

# A LEVEL/AS SOCIOLOGY (AQA)

## EDUCATION METHODS IN CONTEXT

### REVISION PACK

by

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## HOW TO USE THESE REVISION NOTES

### Structure:

This pack contains three sets of revision notes for each of Families and Households and Research Methods. In each case, the first is a complete set of revision notes including Exam Guidance. The second set is a reduced version of the full notes and the third set is reduced even further.

The full set is meant to provide enough material to gain a top grade at A level (and at AS). The second set should be sufficient to gain a sound A level grade or a top grade at AS. The third level of notes are more basic and summaristic but are enough to obtain a sound grade at AS.

### How to revise: the ever reducing revision notes

The other reason for presenting these notes in this way is that it reflects the usual way in which knowledge revision works. It is all about **MEMORY REINFORCEMENT THROUGH REPETITION**. There is a lot of evidence to show that simply reading through notes or textbooks is not that effective. You may notice it yourself when you've simply read something and it just doesn't seem to stick in your mind. Even re-reading – though helpful – does not have much more effect. The key thing it works with what is written. There's a number of things you can do here, you can underline, highlight, use different colours etc on your revision notes. But if you really want to drive the knowledge home, here's probably the most effective technique.

### REVISION NOTE REDUCTION

This is where the revision note reduction process is very helpful. It means that as you memorise and write out from memory the material you want to remember, you reduce your revision notes to a smaller and smaller amount. If you have kept each 'level' of revision note, you will be able to use the reduced version on your revisit.

#### The process goes something like this:

- Write out your revision notes
- Read through them/a section of them
- Cover them up and write (or speed scribble) them out from memory
- Check for any omissions
- Repeat process using a reduced version of your notes
- Repeat again

Return to the notes a day/week/month later

# SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: FULL EDUCATION NOTES

## 1. EDUCATION POLICY IN BRITAIN

### What do you need to know about this section?

You need to have a sound knowledge of the main educational policy developments in the UK. Educational policy refers to all the plans, resourcing, laws etc brought in by different governments that affect schools.

### FIVE major policy issues

#### 1 Selection and choice

#### 2 Inequality/Equality

#### 3 Comprehensivisation

#### 4 Marketisation and Privatisation

#### 5 Who should influence education policies?

#### 1 Selection and Choice

What sort of schools should exist? Should there be different kinds of local schools? How should schools select pupils? Should it be open entry or some form of entry test? Should parents have any say in which school their children go to? Should the state (local and/or central government) decide who goes to which school?

#### 2 Inequality/Equality

Should there be equality of educational opportunity? If so, how can it be achieved in practice? Do policies ensure equality regardless of class, gender and ethnicity - or do policies make such inequalities worse?

#### 3 Comprehensivisation

This is where all pupils attend their local school. These local schools are run by locally elected councils. Is this the best way to organise education?

#### 4 Marketisation and Privatisation

Should state education be run like a 'market'? Should schools be like competing businesses? Who should run state-funded education? Should it be central government, local councils or private businesses?

#### 5 Who should influence education policies?

Who should decide what kind of schools there are and what they should teach? Teachers, parents, central government, local councils, businesses, school governors/trustees?

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

As you work through the history of educational policies, keep a focus on these five themes. Look to see how these themes weave through the policies. A good question to ask is 'how does a particular policy affect equality of opportunity, marketisation, selection etc'. **Why?** Because you can get questions on these themes - particularly policies and inequality or marketisation and privatisation policies. You will get more marks by linking policies to whichever of these five issues is relevant to the question. This is better than just telling the examiner what the policies are.

### Education policies Pre-1944

Basic education for all was only provided by the state from the 19th century—and then only up to the age of 13. Most working-class children only received this very basic education. This was all that was needed for working in factories and mines. Middle-class children, boys in particular, could afford to attend private schools.

### **1944 onwards**

Based on the idea of meritocracy (individuals should achieve their status by their own abilities and efforts, rather than getting it from their social class of birth), the 1944 Education Act brought in the tri-partite system of post-11 education (in reality, it was bi-partite with few technical schools being built).

There were two types of schools funded by the state and run by local councils (Local Education Authorities - LEAs). Which type a pupil attended was determined by whether they passed an 11+ exam.

**Grammar schools** gave an academic education to those who passed the 11+ - mainly middle-class pupils.

**Secondary modern school** had a non-academic curriculum which led to manual work jobs - mainly attended by working-class pupils.

About 20% of pupils attended grammar schools .

### **Criticisms of the grammar/secondary modern school system**

- 11+ culturally biased towards white, middle class pupils
- Intelligence' is impossible to measure objectively (as claimed for the 11+)
- Idea of 'academic', 'technical' and 'practical' intelligences is very dubious
- Wealthy parents could still obtain an academic education for their children even if they had failed the 11+ exam.
- Although they were supposed to be 'equal but different', in reality secondary moderns were seen as 'second class schools'.

#### **EXAMINER GUIDANCE**

Think how this education system links to issues of selection (11+), control (governments) and inequality of opportunity (middle-class did best).

You can also link it to sociological theories of education. Marxists would claim that it effectively reproduced inequality (middle-class children were favoured by the kind of questions asked in the 11+) and legitimated it - by claiming everyone took the same exam and therefore had an equal chance of passing.

### **Comprehensive education 1960s onwards**

The tri- (or bi-) partite system was established throughout Britain except in Scotland. It was largely replaced by comprehensive education from the mid-1960s in most areas. However, not every area went comprehensive and about 160 grammar schools and 500 secondary modern schools continued to exist.

- Most of the pressure for comprehensives came from Labour governments which saw that the tripartite system just reproduced educational and social inequalities.
- All pupils in an area would attend the same school and have the same educational opportunities.
- There would be no selection or different types of schools/education.
- Pupils would have more opportunities to gain qualifications.

### **Criticisms of comprehensive education**

- The New Right claimed that comprehensives have resulted in the 'dumbing down' of educational provision, with academically stronger students being 'held back'.
- Inequality continued within comprehensive schools through setting and streaming - 'the tri-partite system under one roof'.

#### **EXAMINER GUIDANCE**

Think how the comprehensive education system links to issues of selection (none), control (governments) and inequality of opportunity (middle-class still did best).

You can also link it to sociological theories of education. Functionalists would claim that it aimed to integrate all social classes and groups. However, research shows that actual integration was limited. Functionalists may also claim it was more meritocratic as late developers were given more opportunities

## Education policies under Conservative governments 1979-97

### Main aims

Conservative governments saw education as failing to provide a sufficiently skilled workforce. Britain's lack of industrial competitiveness was partly blamed on schools. They also believed that schools were failing pupils and needed to raise the standard of education.

Therefore, Conservative education policy wanted to

- Raise standards by making schools compete with each other – creating an 'education market'
- Increase parental choice
- Establish greater government control over what was taught in schools
- Reduce the influence of Local Education Authorities (LEAs)
- Introduce more vocational education

### Marketisation and 'parentocracy'

These governments were strongly influenced by neoliberal and New Right thinkers. These claimed that state control produced lower standards and inefficiency. The answer they claimed, was to introduce market forces into state education. School should operate like businesses, focusing on their customers (parents and pupils) and competing with each other to drive up standards.

Central to this is the introduction of 'parentocracy' - parent power in state education.

### Policies

At first, vocational education, LMS, greater competitiveness etc was introduced fairly slowly. The great change took place in 1988 – the biggest shift in education policy since 1944.

### The 1988 Education Reform Act

- This introduced a National Curriculum in England and Wales.
- The Act also brought in a system of national assessment primarily through SATs (Standardised Assessment Tests) at 7, 11, 14 and 16.
- Schools could 'opt out' of their LEA and become Grant Maintained Schools was created in this Act.
- Open enrolment gave parents the right to choose which school their children attended.
- Formula funding of schools meant that the funding a school received was based on the number of pupils it attracted.

### Other policies:

- Further Education Colleges were made independent of LEA control
- School Curriculum and Assessment Authority established to oversee the examination system
- The government could take over the running of failing schools.
- Schools required by law to publish their exam results and truancy rates.
- Regular inspection of schools by OFSTED with results made public.
- Schools allowed to specialise in technology, science etc.
- More vocational education.
- Business sponsorship of schools

### Key marketisation policies

**Formula funding:** the money schools receive from the government is directly linked to how many pupils the school attracts. More successful schools (in parents eyes) get more pupils, therefore more money, likely to attract more pupils, and so on. Formula funding is a great incentive to schools to work hard to get top results.

**Parental choice:** Parents did not have to send their children to the local school - they could (and still can) apply to other schools. So schools do not have a ready supply of local pupils, they have to work hard to attract them.

**League tables:** publishing exam results, truancy rates etc means that parents have the information necessary for them to choose the school for their children. This also links to a National Curriculum and a national system of regular testing. This information feeds into parental decision-

### **The impact of marketisation policies**

- It is claimed that they have increased inequality as middle-class parents are better placed to use their cultural capital to take advantage of parental choice.
- League tables are also misleading and open to manipulation. IN their basic form they merely reflected the social intake of the school.
- IPPR research 2012 - has increased social segregation.
- High achieving schools can do 'cream-skimming' - over-subscribed so can be selective and take most able pupils.
- Formula funding also creates sink schools that have to take more less able pupils just to survive financially.
- Parentocracy is a myth. It may be more true for middle-class parents - they can afford to move nearer to successful schools and use their cultural capital to 'work the system'. Even then, high-achieving schools are increasingly able to manipulate their admissions policies to control who they admit - reducing genuine 'parent power'.
- By 1996 90% of secondary schools were still run by local education authorities.

### **Education policies under Labour governments 1997-2010**

- New Labour argued that education is the key to economic success - a modern global market means individuals to continually develop and change their skills.
- Marketisation was needed to promote diversity and choice.
- It has also identified the need for all pupils to have good basic skills in numeracy and literacy.
- However, they were also concerned that some groups were failing in education – with negative effects for society, communities and individuals.

So Labour governments since 1997 kept some major elements of Conservative policies, particularly those that encouraged parental choice and competition between schools. But it also placed an emphasis on reducing inequality.

#### **EXAMINER GUIDANCE**

Think how an education market links to issues of selection (allegedly parental - but is it really?), control (central rather than local government) and equality of opportunity (middle-class parents can manipulate the system; working-class children are more likely to end up in a poor school).

How does marketisation link to neoliberal thought (the market will create higher standards)? Marxists see marketisation as just another way reproduce and legitimate social inequality.

### **Unchanged Conservative policies**

- League tables
- School inspections
- Vocational education
- Powers to take over failing schools
- National Curriculum
- Testing
- Local Management of Schools
- Formula funding
- Student loans rather than grants

### **New policies**

- Reducing primary class sizes to under 30
- Literacy and numeracy hours in all primary schools
- After-school homework clubs and Easter revision schools
- Social exclusion units to help the most deprived pupils
- Education Action Zones and Aimhigher projects with additional resources
- Educational Maintenance Allowances(EMA) to encourage students to stay on post-16.
- Parents in areas with grammar schools could hold a vote to see change the school to a comprehensive.
- Specialist school status to promote diversity.
- City Academies - a fresh start for inner-city schools.

### Evaluation of Labour policies

- Benn calls Labour's policies paradoxical. Some promote inequality through the education market, others try to reduce it eg EMA's for school pupils but tuition fees for university students.
- Marxists have claimed that there is little difference between the policies of Labour and Conservative governments. By retaining the 'education market' and through policies like student fees, Labour is perpetuating class inequalities in education. The emphasis on basic skills and vocational training is also seen as meeting the needs of capitalism.
- They failed to remove the charitable status of private schools or abolish grammar schools.
- There is still a strong focus on standards, testing and controlling what is learned in schools etc. rather than developing individual abilities.
- However, Labour governments substantially increased education spending.

