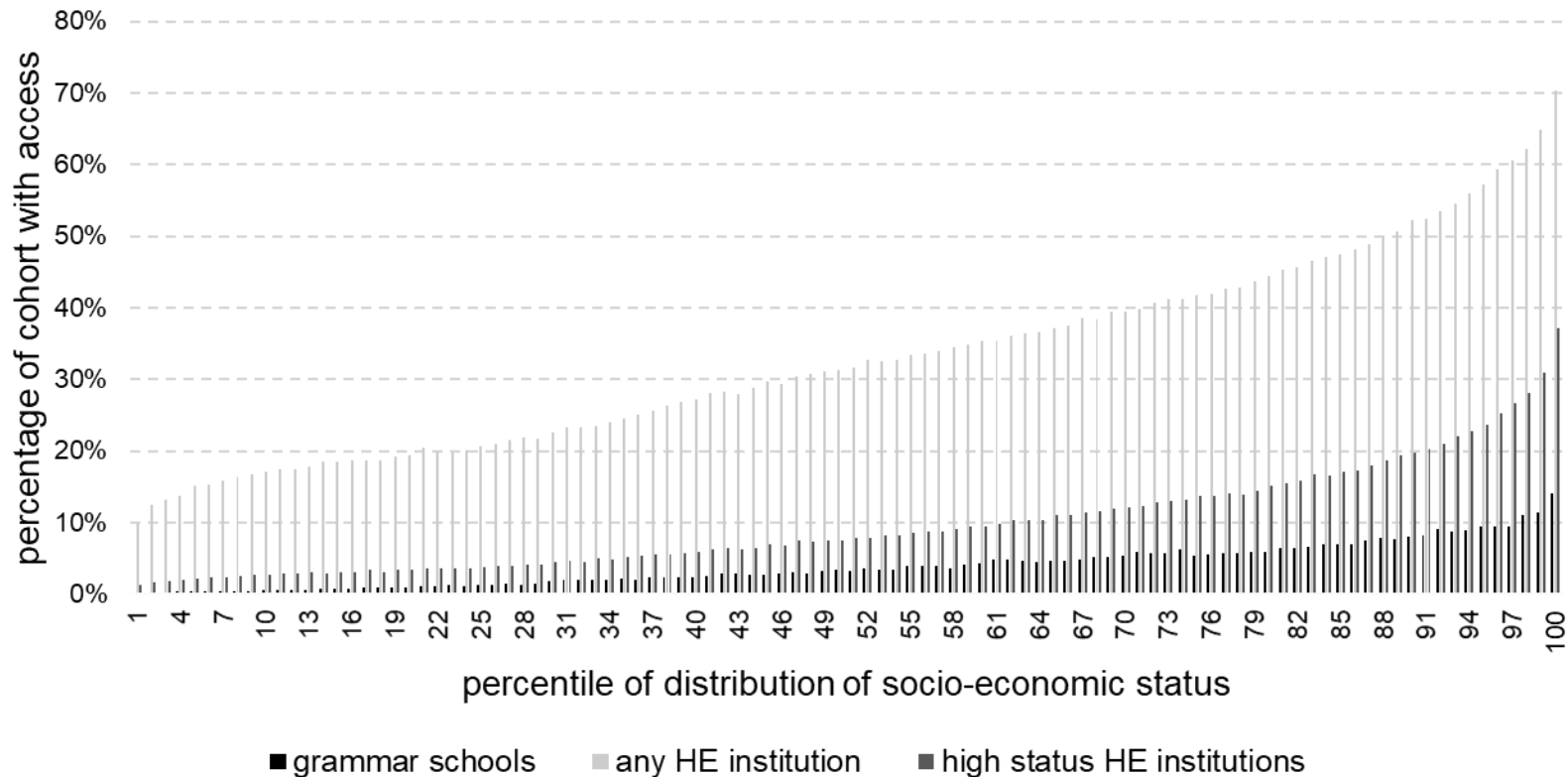


How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Greater use of contextual admissions policies (and greater transparency about existing ones) could help
 - Boliver et al. (2017) highlighted lack of clarity about which factors used to contextualise and how they affect offers
- But it would require a substantial relaxation of entry requirements to make a significant difference
 - Even with offers two grades lower, only around an additional 750 students eligible for free school meals would qualify
- Clearly other innovative solutions required as well . . .



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Most pupils, especially those from low SES backgrounds, don't have the chance to go to a grammar school, and most don't go on to university
- Suggests must focus on rest of education system as well to maximise potential mobility (and productivity)



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Need a system that delivers skills that are in high demand in the labour market (and likely to remain so)
- Basic skills command a premium, suggesting a shortage
 - e.g. Vignoles et al. (2011)
- Our schools don't seem to equip all children with these skills, leaving England lagging behind internationally



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- ❑ Despite being massively more qualified, the basic skills of those aged 16-24 are no better than those aged 55-65
 - Source: Kuczera et al. (2016) [OECD Skills Survey]
- ❑ Suggests shortage of basic skills will become more acute
- ❑ Those from lower SES backgrounds over-represented amongst the group lacking these skills, potentially holding back wages (and hence prospects for mobility)



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Some interventions identified as helping children make good progress by EEF toolkit especially good for literacy
 - e.g. language/comprehension interventions
- Evidence on effective numeracy strategies more mixed
- Most effective seem to be high intensity, high cost
 - e.g. one-to-one support via Every Child Counts



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Also require technical skills to develop new products, technologies and other innovations, and strong management skills to ensure these are disseminated
- FE has an important role to play here, yet has been under-funded relative to HE and schools in recent years
- And plethora of vocational qualifications, not always delivering strong average wage returns, do not provide clear alternative to GCSE/A-level/university pathway



Policy implications?

