Education gentrification in London: evidence from transport and housing price

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the education gentrification in London. Past research mainly studied education gentrification on a macro level while this paper will visualize the data to find the relationship among number of schools, rental prices, sold prices, number of transportation and median income. By analyzing the data, this paper finds that educational resources will lead to the development of local housing price, income and transportation.

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of gentrification continues to accelerate with the development of urbanization, such as green gentrification, tourist gentrification and education gentrification. These gentrification phenomena not only improve the quality of life of most people, but also have an impact on the lives of other people. The consequences of gentrification, which increase the rate of land use, hastened urban renewal and brought other benefits to residents, such as stimulating business development. However, it also brings some negative side-effects to the poor, including displacement and marginalization.

The specific subject of study in this paper is education gentrification, a subject that is particularly evident in some regions. Its representation is related to social economy. For example, the relationship between the number of schools and house prices affects the distribution of social classes.

2 Literature review

2.1 Gentrification

Gentrification is the displacement of working-class residents of a neighborhood replaced by wealthier professionals [1]. It means that after reconstructing an old area which gathering the poor, the change of the land use increase land value, reflecting in rent and housing price. This change may attract upper middle class to move to this community and replace the local residents, so that most of locals have to move away. And the rest of low-income residents might be discriminated by high-income people who have moved in.

2.2 History of gentrification

‘Gentrification’ is first mentioned in ‘London: Aspects of Change’ by Ruth Glass in 1964. It was originally used to describe the phenomenon that the middle class invaded working-class neighborhoods and changed the morphology of that community area in Britain. Previous research has mostly focused on green gentrification, tourist gentrification, rural gentrification and so on. Since the early 1990s, scholars have indicated less on the causes of gentrification and more on its consequences, including displacement and the effects that it has had upon urban policy [1]. These research are mainly discussing the relationship between the local residents, the middle-class people and also the development of those areas in process of gentrification. Green gentrification indicates the change of property values and the cost of living increasing in a community where the community becomes greener and more attractive to outside investor [2]. Tourist gentrification refers to a movement that the local neighbour transforms because of the influx of tourists, often related to green gentrification and rural gentrification [3]. Rural gentrification defines a phenomenon that working-class residents are displaced by the middle-class incomers in countryside. Due to the gentrification, the living standards have been improved by middle-class incomers and thus simulate the business activities [4]. Also infrastructures have been improved and housing price has increased due to the gentrification.

2.3 History of gentrification

Education gentrification, also named ‘school gentrification’, this word was firstly used by Posey-Maddox in 2014 to describe a new gentrification fact which relates to school choice made by parents from middle class for their children [5]. Another similar concept ‘Jiaoyufication’ was coined by a Chinese scholar Qiyan Wu. It described an education gentrification that middle-class parents strive for high-quality, scarce education resources for their children by purchasing housing approximating to schools [6]. Moreover, purchasing school district housing is also a way of investing for...
parents. When their children are graduated, they can sell houses to people who needs school district housing at prices higher than when they bought the houses. A similar phenomenon is also found in London that the reasons for selection for residential areas are not only for the education of children, but also for an appropriate circle of friends drawn from the same background, reputation and standing among children’s peer group [7]. And for those who could not afford the housing living in the defined catchment district of the desired schools or the fees of boarding schooling, and who were not prepared to move out of London, boarding schooling was a permanent dilemma which demanded the investment of considerable time and emotion energy [7]. Moreover, the process of education gentrification has caused class discrimination which a working class has been excluded by the middle class [7].

2.4 Research gap

In general, previous research typically mainly investigated the causes and effects of education gentrification on the families and local communities. However, studies on education gentrification are lacking methodological studies which use quantification on time and space based on statistical data. In addition, only a few researches address the situations that if housing price is rising quantitatively due to the existence of schools nearby, and how will social classes change in local communities.

3 Research method and analysis

London, the capital city of the United Kingdom, is located in southeastern England, lying astride the River Thames around 50 miles upstream from its estuary on the Sea. The population in Great London was around 9.0 million in 2020 [8]. In general, British society is mainly divided into three socio-economics groups: the upper class, the middle class which contains the majority of the population of Britain and working class. To be more specific, there are seven distinct social classes in the modern British class system: wealthy elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emergent service workers, precariat, or precarious proletaria [9]. For UK households, the median annual disposable income in 2020 was £299,000 [10]. And in London, the 33.4% of total net and gross income before housing costs is the net income of the top 10% of households in London, almost the sum of the income of the lowest 60% of the families combined in 2020 [11].