### Conservative-led policies 2010-15 Privatisation

- The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government in 2010.
- It promised to lift the 'dead hand of the state' from education.
- A series of policies went beyond the marketisation introduced by Conservative governments from the 1980s and maintained with some changes by New Labour up to 2010.
- The government initiated the privatisation of many aspects of state education, especially post-11 schooling.

### Neoliberalism

- Neoliberals and the New Right have been critical of the role of the state in providing services of virtually all kinds. They argue that the state is more bureaucratic, inefficient and ineffective than privately run services.
- They argue that competition creates excellence so the only way to raise educational standards is through direct competition.
- Before 2010, this informed the development of an education market.
- After 2010, the move was towards privatisation of education.

### Marketisation and privatisation

- **Marketisation:** up to 2010 the focus of policy had largely been on creating an 'internal education market'. State schools competed with each other for business i.e. pupils. However, schools stayed mainly under local council control.
- **Privatisation:** the state no longer provides the actual education. It gives this role to private companies, charities etc. Schools, advisory services, assessment etc are contracted out. The state then monitors and regulates how these contracts work in practice. This opens up an 'external education market'.
- **Different or is one an extension of the other?** Both are a form of market. However, passing state-owned assets (e.g. schools) to private hands is a major difference.

### Policies

**Academies:** Labour had created City Academies to replace failing inner-city schools. Academisation is the full-scale process of encouraging schools to leave local council control and be funded directly from central government. By 2015 about 70% of secondary schools had become academies. Many were operated by 'academy chains', effectively groups of schools run by a central, private organisation.

Some chains have been criticised for using public funds to pay highly paid management or for forcing schools to purchase their educational services/materials.

**Free Schools:** Charter schools in the USA and free Schools in Sweden have been the model for free schools in the UK. Parents, faith groups, charities, businesses can set up a free school - a new school, using state funding. By 2014 there were 331 such schools. Supporters of free schools argue they raise standards. However, a number have been branded 'inadequate' and closed or placed in special measures following Ofsted inspections.

Allen (2010) claims that they primarily benefit the middle-class parents who use state funding to set them up. There is also evidence they take disproportionately fewer pupils on FSM.

**Pupil Premium:** This is extra money directed at pupils from disadvantaged families. However, the previous government's more highly funded AimHigher programme was ended by the Coalition government. Also the money is not ringfenced for particular pupils and can be spent by a school on anything.

**Public spending cuts:** As part of the Coalition government's austerity campaign, education spending has fallen for most schools. For example, EMA's were abolished and university tuition fees of up to £9000 introduced.

**Changes to what schools teach:** claiming that standards had slipped, the Coalition government made efforts to make exams more difficult e.g. reducing or removing modular exams and decoupling AS and A levels.

**Out-sourcing education services:** School building is largely a government-private capital funded programme. Prison education, supply teachers, libraries, teacher's pensions, Ofsted inspections etc are all out-sourced i.e. provided by private companies. In some cases these companies have been set up by former senior public sector executives, headteachers etc who can use 'insider knowledge' to win contracts. The dividing line between public and private sectors is now very blurred in education services.

**Globalisation of UK state education:** some services are provided by global corporations. In return, UK education companies operate in the global education market.

#### **Evaluation: How do different theories see privatisation?**

- Neoliberals welcome these developments. They are removing the dead hand of the state, freeing schools to succeed.
- Ball disagrees. He sees state education as now being a 'commodity' - schools, services are there to be bought and sold like any other goods or services. Hall argues that public services have been handed over to private companies for nothing with no guarantees of improved outcomes.
- Ball also argues there is hardly a state education 'system' now - instead it is 'fragmented centralisation'. The wide range of different types of schools, different admissions procedures, lack of regional planning of educational provision, generates greater inequality. At the same time, the decline of local council's involvement in education means that more power of what is taught, how it is taught, the kind of schools it is taught in, is placed in the hands of the minister of state for education.

#### **What is compensatory education?**

- 'Compensatory education' is the idea that the educational weaknesses of pupils from certain social groups can be overcome by targeted educational assistance. Governments have periodically introduced programmes to raise the educational performance of these groups, usually to prevent them from disengaging from mainstream society.
- The basis for such policy approaches tends to be the claim that some groups - the poor, the working class, the 'underclass', ethnic minorities - perform worse in schools because of some deficiencies in their material or cultural background. These family and community weaknesses can be compensated for by special educational initiatives.
- Sometimes this is seen in terms of material deficiency - lack of privacy for study, insufficient money for personal educational resources, inadequate diet, overcrowding and poor quality housing.
- Other sociologists have stressed that the most important element in home/community background is cultural deprivation. This is the notion that groups at the bottom of the social ladder typically hold cultural values that do not emphasise education. Children lack encouragement and mental stimulation and are fatalistic about their chances in life.

#### **Examples of compensatory education programmes.**

- Operation Headstart was part of the US governments' 'war on poverty' in the late 1960s. Additional resources were channelled into schools in low-income areas to try to make up for an alleged lack of material and cultural stimulation.
- Labour governments 1997-2010 introduced Education Action Zones, AimHigher programmes and EMA's to help disadvantaged pupils.
- These were ended by the Coalition government which introduced the Pupil Premium for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.



### Private education

- About 7% of pupils go to private, independent school, in post-16 education this rises to 18% of male and 15% of female students.
- A higher proportion of privately educated students go into higher education (especially to Oxbridge) than those from the state sector.
- Private education is not part of the state education sector and is financed from the fees paid by the parents of those attending.
- Independent schools, especially the old, established public schools like Eton, Harrow and Winchester, often have their own sources of income from land and investments from past pupils.
- These schools also often have charitable status that enables them to reduce their tax burden.
- Having a private education, particularly at a prestigious public school, is usually seen as great advantage in getting into politics, the armed services, the civil service and other positions of power in Britain. Most Cabinet Ministers in the Coalition government and some in the current were educated at private schools.

#### Evaluation: How do different theories see these?

- The **New Right** claims that private education exists because of the free market - individuals and families have the right to spend their money as they wish. This is supported by evidence that most parents who send their children to private schools do so because they believe that this will improve their children's chance of obtaining better qualifications.
- **Marxists** view private education, as maintaining divisions in society and ensure that class inequalities are reproduced.
- Marxists also see compensatory education as limited and completely outweighed by the impact of the education market. It is a figleaf concealing vast social inequalities.

## 2 THEORIES OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

### WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

You need to have a clear understanding of the main sociological theories of education, their central claims, concepts, strengths and weaknesses. Each of functionalist and Marxist approaches can come up as a 'mini-essay question on its own. You also need to understand the contribution of feminism, postmodernism, neoliberalism and the New Right. Furthermore, you can make reference to any of these theories (where relevant) when answering other questions about differential educational attainment, equality of educational opportunity and education policy.

### Key Issues/Questions

- What issues have sociological theories of education examined?
- What functions does education perform for society or for particular groups in society?
- How does education serve the needs of society?
- How far does education create equal opportunities and equality in educational outcomes?

### Theories of the role of education:

- Functionalism
- Neoliberalism and New Right
- Marxism

### FUNCTIONALIST APPROCHES TO EDUCATION

#### Key concerns and ideas:

- Functionalists are mainly interested in the (positive) functions education performs for society and in particular, for the economy.
- For society to survive, it needs to be united. Members of society need to share the same norms, beliefs, aims etc otherwise the social group would disintegrate.
- Education plays an important role in teaching individuals the norms and rules of society.
- Education also carries out a very important function for the economic sub-system by allocating individuals into work roles that match their abilities.

## **Durkheim**

### **Linking individuals and society: creating social solidarity**

Education performs the function of making individuals feel they are members of a larger social group. Linking the individual to society in schools can be achieved through teaching the history of their society, learning its political structures, civics and citizenship lessons etc.

### **Learning social values**

Unlike the family, the school is a miniature version of society. Schools teach pupils how to work with others in a social context.

### **Specialist work skills**

Schools also teach specific work skills of the kind required by society.

## **Parsons**

### **Learning 'universalistic values'**

Within the family, people are treated as individuals, allowances are made for behaviour etc. A society cannot operate in this way, there have to be universal values and rules which can be applied equally to everyone.

The school is the first place an individual is judged by universalistic values and the first place where they are taught. It is a 'bridge' between family (where child is treated individually) and society (where you are judged by the same rules as others). School is a secondary socialising agency.

### **Meritocracy**

In society, a person is judged on their own merits and their own efforts - meritocratically. Status is achieved not ascribed. School is based on this principle and pupils have their abilities and talents tested in schools so that they can be channelled into roles appropriate to their abilities and training.

## **Davis and Moore: role allocation function**

Davis and Moore explain the role allocation function of education in these terms.

- Some individuals have greater talents than others
- Positions in society require different talents
- To ensure society functions most efficiently, the most able individuals need to be allocated the functionally most demanding roles
- The education system is responsible for identifying those with the greatest ability and for training them for these more important tasks
- The most able gain the greatest rewards in order to attract them into the long period of training usually required to fill these roles.

## **Criticisms of functionalist views**

- Functionalism sees the relationship between society and individuals as a one-way process with schools educating people in the interests of society. Interactionists show that it is not as simple as this as individual pupils and teachers negotiate meanings in the classroom and outside.
- Functionalism assumes that there is agreement over the basic values in society, other approaches suggest that different social groups have different sets of values. Marxists argue that education transmits the values of the ruling class.
- It is doubtful whether schools do teach the work skills needed by the economy as some school subjects seem to have limited usefulness in the world of work.
- There is an assumption that the education system is meritocratic, offering the same chances to all pupils. Persisting class inequalities in educational achievement indicate that this is not the case and that the education system operates in the interest of the wealthy and powerful.
- The New Right argues that state education fails to prepare young people for work, it should hand that role over to market forces.
- Tumin claims Davis and Moore offer a tautological approach - there is no clear reason why one job is functionally more important and therefore rewardable, than another.

### **Vocational education:**

- This is work-related education for specific jobs or types of jobs. Some have claimed that the British education system has not stayed linked to the needs of the economy.
- This fits well with functionalist thought and the ideas of neoliberalism and the New Right.
- Since the 1980s there have been many vocational education initiatives - Youth Training Scheme, NVQs, vocational A levels, modern apprenticeships etc.
- These have been criticised for not linking to genuine work opportunities but leading to low-paid work.
- Strathdee(2003) claims working-class and minority ethnic group members are channelled into low-paid, non-career jobs.
- Finn argues they reduce unemployment figures and undermine trade unionism.

### **NEOLIBERALISM AND NEW RIGHT IDEAS**

#### **Neoliberalism:**

- This approach argues that the state is too powerful, inefficient, bureaucratic and oppressive.
- Governments should step back from delivering services like education and leave it to the free market.
- Competition and parent power can be relied upon to drive up standards as competition forces schools to improve or fail.
- Schools should be run on business lines.
- These ideas have influenced all governments since 1979, including Labour ones, but most directly since 2010.

#### **New Right:**

- A form of neoliberalism, the New Right is similar to functionalism in that it favours meritocracy, creating shared values and allowing individuals different and unequal talents to emerge.
- Where it splits from functionalism is over the role of the state. New Right thinkers believe that the state must fail to achieve these aims if it tries to deliver education itself.
- The state allows poor performing schools to continue. Lower standards persist.
- What is needed is an 'education market'. Competition between schools will drive up standards through the pressure of a 'parentocracy'.
- The state has only two roles - ensuring a shared set of values is transmitted (e.g. through a national curriculum) and setting up a framework to monitor the actions of privatised education services (e.g. Ofsted).