- ❑ Must get better at evidencing effective practice (e.g. in widening access to HE) and following the evidence
- ❑ Must ensure social mobility debate not driven exclusively by the needs of bright children from poor backgrounds
- ❑ Must ensure all children leave school with basic skills
- ❑ Must do better at communicating vocational routes through FE as alternatives to typical academic pathway
- ❑ Must ensure FE provision is well funded and high quality



Thank you!



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES



References

- Belfield, C., J. Britton, F. Buscha, L. Dearden, M. Dickson, L. van der Erve, L. Sibieta, A. Vignoles, I. Walker and Y. Zhu (2018), *The relative labour market returns to different degrees*, Report to the Department for Education (www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13036).
- Blanden, J., P. Gregg and L. Macmillan (2007), Accounting for intergenerational income persistence: noncognitive skills, ability and education, *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 117, pp. C43-60.
- Boliver, V., C. Crawford, M. Powell & W. Craige (2017) *Admissions in Context: the use of contextual information by leading universities*, Report to The Sutton Trust.
- Burgess, S., C. Crawford and L. Macmillan (2017), *Assessing the role of grammar schools in promoting social mobility*, DoQSS Working Paper No. 17-09, UCL Institute of Education.
- Crawford, C., L. Dearden, J. Micklewright and A. Vignoles (2016), *Family Background and University Success*, Oxford University Press.
- Kuczera, M., S. Field and H. Windisch (2016), *Building skills for all: a review of England*, OECD Skills Survey.
- Vignoles, A., A. De Coulon & O. Marcenaro-Gutierrez (2011), The value of basic skills in the British labor market, *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 63, pp. 27-48.



Spare slides

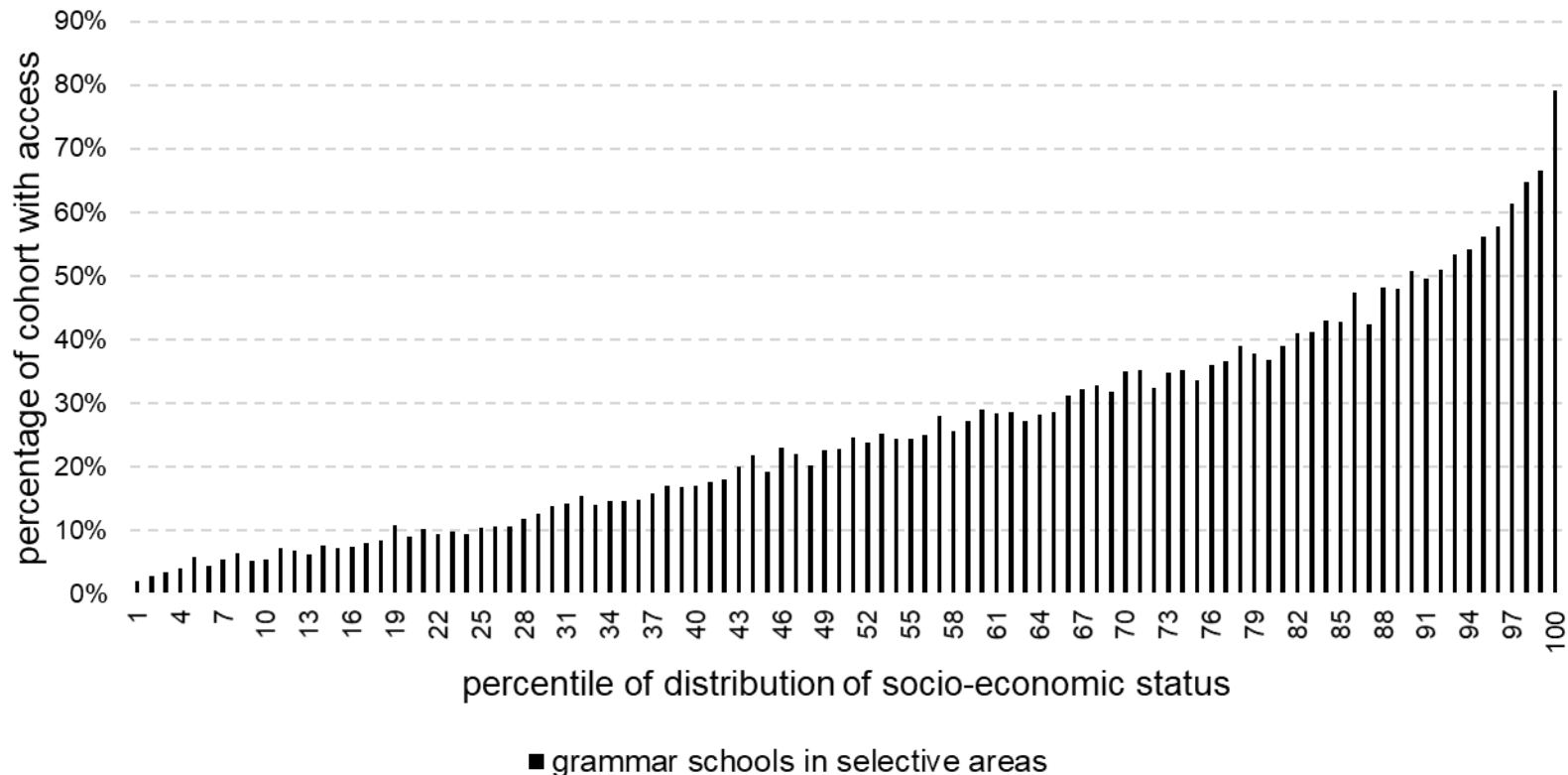


UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES



Much policy discourse focuses on access to elite education institutions



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES

CAGE
Competitive Advantage
in the Global Economy

Is selective education good for social mobility?