According to statistical data, there are around 2155 primary schools in London in 2022, including middle deeded primary schools. Most of them are located in South East London (357 schools), West London (319 schools) and North London (308 schools). Moreover, the schools which are commented ‘Outstanding’ are mostly sited in West London (55 schools), South East London (39 schools), and North London (37 schools) [12].

3.1 Development trend of educational resources

After an education reform in the UK in 2016, once again, the UK added an academic evaluation test of the academic quality of primary schools in English reading, English writing and mathematics. Since it is found that examination can strengthen study abilities of pupils and also the teaching quality due to an increase in studying content. In 2019, it was showed that there is a higher proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in London than the average in England. Moreover, In London’s primary schools, the proportion of students from ethnic minorities is also higher than the national average. There are about 73% of pupils belong to an ethnic group in London other than white British, this compares to the national average of 33%. Additionally, the proportion of primary students in London whose English (49.4%) are not their first language is much higher than the national average (21.2%). Like before, London remained the region with the highest percentage of Key Stage 1 which is a part of the National Curriculum for children aged 5 to 7 in Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school and Key Stage 2 which is also a part of curriculum for children aged 7 to 11(71%) pupils reaching the expected standard, comparing to other regions in the country [13]. While performance has improved, still 29% of children who are graduated from primary school are not fully ready for secondary education. Although pupils from low-income families achieved results in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, they also achieved higher scores than similar students in other areas. Similarly, a greater proportion of London pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds obtain the expected standard at Key Stage 2 when compared to similar pupils elsewhere. Furthermore, it is found that Chinese pupils show the highest proportion of those reaching the expected standard. In four categories (Asian, Black, Chinese and Mixed) [8]. Overall, pupils in London achieved higher results, comparing to pupils elsewhere. This result indicates that quality of educational resources in London is relatively higher than educational quality in other regions. Moreover, it also indicates a part of reason why loads of parents choose to move to London and send their children to the top schools there.

3.2 Development trend of housing price

There are four different types of catchment processes used by schools in London: straight line catchment, walking distance catchment, priority admission area and nearest school catchment. School catchment areas have been changing most years, depending on which catchment process each school is using. That means if a child from outside of the school’s catchment area was given a place, the following year’s catchment area will be larger [14]. It is showed that parents needed to pay around £70,000 more than the average local property price to buy school district homes in London in 2018. On average, school district housing in London is 15% higher than the price in other communities. A survey by the Department of Education showed more than 8% of average housing prices are paid if parents choose to live near ‘Outstanding’ primary schools. Housing prices near the top 10 % of primary
schools in London is nearly 40,000 higher than the average price [15].

3.3 Development trend of population

Population in Bethnal Green was around 19308 in 2011, according to census. And it is estimated to increase to 23349 in 2020. The annual population change is around 2.1%. The distribution of males and females is almost equal. The population aged 18 to 64 years is the majority of the total population (71.8%) [16]. Meanwhile, the population of Bethnal Green as a whole, is younger than the national average. The mean age in Tower Hamlets is 30.9 years old while the mean age in England is 39.3 years old [17]. In 2019, the median household income in Tower Hamlets was £30,760 which was slightly more than London (£30,700) but greater than England. While the median household income in Tower hamlets was £27,726. In addition, most of households’ income (74%) distributes in between £15,000 to £60,000 [18].

Moreover, the statistics, drawn from the 2011 UK Census, shows that residents in Tower Hamlets have a higher education level, comparing to England. The proportion of residents who did not have any qualifications or residents who only reached level 1 or level 2 is below the national average (38%<51%). Furthermore, the proportion of residents with a higher education qualification (level 4) in Tower Hamlets is above the national average rate (41%>27.4%). This phenomenon indicates that people who live in Tower Hamlets are better educated than the average England citizen [17].

3.4 Location

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, is a London borough covering much of the traditional East End. The borough lies on the north bank of the River Thames immediately east of the City of London, and includes much of the redeveloped Docklands area.

Bethnal Green is an area in the East End of London 3 miles (4.8 km) northeast of Charing Cross, locating in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Limehouse, the other place to be compared with Bethnal Green, is located in the borough of Tower Hamlets in the East End of. It is quite close to Bethnal Green with only taking five minutes by car [19]. Population in Limehouse is estimated to be around 7817 in 2020. According to statistics, the median household income in Limehouse is £41,669, exceeding it in Bethnal Green (£27,337) [16].