#### **Chubb and Moe (1990)**

- Their comparison of state and private schools in the USA led them to argue that state education is inefficient.
- To introduce a market into education they advocate a voucher system. Parents can spend their education voucher in whichever school they wish. In the same way as private businesses, schools would be forced to improve in order to attract enough vouchers to continue in business.
- Power is therefore put in the hands of consumers as in the world of business.

#### **Criticisms of Neoliberalism and New Right**

- Middle-class parents have the resources to gain extra educational advantages for their children.
- Markets create inequality. Schools with mainly working-class intakes will achieve poorer exam results, attract fewer pupils, less money etc. and enter a cycle of decline. This does not raise, but lower, standards.
- In rural areas there is no opportunity for a market to function as there are few schools for parents to choose from.
- It is not proven that lack of competition lowered standards
- The most successful become over-subscribed and therefore can begin to select the pupils they take, effectively reducing or removing consumer choice.
- Closing 'poorer' schools leads to a reduction in consumer choice.
- Just because a market approach works for certain products, does not mean it works for a public service like education.

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE Links with education policy

- There is a strong link between neoliberalism/New Right and education policy.
- These provide the underlying ideas for marketisation and privatisation policies over the past 30 or so years.
- Although there is no voucher system in the UK, policies to privatise schools mean that market forces are now thoroughly embedded in the education system.

## MARXIST VIEWS

### Key concerns and ideas:

- Marxists are interested in the way education works in the interests of the ruling class in capitalist society.
- Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of workers by the owners of the means of production.
- The education system is driven by the needs of capitalism which wants a workforce that is easily exploited and which accepts their exploitation.

### Bowles and Gintis

Two US Marxists, Bowles and Gintis looked at how schools prepared the next generation of workers in capitalist society.

A lot of this is passed on not through the formal curriculum but through the **'hidden curriculum'**- the experience of schooling rather than the content of school subjects

As a result, education produces a docile, divided workforce motivated by money rewards and which accepts being exploited.

### The 'correspondence principle'

Schools are structured in ways that prepare pupils for the experience of work in a capitalist society. The school **corresponds** to the workplace in many ways:

- **Hierarchy:** schools have hierarchies (Headteacher, Deputy Head, Senior Teacher etc.) just like workplaces (Managing Director, Section Head, Supervisor, etc.)
- **Power:** teacher/boss has authority over pupil/worker
- **Organisation of work:** separate school subjects mirroring separate workplace tasks
- **Motivation;** exam results and pay rather than enjoyment of learning and work
- **Equal opportunities:** educational success/promotion at work is based on merit

In these ways, the school corresponds to the workplace. The school is where **'social reproduction'** occurs as future generations of workers are prepared to understand and accept their roles in capitalist society.

### What happens in schooling?

In schools, pupils are taught to...

- ... value hard work, punctuality, unimaginative students
- ... accept the authority of teachers
- ... see knowledge as divided up into separate subject areas
- ... accept what teachers define as 'learning' and 'knowledge'
- ... believe that the education and work systems are fair to everyone
- ... compete against each other.

- From a functionalist perspective this is how shared values are taught and how individuals are prepared for the world of work.
- Marxists see it differently - this is how the working-class are taught to accept low-paid, low status jobs.

### The myth of meritocracy

- Schools claim that educational achievement is based on merit – how intelligent and hardworking an individual is. This is matched by the idea that work opportunities are also based on merit – so the best way to get on in work is through education.
- The reality of capitalist society is that some social groups have better educational opportunities than others – for example, through private education, attending schools with a mainly middle-class intake, more educational resources at home etc.
- Not only have working-class pupils less opportunity to do well in school and at work, they are taught to believe that any failure is their fault – they had the same chance as everyone else.

### **Criticisms of Bowles and Gintis**

- Bowles and Gintis produced no research evidence to support their claims. They assumed that schools had these effects.
- It is a very deterministic view and not all schools may act in exactly the same way and not all pupils may respond in the ways Bowles and Gintis suggest.
- Does capitalism just want docile, subservient workers? Modern systems of work often demand imagination, flair, teamwork etc.
- Is the 'hidden curriculum' really that 'hidden'? Many aspects of the so-called 'hidden curriculum' are fairly open.
- This approach sees a very tight relationship between education and work. Giroux suggests that the education system is less closely tied into the demands of the economy.

### **Paul Willis 'Learning to Labour' (1977)**

- Willis studied 12 working-class boys in the last year and a half of their schooling to see how the schools prepared pupils for work. His research is often seen as a criticism of some of Bowles and Gintis' claims.
- The 'lads' formed a counter-school culture. They rejected most of the schools' values.
- At the end of compulsory schooling, the 'lads' became manual workers, carrying over their counter-school culture into the workplace.
- The 'lads' saw through some aspects of capitalism, not accepting any ideas about meritocracy or the emphasis on individual effort.
- The school had not prepared them to be docile obedient workers (as Bowles and Gintis argued).
- But their rejection of school and their choice of manual work still prepared the 'lads' for exploitation - they are still trapped by capitalism but not in the way Bowles and Gintis thought. Their rebellion against school led them into the world of unskilled jobs because they ended up with no qualifications.

### **'Cultural capital'**

**Bourdieu** developed the concept of 'cultural capital'

- 'Cultural capital' is a concept used to explain why middle-class pupils achieve more than working-class pupils do.
- As part of the dominant culture, middle-class pupils have an automatic advantage over working-class pupils because they share the culture of the school.
- Their language is like that of teachers (also middle class) and their values correspond more closely to those of the school.
- This 'cultural capital' enables middle class families to pass on their superior position to their children and in so doing, reproduce the class system.

### **'Cultural capital' and the 'education market' in Britain.**

Ball et al's study of how open enrolment and parental choice of school affected equality of opportunity showed that middle-class parents could use their greater 'cultural capital' (and greater material wealth) to give their children an advantage in school. This meant that middle-class parents:

- knew how to appeal against school allocation
- shared the same language as teachers
- understood 'the system'
- had contacts within the education system
- could move house nearer to 'better' schools
- could pay for public transport to distant schools
- could pay for private tuition

### **Althusser: education as an 'ideological state apparatus'**

- Althusser argues that the education in a capitalist society has two key purposes:
- It transmits an ideological justification of capitalism. This set of values justifies the inequality inherent in capitalist society.
- Secondly, it actually reproduces the very inequality it justifies.

### **Post-Fordism and postmodernism:**

- The view of the workplace presented by Bowles and Gintis - the 'assembly line' as first developed by the Ford company - is not really much like the modern workplace.
- Post-Fordist businesses need a skilled and flexible workforce, not one based on traditional work structures.
- This means a different kind of education is required, one in which creativity and flexible skills are developed.
- Postmodernists argue that in a globalised economy, retraining in new skills is necessary to keep up with technological change.
- So postmodernists reject Marxist views, arguing that the old factory system has gone and with it, class inequalities.
- The postmodern economy produces diversity not inequality.
- Morrow and Torres claim that class is not the central inequality - it is only one of many based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality etc.

### **Criticisms:**

- Although the old economic structures associated with manufacturing, shipbuilding, mining etc may have largely disappeared, the relationship between the owners of capital and those who do not own capital, remains.
- In the world of zero-hours contracts, minimum wage jobs, casualisation of labour, agency work and even in lower middle-class occupations such as teaching and local government, inequalities based on class still exist.

## **INTERACTIONIST VIEWS OF EDUCATION**

### **Key concerns and ideas:**

- Interactionists are interested in the day-to-day life of schools rather than in creating grand theories of the social role of an education system.
- Interactionism has examined the social processes within schools, particularly teacher-pupil relationships.
- Some interactionist research has highlighted and, in some cases, challenged the lack of practical research in many functionalist and Marxist work.

### **Interactionist studies**

- **Becker's** study of the ways teachers classify pupils concluded that most shared a common image of the 'ideal pupil' who was intelligent, motivated and well behaved. In the classroom, teachers judged their pupils against this model, creating both positive and negative labels. Middle-class pupils were more likely to fit this ideal type than were working class students. Applying labels based on this 'ideal pupil' generated a self-fulfilling prophecy in which pupils lived up to their label, in other words they behaved in ways which matched their teacher's view of them. From this view, teacher attitudes are crucial in the way they affect students' self-images and consequently their attainment.
- **Hargreaves et al** examined in greater detail how this worked in practice. They suggested that the construction of teacher attitudes went through three stages. In the 'speculation' stage - where 'first impressions' were made - teachers evaluated their pupils on the basis of their behaviour, perceived attitude to school, personality, body language and so on. After further classroom contact, teachers 'elaborated' this impression and by the final 'stabilisation' stage, they had determined a clear picture of the pupil.

- **Rosenthal and Jacobson** attempted to measure the effect on attainment of teacher expectations. By setting up expectations of different groups of pupils in the minds of teachers and then measuring any changes in pupil attainment, this research found that high expectations (unrelated in reality to ability) did lead to an increase in achievement.
- **Teacher expectations.** **Ball's** study indicated that teachers had differing expectations of pupils in different ability bands and this was recognised by pupils, resulting in a negative impact on their performance. **Keddie** took this further in her analysis of the way teachers defined appropriate knowledge for different ability groupings. The resources used, the teaching strategies employed, the tasks set, all reflected teacher perceptions of students. As with many interpretivists, Keddie related this to social class.
- **Pupil adaptations.** **Woods** has developed an eight-fold typology of the ways pupils adapt to the demands of the classroom. Through these modes, including rebellion, compliance, ingratiation, ritualism and colonisation, pupils negotiate the meaning of schooling. Teachers collaborate in this process.
- **Gender in the classroom.** Some research has looked at the ways female and male students are perceived by teachers. **Stanworth** found that teachers learned boys names more quickly, held higher academic and career expectations of boys and tended to up-grade boys work whilst downgrading that of girls. **Spender** argued that girls were 'invisible' in the classroom, receiving less teacher attention than boys do and having sexist abuse largely ignored and unpunished.
- **Ethnicity and the classroom.** Research into the experience of ethnic minority students has indicated that many teachers hold ethnocentric attitudes that prejudice the achievements of black and Asian pupils. **Wright's** investigation of primary schools noted that teachers saw Asian students as quieter, less proficient in English and usually received least classroom attention. Afro-Caribbean students on the other hand were often perceived to have behaviour problems. Other research in secondary schools has found a similar picture.

#### Criticisms of Interactionism

- Labelling seems a very deterministic model of behaviour - the teacher labels, the pupils recognises and accepts the label and behaves accordingly. Pupils do not necessarily accept the label they are given. Mac an Ghail noted several female and ethnic minority students in his study who consciously rejected the label they felt they had been given – as did the female Afro-Caribbean pupils studied by Fuller. Both Swann and Stone found little evidence of low self-esteem among students who allegedly had been negatively labelled.
- Some educationalists have been sceptical about the way labels can be applied in secondary schools where pupils are taught by a number of different teachers. It is difficult to see how a common label can be created and consistently applied when a pupil may have ten or more teachers.
- Other researchers have questioned the apparent assumption that all teachers behave in a basically similar manner. Hammersley for example has pointed out that although some teachers made racist comments in private they did not act in a racist way in the classroom. Taylor found that many teachers were very aware of issues of racism and their teaching was sensitive in this respect.
- Some studies have attracted specific criticisms. Randall attempted to replicate the work of Spender and Stanworth, producing data that was at odds with the original work. Rosenthal and Jacobson have been strongly criticised not just for their method - which did not observe to see if and how labels were transmitted in the classroom - but also for their dubious interpretation of the results.
- Looking in such detail at the individual classroom and school means that sometimes the influence of wider social factors such as changing social norms, employment structures and changes to the education structure cannot be identified. Classroom interactions do not take place in a social vacuum.

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

This is a very important part of the Education topic. There is a very good chance that you will get a question on some aspect of the educational performance of different social groups.

Questions tend to ask you to:

- examine/explain/evaluate a particular sociological explanation of the link between either class, gender or ethnicity and educational performance
- or
- examine/explain/evaluate the influence over achievement of either home background or school factors

### Key Issues/Questions

- What is the link between educational attainment and each of social class/gender/ethnicity? In other words, how much effect does each factor have on pupil's performance - what do statistics about educational performance tell us?
- What is the effect on attainment of home background? What effect do school factors have?
- What explanations have sociologists offered to explain the links between social class, gender and ethnicity and educational attainment?
- How useful/accurate are these explanations?
- What is the relationship between education, class, gender, ethnicity and pupils' identities?

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

#### Links between this material and other parts of the Education module

- One link is into the main sociological theories of education. Here you could use material from this section to **TEST** the claims of Marxist and functionalist theories. For example, functionalist claims about meritocracy and role allocation can be challenged by the existence of inequalities in the education system.
- One major link is into any question about educational policy. Here you may be able to make reference to marketisation and privatisation or the need for compensatory education.

## SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

### How does social class affect educational attainment?

- There is a very close relationship between social class and educational performance. This has been the case regardless of how the education system has been organised.
- The higher a person's social class, the higher their level of educational attainment.
- The higher a person's social class, the more likely they are to stay on into higher education. Pupils from professional backgrounds were nearly six times more likely to enter higher education than pupils from unskilled manual work backgrounds.
- Even though the proportion of pupils achieving qualifications has risen for all social classes, middle-class pupils have benefited more from this than working-class pupils.

### Sociological explanations of social class differences in achievement

Sociologists tend to see two broad causes of social class differences - external and internal factors.

**External factors:** these are causes lying outside the education system.

They include:

- Cultural differences - language, reasoning skills, parental attitudes and education, working-class subcultures, 'cultural deprivation'.
- Material deprivation: housing, diet and health, income, costs of education,
- Cultural capital, marketisation and parental choice.



**Internal factors:** these lie within the school.

They include:

- Labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy
- Streaming and the A-C economy
- Pupils subcultures
- Marketisation and selection policies

#### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

- This is a very commonly assessed area of the education topic. Usually an essay question will focus on either internal OR external factors. It will usually set up the claim that one of these groups of factors is the main reason why working-class pupils underachieve. Implicit in this however, is the idea that there are other explanations i.e. internal if the question claims external as most important and vice versa.
- You need to be careful here to focus on the group of factors that the question highlights. However, you also need to then refer to the other group of factors (in less detail) as an ALTERNATIVE explanation. So you need to be able to expand and compress your knowledge of each factor depending on the focus of the question.
- You should also challenge the division between internal and external factors. Are they really completely separate? Language for example bridges both the home and the school.
- Similarly, you can see the connection between material and cultural factors. Maybe middle-class parents are able to exercise the choices they do not just because they have the cultural values to do so, but because they have the money to as well.

#### HOME BACKGROUND FACTORS

##### Intellectual development, attitudes, values and language

##### Intellectual development:

- Studies show that from even an early age, middle-class children have greater intellectual development than working-class children.
- Cultural deprivation theorists argue that working class families have fewer books, educational toys, they read less to their children etc - so their children are less stimulated intellectually.
- **Douglas** noted the importance of the level of parental care, interest and encouragement of children both in early childhood and in school years. Differential socialisation and, in particular, lower levels of parental interest in schooling shown for example, through middle-class parents being more likely to attend parents evenings, were presented as being the main cause of working-class underachievement.

##### Language:

- **Bereiter and Engelmann** claimed working-class language is limited and limits the ability of their children to develop abstract thought.
- **Basil Bernstein** argued that language has a major impact on an individual's ability to access educational opportunities. He identified two main forms of linguistic expression - the 'restricted' and the 'elaborated' speech codes. 'Restricted' code is grammatically simple, lacks clarity in sentence construction, typically employs short sentences, uses limited vocabulary, descriptive rather than analytical and content is specific to the situation it refers to. Bernstein claims this code is more typical of the working class. 'Elaborated' code is grammatically more complex, uses longer sentences, is more detailed and analytical and is not context-limited. 'Elaborated' code speech is more 'universalistic' as being more abstract, it can be understood by a wider audience. This code is more typical of the middle class. As the education system uses the 'elaborate' code, users of restricted speech patterns will inevitably suffer. Schools also fail to teach children the elaborated code.

### Working-class subcultural values:

- **Hyman** (1979) suggested that working-class parents place less emphasis on education as a means to get on in life. This undervaluing of education by adults combined with more limited career aspirations, results in working-class pupils viewing schooling as merely a prelude to getting a manual job.
- **Sugarman** claimed that working-class culture was fatalistic - parents passed on the idea that their lower status was relatively fixed. The impact of this is that working-class children do not see much point in investing time and effort into something which will have no effect on their lives. Sugarman also identified higher levels of attainment among middle-class pupils with a set of attitudes emphasising the value of deferring gratification. Middle-class children put more into schooling because they believe that they will gain greater rewards later in life. Working-class pupils are more oriented towards leaving school as early as possible and getting a job.
- **Murray**, from a New Right perspective, has more recently pursued the theme of the development of an underclass culture. The poorest stratum in society have a distinct set of values which stem from high rates of illegitimacy, single parenthood, welfare dependency, poor socialisation of children etc. - a very pathological view of part of working-class culture. This cultural deprivation, which Murray controversially links to lower IQ levels, is seen as creating a group of pupils who are fundamentally alienated from the education system.

### Level of parental education:

- **Feinstein** argues there is a direct correlation between the level of parental education and how successful their children are in education - even amongst middle-class families.
- More highly educated parents have a parenting style that includes high expectations and encouragement, encouraging independence of thought.
- From their own experiences they are also more aware of what is needed to do well in education so read more to their children, show them how to use language more effectively and in a critical and creative manner.
- More highly educated parents make more effective use of their (usually higher) income e.g. buying educational toys.

### Evaluation

#### Cultural deprivation?

- There is a strong element in these explanations which implies that there is something missing, deficient, ineffective about working-class culture, language, use of income etc. At times this seems to be blaming this social group.
- What is seen as 'cultural deprivation' may simply be more down to differences in income and wealth than some cultural difference.
- **Blackstone and Mortimore** (1994) argue working-class parents may simply have more practical difficulties in visiting schools rather than not wishing to visit them.
- **Keddie** (1973) sees this as 'victim-blaming' rather than seeking the real causes of class differences in achievement.
- Why is one form of language 'better' than another? It is more a case of school's attitudes towards different language codes than the codes themselves. **Troyna and Williams** argue that in terms of language, it is the school's attitude that is the problem.
- Such approaches also treat working-class culture as homogenous - they do not acknowledge the variety of working-class attitudes.

### Material deprivation

- Material deprivation refers to poverty and limited material resources.
- Educational under-performance is linked to poverty - in 2006, 33% of pupils receiving free school meals gained 5+A\*-C at GCSE compared with 61% who were not receiving fsm.
- Nearly 4 million children live in poverty according to government figures.
- Most failing schools are in low-income areas.

### Effects of material deprivation

- Poor housing produces overcrowding, greater health problems. Some children live overcrowded accommodation.
- Poor families often in temporary accommodation or move more often - leading to poorer educational experience.
- Poor diet = poor nutrition, weakens immune system and lowers stamina.
- Poverty is linked to higher levels of psychiatric illness.
- Lack of income means children from poor families lose out on educational visits, access to internet, fewer books etc. The costs of educational success are outside poor families' budgets.
- Low family income means children more likely to work and lose study time.
- Pupils receiving free school meals can be targets of bullying. They can suffer low self-esteem through not having good quality clothes etc. children on FSM may experience stigma.
- Higher drop-out rates in higher education for students from low-income backgrounds.
- Working-class children are more likely to go to local universities to reduce costs.

### Costs of education and fear of debt

- Schooling appears to be free but necessary materials, support and affording good quality clothing etc puts a financial burden on poorer families.
- Entering post-18 education, working-class students are more debt averse so some do not go to university for this reason. Universities with a higher proportion of working-class students also have higher drop-out rates.

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE: which has most impact - cultural or material factors?

- Placing a high value on education can over-ride material deprivation.
- The **New Right** claims that private education exists because of the free market - individuals and families have the right to spend their money as they wish. This is supported by evidence that most parents who send their children to private schools do so because they believe that this will improve their children's chance of obtaining better qualifications.
- **Marxists** view private education, as maintaining divisions in society and ensure that class inequalities are reproduced.
- Marxists also see compensatory education as limited and completely outweighed by the impact of the education market. It is a fig leaf concealing vast social inequalities.

### Bourdieu: Cultural Capital

Bourdieu argues there are three types of capital - economic, educational and social.

These are inter-related and one can be converted into another.

- Cultural capital: This is the attitudes and values, language and cultural knowledge that the middle-class commonly have. They have greater understanding and experience of the education system and knowing how it operates gives them an advantage over working-class families. Middle-class children are more likely to have hobbies and interests that are valued by the school, itself an institution based on middle-class values. Unsurprisingly, they feel that education is for them.
- Economic capital can be converted into educational capital e.g. through paying for private education or moving house into an area served by high-achieving schools.
- Sullivan found that cultural capital had some effect on educational success but economic resources were also a very important factor.

## SCHOOL FACTORS

### 'Labelling' and the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'

'Labelling' is an idea used by interactionist sociologists to describe the way social actors attach 'labels' to other social actors. In the case of education, the main 'labeller' is the teacher; the main 'labelled' the pupil.

Interactionists like **Becker** have shown that teachers have an image of the 'ideal pupil' who is courteous, hard working and academically able. Teachers judge pupils against this 'ideal pupil' and middle-class pupils are far more likely to fit this model of a pupil than are working-class students.

- Students will experience their 'label' and may come to believe that they are as the teacher defines them and to take on the characteristics of the label - 'becoming' the label.
- The idea of 'labelling' gives an insight into the power of teachers to influence the behaviour and academic performance of students and thus have a major impact on the attainment of different groups of students.
- **Gillborn and Youdell** (2001) argue that teachers use notions of 'ability' linked to social class to type pupils.
- A 'self-fulfilling prophecy' refers to the way that by making a prediction, the prediction itself helps to produce the prophesied outcome. This links to the idea of 'labelling' and applied to education, because teacher predictions of the likely future achievement of a pupil can influence the pupil's actual performance. A pupil who is repeatedly told that they are unlikely to achieve much may consequently give up their efforts which in turn will reduce the likelihood of gaining a qualification. The teacher prediction would have helped the prediction to come true.

### Teacher expectations

- 'Teacher expectations' refers to the assessment a teacher makes of a particular pupil in terms of their behaviour, academic performance and potential. This perception is transmitted to students and others by language, body language, work set, etc.
- **Rosenthal and Jacobson** set up an experimental situation to try to test the power of teacher expectations. They convinced teachers in a junior school that certain pupils (picked by them at random) would show major improvements during the following year or so. They then tested the children at regular intervals finding that some of those they had identified to teachers in this way, had in fact raised their IQ scores. The only different influence on these pupils were the higher expectations the teachers now had of their ability.

### How might pupils react to being 'labelled' by teachers?

- A label, backed by the authority of the teacher, might be difficult for the pupil to escape. One of the effects of being labelled in this way is the lowering of a pupil's self-esteem.
- Pupils might reject the label. Fuller's study of Afro-Caribbean girls indicated that rather than accept the negative labels given to them by teachers, they actively rejected.
- Labelling may create or reinforce an anti-school pupil sub-culture.