3.5 Average sold price

In 2001, there were 5 primary schools in Bethnal Green while there were 3 primary schools in. After 20 years, the total number of primary schools in Bethnal Green increases to 16. At the same time, the number increases to 4 in Limehouse. From the perspective of average housing price, although the growth trend of it in Bethnal Green is fluctuant, the overall trend of it is gentler than the trend of Limehouse and the trend of the whole area of Tower Hamlets, without much significant sharp points. Similarly, the housing price in Bethnal Green becomes higher than it in Limehouse since 2015. At this year, the number of schools existing in Bethnal Green increases to 10 while the number stays at 3 in Limehouse. In 2020, both of the average sold price and increasing rate of housing price in Bethnal Green are the highest. Besides, there were fewer years in which the increasing rate of housing price is negative in Bethnal Green than those in Limehouse. In conclusion, the number of schools will affect the housing price in that area. What’s more, it will increase at a relatively stable rate [20].

3.6 Population

In comparison, the population in Bethnal Green is always greater than the population in Limehouse from 2001 to 2020. In addition, the trends of growing rate in two areas are similar. Both of them have a sharp point at 2011 [16]. At this time, there are 10 primary schools in Bethnal Green and 3 primary schools in Limehouse. In conclusion, the number of schools is one of the reasons why a district attracts people to live in since population is always greater in an area with more schools.

3.7 Average rental price

According to statistics, the average rental price in Bethnal Green is the highest in 2022, comparing to it in other districts in Tower Hamlets and the whole are of Tower Hamlets. It is one of the only two areas that the average rental price exceeds 700 pounds per week. Moreover, the annual growth rate of the rental price in Bethnal Green (15%) is one of the areas with the rapidest rate among the top 20 most expensive rental areas in London between 2020 and 2021. These two data shows that rental prices in places with more schools are more expensive and come with faster growth.

3.8 Transportation

Comparing to other six districts in Tower Hamlets and three places in the top 20 most expensive rental areas in London, the number of train routes is the greatest in Bethnal Green. There are 57 routes passing through Bethnal Green. This number is far above the total number of traffic routes in other districts. This shows that abundant educational resources will motivate the development of local transportation, leading to improvement of living standards there.

3.9 The distribution of schools

Most of the schools are located next to the interior of the boundary line of Bethnal Green. Meanwhile, there are also some schools locating outside but near the boundary line. In comparison, the locations of most schools are next to the outside of the boundary line in Limehouse. Additionally, whether in Bethnal Green or Limehouse, schools are always constructed near boundary lines.
3.10 The distribution of railway

In terms of the number of public transports, the number of public transport stations in Bethnal Green is slightly greater than the number in Limehouse. Moreover, there are abundant public transport resources around schools in both two places. Besides, there are more railway routes crossing Bethnal Green. Also, the number of railway stations in Bethnal Green is greater than the number in Limehouse. These indicate that educational resources will lead to the development of local transportation.

3.11 Statistical inference

The information presented from shows that; the number of schools in areas with high rental prices is generally greater but not showing an increasing trend. The number of schools is mostly above 15 In districts with high rents. Besides, there are usually more schools in places with higher household median income but also not representing an increasing trend [21]. For every additional school, the median income increases by 398 pounds. Similarly the number of train routes is in proportion to the rental price, increasing in constant rate. In specific, average rental price increases by 4.72 pounds for every additional train route. Besides, the relationship between rental price and number of schools and the relationship between median income and train routes are similar, which are proportional but relatively gentle. If the number of schools increase by one, rental price will increase by 0.762 pounds. Likewise, median income increases by 51 pounds for every additional train routes.

4 Conclusion

This essay mainly discussed the local economic impact generated by education gentrification. Through collecting the information of the number of schools, rental prices, sold prices, number of transportation and median income, this paper visualizes the data to find the relationship among them. The research showed that, in general, average rental prices and its annual growth rate in places with more schools are higher than those in areas with fewer schools. Moreover, the number of schools will drive housing prices in those areas to increase at a relatively stable rate. The second major finding was that there are more transportation facilities, for example, public transportation and railways, in places with a greater number of schools than places with fewer schools. Additionally, it is found that the relationship between median income and number of schools and the relationship between rental price and number of train routes are similar, both representing in proportional relationship and increasing at a constant rate. To sum up, educational resources will lead to the development of local housing price, income and transportation.

5 Discussion

This work contributes to existing knowledge of education gentrification by providing results based on statistical data. In addition, this study addresses the quantitative and spatial relationship between housing price and number of schools, which is rarely mentioned before. However, this study was not broad enough in terms of the number of regions selected. The number of control group could be increased if more data from other areas were available, and thus the results of this research could be more precise. Besides, this work can be improved if using data from long time series. This research can provide several education-related suggestions for policy decision makers. Typically, areas with a high distribution of schools have higher housing prices than other areas. Therefore, policy decision makers can provide housing subsidies to families in need of educational resources in that local district.

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