### What might influence the way a pupil responds to being labelled?

- Social class. Middle class pupils (and parents) may have greater ability to re-negotiate the 'label' whilst working class pupils may have less confidence to do so.
- An existing anti-school pupil subculture might offer an alternative set of values which match those of the label.
- Parental involvement and home culture may influence the response to the label. Support at home may act as a barrier to the negative influence of the label.
- The impact of the label will depend to some extent upon how many teachers' state it, how often and with what intensity.

### Criticisms of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy

- 'Labelling' is a very deterministic idea. It suggests that once a 'label' is attached, then the individual will accept and act out that label. This is clearly not always the case and labels can be negotiated, altered, rejected etc.
- In secondary schools when an individual pupil may have more than a dozen different teachers, it is unlikely that all these teachers will share the same 'label' or apply it in the same way.
- Some studies of 'labelling' such as that carried out by Rosenthal and Jacobson, do not actually observe and record how this process of 'labelling' takes place in the classroom. In research terms it is difficult to ascertain whether a 'label' has been applied and if so, how effectively.
- 'Labels' may be accurate. A pupil labelled as 'disruptive' may, in reality, be a disruptive pupil so it would be a case of the behaviour earning the label rather than the label determining the behaviour

### Streaming and setting

- Streaming and setting is very common in almost all secondary schools. When mixed ability teaching takes place, this is usually during the first year or so of secondary education.
- **Hargreaves** and **Lacey** (in separate studies) identified the way middle-class pupils were over-represented in higher sets and streams, working-class pupil, under-represented.
- Teachers also preferred teaching higher sets and had higher expectations of (predominantly middle-class) pupils in them.
- **Keddie** found that streaming was often based on how well pupils matched the 'ideal student' image teachers had. Because working-class pupils were more likely to challenge teachers, they were less likely to fit this image. This related closely to social class and as a result, middle-class pupils were over-represented in the upper streams.

### Marketisation and selection

- League tables, competition between schools and formula funding affect school selection policies.
- **Gillborn and Youdell** - schools operate an 'A\*-C economy' which targets help at those on the borderline of GCSE grade C - weaker pupils are left to their own devices. Schools operate 'educational triage' as they focus on students capable of getting a C grade at GCSE.
- **Bartlett** (1993) argues schools 'cream-skim' (take the best pupils they can from other schools) and 'silt-shift' (move weaker pupils out) to improve their market position.
- Pupils know what is happening and recognise the new labels they are given.

### Pupil subcultures

- Several sociologists have pointed to the way pupils respond to their experience of labelling in collective manner, forming subcultures. A subculture is set of values, attitudes and behaviours employed by a group - in this case, of pupils - which usually differs to the dominant culture of the school.
- Generally this is often a counter-school culture such as that found by **Willis** in his study 'Learning to Labour'. Willis found that 'the lads' - group of working class boys - developed behaviours to help them deal with the school situation. For example, 'having a laugh' was important to them in order to handle the monotony of school.
- **Hargreaves** argued that setting and banding contributed to the creation of pupil subcultures within a school. Pupils in top sets tended to create a conformist subculture which accepted school while those that did not often grouped together to form a non-conformist subculture.
- **Woods** believed that pupils adapted to school in a range of different ways. Some pupils tried to ingratiate themselves with teachers, others merely complied, some went through the motions and others rebelled.

## Class identities and Schooling

Several concepts are useful to understand how labelling and other school processes affect pupil's identities.

- **Habitus:** class-based ways of thinking and acting, including lifestyles, fashion, consumption patterns. These are seen by those who share them as being 'normal'. They differ between classes and the greater social power of the middle class ensures that their habitus is seen as superior. It is also the same habitus as the school.
- **Symbolic violence:** Schools have a middle-class habitus and denigrate the habitus of the working class. This leads to conflict between two lifestyles e.g. school dress codes conflicting with working-class 'style' or differences in language, accent etc. In denigrating working-class habitus, schools are symbolically (not actually) being violent towards this group's culture.
- **Pressure to 'fit in':** Working-class pupils who are academically capable may experience conflicting pressures from home/community and school. So going to university may be seen as not what people like us do or somewhere you won't fit in or it simply may just not suit their lifestyle.
- **Self-exclusion:** Evans found that working-class girls felt inhibited from applying to top universities and from moving away from home to study. This limited their future educational and career options.

## GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

You can get a range of questions on gender and education.

- Questions can ask for explanations of gender differences – in which case you can refer to both girls and boys.
- Other questions can focus on either girls or boys' achievement – there's a potential trap here as it is easy to offer an answer dealing with both genders.
- Questions may be broader than just focusing on achievement, they can ask about identity, subject choice etc.

### The 'gender gap' in educational attainment

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that girls have opened up a 'gender gap' in educational performance and that there is now a real problem of 'boys under-achievement'.

- Boys lag behind from Year One in all skills including literacy.
- This gap continues through KS1-3.
- Girls outperform boys at GCSE (10% more girls than boys gain 5+ A\*-C grades)
- Post-16 a higher proportion of girls gain top grades – though the gap narrows at this point.
- This 'gender gap' is not confined to Britain with most Western countries reporting a similar trend.

### Problems with the idea of a 'gender gap'

- Although there is a definite 'gender gap' it is not just a simple case of 'boys doing badly, girls doing well'. The picture is more complex.
- **The 'gender gap' is...**
- ... not the same in all subjects – GCSE Science, boys do slightly better than girls, GCSE Maths, girls and boys perform similarly
- ...not the same at all levels of education – disproportionately more males opt for science, ICT etc. in higher education
- ...affected by social class and ethnicity
- ...not necessarily translated into better jobs/careers for women
- ...happening within the context of improving exam results for both males and females

### Has there been a 'moral panic' over 'boys under-achievement'?

- **Wiener** and others have suggested that the issue of male under-achievement has been inflated into a 'moral panic' by politicians and others. There has certainly been much more concern about boys' performance than there previously was about the under-achievement of girls in education.
- It is also the case, that the relationship between gender and attainment is much more complex than simply being a case of 'boys' under-achievement'. Not all groups of girls are outperforming boys, educational success does not seem to be reflected in employment for women and subject choice after 16 reflects traditional views of gender and career.

### Explanations of the 'gender gap'

#### Achievement and Girls

##### External factors (outside school factors)

- **Feminism:** this social movement to improve female opportunities has had a number of effects. It has raised awareness and female aspirations, campaigned for changes in laws relating to pay, employment and rights, challenged media stereotyping etc.
- **Changes to employment:** Equal pay and anti-discrimination laws have improved women's employment opportunities as have changes to the occupational structure moving it away from traditional heavy industry towards the service sector. These open up opportunities for women to develop careers similar to those of men.
- **Changing ambitions:** research in the 1970s showed girls to have limited career aspirations – these came behind family and marriage. This was changing in the 1980s and 1990s and now there is far less focus on domestic futures and much more on a career. This rising expectation of economic and social independence links to the need to obtain educational qualifications. There is a greater range of role models for girls in business, politics etc.
- **Changes to family structure:** There have been several important changes in family structure – smaller families (so less time tied to a domestic context), increase in divorce (so women need to be more self-sufficient) and increased number of lone-parent families (mainly headed by a woman so again the need to be self-sufficient).

##### Internal factors (in-school factors)

- **Educational policies to help girls** Over the last thirty or so years there have been some attempts to improve the academic performance of girls. Girls Into Science and Technology, National Curriculum, OFSTED guidelines, anti-sexism training etc. have all tried to raise the profile of women in education.
- **Coursework favours girls** The introduction of coursework in many subjects is often thought to have helped female students achieve higher grades. This reflects a different approach to schoolwork than that of boys, more careful, more time spent on it and being better prepared.
- **National Curriculum** Before the National Curriculum pupils had more choice over which subjects to study. There was a marked gender bias in subject choice and often 'subject channelling' of boys and girls into different subjects. The National Curriculum means that both male and female pupils have to do broadly the same courses.
- **Marketisation:** because of their better exam results, girls are more valuable to schools as they can boost the school league table position. Girls benefit from this too as they are therefore more likely to attend a successful school.
- **Gender role models in schools:** there are increasing numbers of female Headteachers and senior staff in secondary schools – successful women = positive female role models.

### Evaluation

- It is difficult to estimate the impact of feminism as it is so general.
- There are major class differences in girls' ambitions with many working-class girls continuing to focus more on family and home than on an external career. This is partly to do with family values and partly the result of limited work opportunities.
- Mac an Ghail and others have pointed out that women still face disadvantage in employment through the 'glass ceiling' etc. despite their better educational performance.
- Equal opportunities policies have been fairly patchy and their impact is been difficult to estimate.
- Although girls outperform boys in coursework, they also outperform them in examinations as well.
- When there is a free choice after 16, traditional gender choices still seem to occur.
- Radical feminists argue that schools are still patriarchal and although girls' results are better than boys', their experience of sexism in school is damaging to them.

## Boys' underachievement

Some of the explanations of boys' underachievement are similar to those factors affecting female achievement.

- **Poorer employment prospects for males** Changes in the structure of employment have drastically reduced the number of manual jobs. Globalisation means that these are now located in China and the Pacific rim countries. This may mean that boys have lower expectations of a job/career and consequently, so they see little reason to achieve in education.
- **Male overconfidence** Boys tend to be over-confident in their own abilities and maintain unrealistically high expectations. Consequently, they leave it too late to take to do the necessary work.
- **'Men behaving badly' imagery/anti-school culture** Some sociologists have suggested that male socialisation leaves boys vulnerable to acting out the 'men behaving badly' image - something that places little value on education. Doing schoolwork is seen as not being masculine, especially in working-class subcultures Boys who do work get bullied.
- **Male literacy problems** Boys read and write less than girls. Poorer levels of male literacy can restrict the educational performance of boys across many subjects. Parents may not read as much to boys, their leisure pursuits may not involve much reading or writing, or these activities may be perceived as being feminine.
- **Feminisation of education** This may take a number of forms. There is a shortage of male teachers in primary schools so many boys are not taught by male teachers until age 11. Education may therefore be perceived as feminine. Furthermore, there may be a lack of male discipline that boys are more used to. Sewell claims schools do not emphasise masculine traits, for example, coursework rather than exams.

### Evaluation

- Changes to employment have affected mainly manual work – and academic qualifications were not needed for this in past.
- Is male over-confidence just a recent thing? It would have to be a recent development to explain a recent change in performance.
- Some would suggest that laddish cultures are nothing new – Willis pointed to this in the 1970s.
- Read argues that many female teachers have a similar approach to discipline to that of male teachers.

### Gender and achievement Evaluation

- Some of the explanations suggested by researchers do not really explain why there has been a recent change in the educational outcomes of boys and girls. Labelling, anti-school subcultures, male over-confidence etc. are all not new factors so how can they explain changes in performance?
- The cause seems to lie in society-wide changes. Employment opportunities, changes in career aspirations of girls, the declining influence of traditional views of males and females in relation to work, equal opportunities laws and so on, seem to be having a major impact.
- Mitsos and Browns claim that the underlying factor affecting male performance is 'an identity crisis for men'.
- There is a need for some major research to be carried out – the limited nature of a lot of the 'evidence' cited regarding this issue makes it very difficult to evaluate the possible causes of the gender gap in educational performance.



## Gender identities, subject choice and schools

### Subject Choice

- The introduction of the National Curriculum has reduced the amount of choice pupils have up to the age of 16.
- In post-16 education, gender still seems to affect subject choice. This is particularly true of vocational choices. Girls still disproportionately choose health and social care courses, English and the humanities etc. whilst boys have a greater tendency to opt for ICT, technology, science and so on.

### Why are girls less likely to take science, technology or mathematics courses in post-16 education?

- **Teacher direction** and careers advice may channel girls away from these traditionally 'male' subjects.
- Vocational courses tend to fall into 'traditionally male' and 'traditionally female' categories.
- Choice of subjects at 16 is strongly influenced by **ideas about careers**. Women still over-represented in the caring professions. This reality of employment prospects may continue to exert some influence over subject choice at 16.
- Some **parental influence** may reinforce traditional gender-based choice of subjects although this also seems to be less pronounced than previously.
- **Early gender role socialisation** takes different forms for males and females – toys, play patterns, parental expectations etc. may all shape the future career intentions of girls and boys.
- **Female experience of male domination** of the classroom e.g. access to equipment and resources, may discourage girls from taking these subjects after GCSE.
- There are disproportionately more male teachers of science and technology. The **absence of female role models** may discourage some girls from taking these subjects.
- Colley (1998) suggests that the **way a subject is taught** may have a major impact on which gender identifies most strongly with it. ICT is often taught in ways that girls find less confident.
- **Gender domains**. A lot depends on how a subject is perceived. For example, music was seen as a female subject but recently, more boys have opted for it. This might reflect the increasing use of computer technology in music – making it more 'masculine'.

## Gender identities

### How can males dominate the classroom?

- Access to limited classroom resources. Male students often try to take the most/best equipment in science/technology lessons. Kelly identified this as one reasons for the lower level of female involvement in science in schools.
- Intimidating female pupils through verbal/body language during classroom interaction. Males often interrupt or ignore female students during class discussions/question and answer sessions.
- The 'Male Gaze'. Girls are assessed as sexual objects – devalued and objectified. This links to verbal abuse e.g. the use of 'gay' and 'lezza' to control other pupils' behaviour.
- Claiming disproportionate attention from teachers through either negative or positive classroom behaviours. Teacher time is often spent dealing with male misbehaviour, leaving less time to be spent with female pupils.
- Double standards about sexuality exist as outside the classroom. Sexually active boys are viewed positively, sexually active girls seen negatively.
- Males also police each other through their peer group. Working-class boys macho culture rejected boys who worked at school. Some middle-class boys cultivated an image of achieving but apparently doing this without any effort.

### **How might teachers reinforce male domination of the classroom?**

- Teachers may accept male domination of the classroom or even actively reinforce male domination.
- Teachers using sexist language
- Using gender-specific examples e.g. football analogies. Kelly (1987) saw this as a reason why science was often seen as a masculine subject.
- Patronising female students.
- Tolerating male behaviour that intrudes on classroom interaction.

### **A 'patriarchal curriculum'?**

- The content of the formal curriculum often reflects male concerns. In History, for example, women are largely invisible, Physical Education is often divided into male and female sporting activities and as research by Lobban and others has shown, some reading schemes (particularly older schemes) present very traditional stereotypes of males and females.
- Best's research in the 1990s suggested that although some textbooks had become more balanced in their representation of men and women, there was still some disparity in the images presented.
- Limited resources often means that schools retain textbooks and other materials that have these more traditional images.

### **How may the 'hidden curriculum' affect female pupils?**

- It may take the form of teachers spending less time with female students - as Spender found.
- Alternatively, the 'hidden curriculum' might affect female students in the negative references teachers make about women or the use of male-centred language and examples.
- Some teachers may accept and tacitly encourage male domination of the classroom in terms of access to resources, control of discussions etc.
- Lower teacher expectations of girls' academic performance.

### **Identity and Class**

- Working-class girls experience a conflict between their home/peer group values and those of the school.
- They get 'symbolic capital' – esteem – from their peers by creating for themselves a glamorous identity, spending a lot of money on make-up, hairstyles and particular kinds of clothing. They place great store in having a boyfriend.
- All this brings them into conflict with the school. They are seen as being distracted from schoolwork by spending too much time on developing this identity, being with a boyfriend rather than working etc.
- Therefore working-class girls have a choice – follow their peer group or accept the values of the school.
- Their dilemma causes them to underachieve.
- Even working-class girls who do succeed at school then find it difficult to leave their home culture behind. So they tend either not to go to university or apply to local universities so they can live at home. Either way, their career options continue to be limited.

## ETHNICITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### How does ethnicity affect educational outcomes?

- 'Ethnicity' is not easy to define and measure so we do not always have detailed statistical evidence with which to compare groups.
- The relationship between ethnicity and attainment is more complicated than the gender and class links. The key point to make is that there are many different ethnic groups in Britain and their educational performance varies greatly. Chinese and Indian pupils do better than average; Pakistani and Afro-Caribbeans do less well.
- What also needs to be taken into account is that social class and gender also 'cut across' this picture, for example, Caribbean girls do better than Caribbean boys. Possibly the group giving greatest concern is white working class boys.
- The complexity of this picture makes it more difficult to develop explanations of ethnic differences when there are many ethnicities to be taken into account.

### Explanations of ethnic differences in achievement

#### External factors

##### Home Culture/Family structure

- Cultural deprivation' models are based on the belief that there is something lacking in a child's home background e.g. **Murray** (1984), a New Right theorist, argues that Afro-Caribbeans have a higher than average proportion of single-parent households and above average proportion of working mothers. This, it is argued leads to an absence of male role models and a family life described by **Pryce** as 'turbulent'. This has a negative effect on the educational performance of Afro-Caribbean students.
- Asian family life is often described in quite different terms. Typically it is seen to be much larger and more closely knit. It is also more closely linked into the community so that not only are material resources shared and a higher value placed on education, but also the community reinforces an emphasis on educational success. The **Swann** report connected the Asian family with high levels of educational performance. **Driver and Ballard** (1981) described it as a 'positive resource' for educational development.
- **Sewell: fathers and gang culture** The absence of a strong nurturing father means that street gangs of similar boys can take their place in a perverse way. Black peer pressure negativises educational success and acceptance of school rules, language and values. Aspirations are channelled into being a successful gang member.
- **White working-class families** There is a low level of aspiration and achievement amongst white working-class pupils which may reflect limited parental support. It may also be that working-class street culture is brought into the school, creating a further distraction from schoolwork.

#### Criticisms

- Some of the claims about family background and education get very close to being stereotypical and have the additional danger of 'blaming the victim'. **Sewell** (1997) points out that only a minority of black boys respond to 'cultural deprivation' in an anti-school way.
- Afro-Caribbean parents are often amongst those most prominent in developing supplementary schooling at weekends and in school holidays.
- Other research has produced data indicating that Afro-Caribbean parents make more contact with schools than white or Asian parents do.
- There is a possibility that this explanation is more a case of finding a characteristic of a particular family structure and then claiming a link between it and high or low rates of attainment. For example, large families are often represented as limiting educational development through for example a lack of private study space, fewer resources etc. but here it is seen as a positive reason *for* educational success in the Asian community.

## Language

- This explanation has focused on the language disadvantages experienced by those Asian students whose first language is not English
- The research into this relationship seems to suggest that it is an unlikely cause of differential achievement. **Driver and Ballard** found a similar level of language development among Asian and white pupils at age 16 regardless of home language. This may be a positive effect of the English as a Second Language programmes in many LEAs.
- **Modood** (1997) argues that the high performance of Indian pupils indicates that any language disadvantage is temporary.

## Social Class

- Some minority ethnic groups experience higher levels of material deprivation so much of the educational disadvantage experienced by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis is the result of being disproportionately working class. **Swann** (1985) put the contribution of class at 50% or more. **Smith and Tomlinson's** study of inner-city comprehensives measured attainment and found large variations according to class but a very limited variation according to ethnicity.
- However, the impact of class seems to vary between different ethnic groups.
- That Indian pupils – who tend to be from more middle-class homes - do better than Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils suggests that there is a correlation between material circumstances and educational achievement.

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

Be careful when answering a question on ethnicity and achievement not to turn your answer into a class and achievement answer when you make the link between deprivation and some ethnic groups. Explain carefully this link and then return to material specifically about education.

## Racism in society

- The material deprivation experienced by some minority ethnic groups is linked to racism and discrimination in wider society.
- This leads to social exclusion, poorer job prospects, lower income and poverty which in turn impacts on educational performance.

## Internal school factors

Many researchers have looked at the likely impact of a range of school factors. These have included language, teacher attitudes, curriculum content, ethnocentric resources, streaming etc. The general notion here is that it is mainly the experience of school which creates differential achievement.

## Teacher attitudes and racism

- **Gillborn and Youdell** (2000) argue teachers hold 'racialised expectations' of pupils and treat black pupils more negatively because they expect them to be more difficult to handle. The result is a cycle of conflict.
- **Wright** (1992) found Asian pupils in primary schools were largely 'invisible' in the classroom and were treated insensitively by teachers and white pupils. Black pupils were identified as being disruptive and classroom management problems. Other studies of secondary schooling have found similar results including the fact that according to DCSF statistics, Afro-Caribbean's are four times more likely to be excluded from school than white pupils.
- The general concepts of 'labelling' and 'the self-fulfilling prophecy' can be applied the study of variations in educational performance according to ethnicity.
- **Mirza** (1992) found majority of teachers held some form of racist attitudes. There are the 'overt racists' who believe whites are superior, the 'liberal chauvinists' who believe black pupils are culturally deprived and the 'colour-blind' who see 'no problem here' because all pupils are equal. Only a minority of teachers recognised the difficulties faced by non-white pupils.

## Criticisms

- **Mac an Ghail** found that there was no clear relationship between students who expected to fail and those who had experienced racism. How well post-16 students expected to do was much more influenced by the school they had come from, whether it was in an inner city or suburban area.
- **Fuller** (1984) studied black girls whose response to being labelled was to reject the label and work hard (although not appearing to do so)
- Whereas the way teachers see Asian and Afro-Caribbean students differently may help us to understand the variation in these groups' levels of attainment. The difficulty is that both groups are defined as 'problems' by some teachers. If Asian pupils are seen as 'problems' how do most of them end up achieving better qualifications than white pupils?
- Much of the research evidence does not see teachers as being racist in their contact with ethnic minority pupils. **Taylor** identified many teachers as being very sensitive to multi-cultural issues whilst **Hammersley** found that even those teachers who were racist in private did not bring racism into the classroom.

## Pupil responses and subcultures

**Sewell** (1998) argues that black male pupils respond to teacher racism in several ways, some are 'rebels', some become 'conformists' (the largest group), others are 'retreatists' and some become 'innovators' who are pro-education but anti-school.

The rebels were a relatively small group but their activities fed into teacher perceptions of black pupils in general. Innovators were anti-school but nonetheless committed to their educational success - they spanned the rebels and the conformists.

## Critical Race Theory

- **Troyna and Williams** (1986) argue that it isn't just individual teacher racism but institutional racism i.e. built into structure of schools e.g. in curriculum or language provision.
- **Gillborn** (1997) argues that the marketisation of the whole education system is another example. The pressure on schools to get high results means some minority ethnic group children are seen as 'liability students' and are less likely to get into high achieving schools so achieve lower results because their educational opportunities have been limited by the system.
- **The ethnocentric curriculum Coard** (2005) argues that history curriculum in schools often covers only white history or history from a white perspective. So for example, in the past, the history of the British Empire was presented mainly from the colonisers' point of view. This undermines black children's self-esteem and develops into poorer educational performance.
- **Ball** (1994) - National Curriculum is Eurocentric e.g. Religious Studies often covers more than Christianity, but the balance is still in favour of the Judeo-Christian heritage.
- **Assessment and Support** Black pupils are more likely to be entered for lower tier exams and are under-represented on support programmes such as Gifted and Talented.
- Teachers tend to underestimate the abilities of black pupils in school-based assessments and coursework. They also underestimate their potential which then feeds into streaming decisions.
- Schools are increasingly returning to using IQ style tests for admissions and internal streaming.

## Criticisms

- However, although these explanations may work to some extent for black British pupils, why do Indian and Chinese pupils outperform white pupils even though their cultures are under-represented in the curriculum?
- Others believe it is external factors that exert the greater influence.

# SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: REDUCED EDUCATION NOTES

## **Comprehensive education 1960s onwards**

- Comprehensive education from the mid-1960s in most areas - about 160 grammar schools and 500 secondary modern schools continued.
- Most of the pressure for comprehensives came from Labour governments which saw that the tripartite system reproduced educational and social inequalities.
- All pupils in an area attend the same school. No selection.

## **Criticisms of comprehensive education**

- New Right: comprehensives 'dumbing down' with academic students 'held back'.
- Inequality continued within comprehensive schools through setting and streaming.

## **EDUCATION POLICIES UNDER CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS 1979-97**

### **Main aims**

Britain's lack of industrial competitiveness was blamed on schools. Need to raise standard of education.

Conservative education policy aims:

- Raise standards by making schools compete with each other – creating an 'education market'
- Increase parental choice
- Control what was taught in schools

### **Marketisation and 'parentocracy'**

Neoliberal and New Right: state control produces lower standards and inefficiency. Introduce market forces into state education and make schools compete with each other to drive up standards.

Bring in 'parentocracy' - parent power in state education.

### **The 1988 Education Reform Act**

National Curriculum in England and Wales.

System of national assessment primarily through SATs

- Schools can 'opt out' of their LEA.
- Open enrolment - parents right to choose which school their children attended.
- Formula funding - funding a school received is based on the number of pupils it attracted.

### **Other policies:**

- Exam results and truancy rates published.
- OFSTED inspection of schools - results made public.
- Schools allowed to specialise in technology, science etc.

### **Key marketisation policies**

**Formula funding:** money schools receive directly linked to how many pupils the school attracts. More successful schools get more pupils so more money, likely to attract more pupils, and so on.

**Parental choice:** Parents could apply to any school. So schools have to work hard to attract them.

**League tables:** publishing exam results, truancy rates etc gives parents the information needed to choose the school for their children.

### **The impact of marketisation policies**

- Increased inequality as middle-class parents can use their cultural capital to take advantage of parental choice.
- League tables often just reflect the social intake of the school. Has increased social segregation.
- High achieving schools can 'cream-skim' - be selective and take most able pupils.
- Formula funding also creates sink schools - take any pupils just to survive.
- Parentocracy is a myth. It may be more true for middle-class parents - they can afford to move nearer to successful schools and use their cultural capital to 'work the system'. High-achieving schools are able to manipulate admissions policies - reducing genuine 'parent power'.
- By 1996 90% of secondary schools were still run by local education authorities.

### **NEW LABOUR 1997-2010**

- New Labour: education is the key to economic success in a modern global market.
- Marketisation was needed to promote diversity and choice.
- All pupils to have good basic skills in numeracy and literacy.
- However, they were also concerned that some groups were failing in education.

So Labour kept some major Conservative policies, those that encouraged parental choice and competition between schools. But it also placed an emphasis on reducing inequality.

### **Unchanged Conservative policies**

- League tables
- School inspections
- Vocational education
- Powers to take over failing schools
- National Curriculum and testing
- Local Management of Schools
- Formula funding
- Student loans rather than grants

### **New policies**

- Reducing primary class sizes to under 30
- Literacy and numeracy hours in all primary schools
- Social exclusion units to help the most deprived pupils
- Education Action Zones and Aimhigher projects with additional resources
- Educational Maintenance Allowances(EMA) to encourage students to stay on post-16.
- Specialist school status to promote diversity.
- City Academies - a fresh start for inner-city schools.

### **Evaluation of Labour policies**

- Benn calls Labour's policies paradoxical. Some promote inequality, others try to reduce it e.g. EMA's for school pupils but tuition fees for university students.
- Marxists: little difference between Labour and Conservative. By retaining the 'education market' Labour is perpetuating class inequalities.
- They failed to remove the charitable status of private schools or abolish grammar schools..
- However, Labour governments substantially increased education spending.

## Conservative-led policies 2010-15 Privatisation

- Promised to lift the 'dead hand of the state' from education.
- Marketisation became the privatisation of state education, especially post-11 schooling.

## Neoliberalism

- Neoliberals and the New Right: state is more bureaucratic and inefficient than privately run services.
- Competition creates excellence and raises educational standards.
- Before 2010, this meant an education market. After 2010, it led to the privatisation of education.

## Marketisation and privatisation

- **Marketisation** = 'internal education market', schools compete with each other for pupils but schools stay under local council control.
- **Privatisation**: the state no longer provides the actual education. It gives this role to private companies, charities etc. Schools, advisory services, assessment etc are contracted out. The state then monitors and regulates this 'external education market'. Passing state-owned assets to private hands is a major development.

## Policies

**Academies:** Academisation is encouraging schools to leave local council control and be funded directly from central government. By 2015 about 70% of secondary schools had become academies. Many were operated by academy chains. Criticisms - using public funds for highly paid management.

**Free Schools:** Parents, faith groups, charities, businesses can set up a free school using state funding. By 2014 there were 331. Some have been branded 'inadequate' and closed. Allen - they benefit middle-class parents and they take disproportionately fewer pupils on FSM.

**Pupil Premium:** extra money directed at disadvantaged pupils. Not funded as well as Aimhigher programme. Also the money can be spent by a school on anything.

**Public spending cuts:** education spending has fallen for most schools e.g. EMA's abolished and university fees of up to £9000 introduced.

**Changes to what schools teach:** exams more made difficult e.g. reducing or removing modular exams and decoupling AS and A levels.

**Out-sourcing education services:** Prison education, supply teachers, libraries, teacher's pensions, Ofsted inspections etc are all provided by private companies. The dividing line between public and private sectors is now blurred in education services.

**Globalisation of UK state education:** some services are provided by global corporations. In return, UK education companies operate in the global education market.

## What is compensatory education?

- 'Compensatory education' - educational weaknesses of pupils from certain social groups can be overcome by targeted educational assistance.
- The basis for such policy approaches tends to be the claim that some groups perform worse in schools because of some deficiencies in their material or cultural background. These family and community weaknesses can be compensated for by special educational initiatives.
- Cultural deprivation - groups at the bottom of the social ladder typically hold cultural values that do not emphasise education. Children lack encouragement and mental stimulation and are fatalistic about their chances in life.

## Examples of compensatory education programmes. .

- Labour governments 1997-2010 introduced Education Action Zones, AimHigher programmes and EMA's to help disadvantaged pupils.
- These were ended by the Coalition government which introduced the Pupil Premium for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.



## 2 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

### WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

#### Key Issues/Questions

What issues have sociological theories of education examined?

- What functions does education perform for society or for particular groups in society?
- How does education serve the needs of society?
- How far does education create equal opportunities and equality in educational outcomes?

#### Sociological theories of the role of education:

- Functionalism
- Neoliberalism and New Right
- Marxism

### FUNCTIONALIST APPROCHES

#### Key concerns and ideas:

- Functionalists are mainly interested in the (positive) functions education performs for society
- For society to survive, it needs to be united. Members of society need to share the same norms, beliefs, aims etc.
- Education plays an important role in teaching individuals norms and values.
- Education also allocates individuals into work roles that match their abilities.

#### Durkheim

##### Linking individuals and society: creating social solidarity

Education makes individuals feel they are part of a larger group e.g. teaching the history of their society, citizenship lessons etc.

##### Learning social values

School is a miniature version of society teaching pupils how to work with others.

##### Specialist work skills

Schools also teach specific work skills of the kind required by society.

#### Parsons

**Learning 'universalistic values'**: within the family, people are treated as individuals, allowances are made for behaviour etc. Society has universal values and rules which can be applied equally to everyone. The school is the first place an individual is judged by universalistic values. It is a 'bridge' between family and society = a secondary socialising agency.

##### Meritocracy

In society, a person is judged on their own merits and their own efforts - meritocratically. Status is achieved not ascribed. School is based on this principle.

#### Davis and Moore: role allocation function

- Some individuals have greater talents than others
- Positions in society require different talents
- Most able individuals need to be allocated the functionally most demanding roles
- The education system is responsible for identifying those with the greatest ability
- The most able gain the greatest rewards in order to attract them.

#### Criticisms

- The relationship between society and individuals isn't just a one-way process with schools educating people in the interests of society.
- Functionalism assumes that there is agreement over the basic values in society - Marxists argue that education transmits the values of the ruling class.
- It is doubtful whether schools do teach the work skills needed by the economy.
- Persisting class inequalities in educational achievement indicate lack of meritocracy.
- The New Right argues that state education fails to prepare young people for work.

### **Vocational education:**

- This is work-related education for specific jobs or types of jobs. Some have claimed that the British education system has not stayed linked to the needs of the economy.
- This fits well with functionalism, neoliberalism and New Right.
- Since the 1980s there have been many vocational education initiatives - Youth Training Scheme, NVQs, vocational A levels, modern apprenticeships etc.
- These have been criticised for not linking to genuine work opportunities but leading to low-paid work.
- Stratthdee(2003) claims working-class and minority ethnic group members are channelled into low-paid, non-career jobs.

### **NEOLIBERALISM AND NEW RIGHT**

#### **Neoliberalism:**

- The state is too powerful, inefficient, bureaucratic and oppressive.
- Governments should leave education to the free market.
- Competition and parent power will drive up standards.
- Schools should be run on business lines.
- These ideas have influenced all governments since 1979, including Labour ones, but most directly since 2010.

#### **New Right:**

- A form of neoliberalism, the New Right is similar to functionalism in that it favours meritocracy, creating shared values and allowing individuals different and unequal talents to emerge.
- Where it splits from functionalism is over the role of the state which allows poor performing schools to continue. Lower standards persist.
- The state has only two roles - ensuring a shared set of values is transmitted (e.g. through a national curriculum) and setting up a framework to monitor the actions of privatised education services (e.g. Ofsted).

#### **Chubb and Moe**

- Comparison of state and private schools in the USA = state education is inefficient.
- They advocate a voucher system - parents can spend their education voucher in whichever school they wish
- Power is in the hands of consumers as in the world of business.

#### **Criticisms of Neoliberalism and New Right**

- Middle-class parents have the resources to gain extra educational advantage.
- Markets create inequality. Schools with working-class intakes achieve poorer exam results, attract fewer pupils, less money and enter a cycle of decline. This lowers standards.
- It is not proven that lack of competition lowered standards
- The most successful become over-subscribed and can select pupils, reducing consumer choice.
- Just because a market approach works for certain products, does not mean it works for a public service like education.

## MARXIST PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

### Key concerns and ideas:

- Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of workers by the owners of the means of production.
- The education system meets needs of capitalism - a workforce that is easily exploited and which accepts their exploitation.

### Bowles and Gintis

A lot of key messages passed through the '**hidden curriculum**'- the experience of schooling rather than the content of school subjects

As a result, education produces a docile, divided workforce motivated by money rewards and which accepts being exploited.

### The 'correspondence principle'

Schools are structured in ways that prepare pupils for the experience of work - the school **corresponds** to the workplace:

**Hierarchy:** schools have hierarchies (Headteacher) just like workplaces (Managing Director)

**Power:** teacher/boss has authority over pupil/worker

**Organisation of work:** separate school subjects mirroring separate workplace tasks

**Motivation;** exam results and pay rather than enjoyment of learning and work

**Equal opportunities:** educational success/promotion at work is based on merit

The school is where '**social reproduction**' occurs - future generations of workers are prepared to accept their roles in capitalist society.

### The myth of meritocracy: legitimisation of inequality

- It is claimed that educational achievement and work opportunities are based on merit.
- The reality of capitalist society is that some social groups have better educational opportunities than others – for example, through private education, more educational resources at home etc.
- Working-class pupils have less opportunity to do well in school and at work, they are taught to believe that any failure is their fault.
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### Criticisms of Bowles and Gintis

- No research to support their claims.
- It is a very deterministic view and not all schools and all pupils may act in exactly the same way.
- Does capitalism just want docile, subservient workers? Modern systems of work often demand imagination, flair, teamwork etc.
- Is the 'hidden curriculum' really that 'hidden'?
- Giroux suggests that the education system is less closely tied into the demands of the economy.

### Paul Willis 'Learning to Labour' (1977)

- Willis studied 12 working-class boys in the last year and a half of their schooling to see how the schools prepared pupils for work.
- The 'lads' formed a counter-school culture. At the end of compulsory schooling, the 'lads' became manual workers.
- The 'lads' saw through some aspects of capitalism, not accepting any ideas about meritocracy or the emphasis on individual effort.
- The school had not prepared them to be docile obedient workers (as Bowles and Gintis argued).
- But their rejection of school and their choice of manual work still prepared the 'lads' for exploitation - they are still trapped by capitalism but not in the way Bowles and Gintis thought. Their rebellion against school led them into the world of unskilled jobs because they ended up with no qualifications.

### **Bourdieu : 'Cultural capital'**

- As part of the dominant culture, middle-class pupils have an automatic advantage over working-class pupils because they share the culture of the school.
- Their language is like that of teachers (also middle class) and their values correspond to those of the school.
- This 'cultural capital' enables middle class families to reproduce their class advantage.

### **'Cultural capital' and the 'education market'**

Ball: open enrolment and parental choice of school affected equality of opportunity as middle-class parents use their greater 'cultural capital' (and greater material wealth) to give their children an advantage in school. Middle-class parents knew how to appeal against school allocation, understood 'the system', could move house nearer to 'better' schools, could pay for private tuition.

### **Althusser: education as an 'ideological state apparatus'**

- Education transmits an ideological justification of the inequality inherent in capitalist society.
- Secondly, it actually reproduces the very inequality it justifies.

### **Post-Fordism and postmodernism:**

- The view of the workplace presented by Bowles and Gintis - the 'assembly line' as first developed by the Ford company - is not really much like the modern workplace.
- Post-Fordist businesses need a skilled and flexible workforce, in which creativity and flexible skills are developed.
- Postmodernists argue that in a globalised economy, retraining in new skills is necessary to keep up with technological change.
- The postmodern economy produces diversity not inequality.

### **Criticisms:**

- Although the old economic structures have largely disappeared, the relationship between the owners of capital and those who do not own capital, remains.
- In the world of zero-hours contracts, minimum wage jobs, casualisation of labour, agency work, inequalities based on class still exist.

## **THE INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION**

### **Key concerns and ideas:**

- Interactionists are interested in the social processes within schools, particularly teacher-pupil relationships, not the social role of the education system.
- Some interactionist research has highlighted and, in some cases, challenged the lack of practical research in many functionalist and Marxist work.

### **Interactionist studies**

- **Becker** teachers classify pupils against 'ideal pupil' - intelligent, motivated and well behaved. Teachers judged their pupils against this model, creating both positive and negative labels. Middle-class pupils were more likely to fit this ideal type. This generated a self-fulfilling prophecy - pupils lived up to their label.
- **Hargreaves** three stages - 'speculation' stage teachers evaluated pupils on the basis of behaviour, attitude to school, body language - teachers 'elaborated' this impression and by the final 'stabilisation' stage, they had determined a clear picture of the pupil.
- **Rosenthal and Jacobson** measured the effect on attainment of teacher expectations -they found that high expectations (unrelated to ability) led to an increase in achievement.
- **Teacher expectations Ball** - teachers had differing expectations of pupils in different ability bands resulting in a negative impact on performance. **Keddie** analysed the way different bands got resources used, the teaching strategies employed, the tasks set, all reflected teacher perceptions of students. = linked to social class.

- **Pupil adaptations Woods** = eight ways pupils adapt to the demands of the classroom. Through these modes, including rebellion, compliance, ingratiation, ritualism and colonisation. Teachers collaborate in this process.
- **Gender in the classroom Stanworth** found that teachers learned boys names more quickly, held higher academic expectations of boys. **Spender** girls= 'invisible' in the classroom, receiving less teacher attention and having sexist abuse.
- **Ethnicity and the classroom.** Many teachers hold ethnocentric attitudes =prejudice black and Asian pupils. **Wright:** primary schools noted that teachers saw Asian students as quieter - usually received least classroom attention. Afro-Caribbean students often perceived to have behaviour problems.

### Criticisms of Interactionism

- Labelling = deterministic model of behaviour - the teacher labels, the pupils recognises and accepts the label and behaves accordingly. Pupils do not necessarily accept the label they are given.
- Can a common label be applied in secondary schools?
- Do all teachers behave similarly? **Hammersley** pointed out that although some teachers made racist comments in private they did not act in a racist way in the classroom.
- Rosenthal and Jacobson have been criticised for their method - which did not observe to see how labels were transmitted.
- The influence of wider social factors cannot be identified.

## 3. DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT - SOCIAL CLASS, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

### Key Issues/Questions

- What is the link between educational attainment and each of social class/gender/ethnicity?
- What is the effect on attainment of home background? What effect do school factors have?
- What explanations have sociologists offered to explain the links between social class, gender and ethnicity and educational attainment?
- What is the relationship between education, class, gender, ethnicity and pupils' identities?

### SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

#### How does social class affect educational attainment?

- There is a very close relationship between social class and educational performance = regardless of how the education system has been organised.
- The higher a person's social class, the higher their level of educational attainment.
- The higher a person's social class, the more likely they are to stay on into higher education.

#### Sociological explanations of social class differences in achievement

Sociologists tend to see two broad causes of social class differences - external and internal factors.

**External factors:** these are causes lying outside the education system.

= cultural differences - language, reasoning skills, parental attitudes and education, working-class subcultures, 'cultural deprivation'; material deprivation; cultural capital, marketisation and parental choice.

**Internal factors:** these lie within the school.

= labelling/self-fulfilling prophecy, streaming and the A-C economy, pupil subcultures, marketisation and selection policies

## HOME BACKGROUND FACTORS

### Intellectual development, attitudes, values and language

#### Intellectual development

- Early age, middle-class children have greater intellectual development.
- Cultural deprivation theorists - w/c families have fewer books, educational toys, etc.
- **Douglas** - differential socialisation and lower levels of parental interest in schooling shown = main cause of working-class underachievement.

#### Language

- **Bereiter and Engelmann** w/c language is limited and limits abstract thought.
- **Basil Bernstein** - two main forms of linguistic expression - the 'restricted' and the 'elaborated' speech codes. 'Restricted' code is grammatically simple, lacks clarity in sentence construction, employs short sentences, limited vocabulary, descriptive rather than analytical and content is specific to the situation. = typical of the working class. 'Elaborated' code is grammatically more complex, uses longer sentences, is more detailed and analytical and is not context-limited. 'Elaborated' = 'universalistic' as = abstract, it can be understood by a wider audience. This code is more typical of the middle class. Education system uses the 'elaborate' code so w/c are disadvantaged.

#### Working-class subcultural values:

- **Hyman** w/c parents undervalue education by adults = results in working-class pupils viewing schooling as merely a prelude to getting a manual job.
- **Sugarman** - w/c culture = fatalistic - idea that their lower status was relatively fixed. So w/c children do not see much point in investing effort into something which will have no effect on their lives. M/c pupils with a set of attitudes emphasising the value of deferring gratification - will get greater rewards later in life.
- **Murray** - New Right perspective - development of an underclass culture = distinct set of values which stem from high rates of illegitimacy, single parenthood, welfare dependency, poor socialisation of children etc. = pathological view of part of working-class culture. This cultural deprivation = creating pupils who are fundamentally alienated from education.

#### Level of parental education:

- **Feinstein** argues there is a direct correlation between the level of parental education and how successful their children are in education - even amongst middle-class families.
- More highly educated parents have a parenting style that includes high expectations.
- More highly educated parents make more effective use of their (usually higher) income e.g. buying educational toys.

### Evaluation

#### Cultural deprivation?

- These explanations imply there is something missing, deficient, ineffective in w/c culture, language, use of income etc. At times this seems to be blaming this social group.
- What is seen as 'cultural deprivation' may simply be more down to differences.
- W/c parents may simply have more practical difficulties in visiting schools.
- **Keddie** (1973) sees this as 'victim-blaming' rather than seeking the real causes.
- Why is one form of language 'better' than another? It is more a case of school's attitudes towards different language codes than the codes themselves. **Troyna and Williams** argue that in terms of language, it is the school's attitude that is the problem.

#### Material deprivation

- Material deprivation refers to poverty and limited material resources.
- Educational under-performance is linked to poverty.
- Nearly 4 million children live in poverty according to government figures.
- Most failing schools are in low-income areas.

### Effects of material deprivation

- Poor housing produces overcrowding, greater health problems. Some children live overcrowded accommodation.
- Poor families often in temporary accommodation or move more often - leading to poorer educational experience.
- Poor diet = poor nutrition, weakens immune system and lowers stamina.
- Poverty is linked to higher levels of psychiatric illness.
- Lack of income means children from poor families lose out on educational visits etc. Costs of educational success are outside poor families' budgets.
- Low family income means children more likely to work and lose study time.
- Pupils receiving free school meals can be targets of bullying.
- Working-class children are more likely to go to local universities to reduce costs.

### Costs of education and fear of debt

- Schooling appears to be free but necessary materials, support and affording good quality clothing etc puts a financial burden on poorer families.
- Entering post-18 education, working-class students are more debt averse so some do not go to university for this reason - also higher drop-out rates.

### Bourdieu: Cultural Capital

Bourdieu argues there are three types of capital - economic, educational and social.

- Cultural capital: This is the attitudes and values, language and cultural knowledge that the middle-class commonly have. They have greater understanding and experience of the education system and knowing how it operates gives them an advantage.
- Economic capital can be converted into educational capital e.g. private education.
- Sullivan found economic resources were also a very important factor.

## SCHOOL FACTORS

### 'Labelling' and the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'

'Labelling' is an idea used by interactionist sociologists to describe the way social actors attach 'labels' to other social actors. The main 'labeller' is the teacher; the main 'labelled' the pupil.

**Becker** - teachers judge pupils against 'ideal pupil' image, middle-class pupils are far more likely to fit this model of a pupil than are working-class students.

- Students will experience their 'label' and may come to believe it
- = insight into the power of teachers to influence the behaviour and academic performance of students and thus have a major impact on the attainment of different groups of students.
- **Gillborn and Youdell** - teachers use notions of 'ability' linked to social class to type pupils.
- A 'self-fulfilling prophecy' refers to the way that by making a prediction, the prediction itself helps to produce the prophesied outcome. Pupils may give up their efforts which in turn will reduce the likelihood of gaining a qualification.

### Teacher expectations

- 'Teacher expectations' = assessment teacher makes of a pupil in terms of their behaviour, academic performance and potential. This perception is transmitted to students.
- **Rosenthal and Jacobson** set up an experimental situation to try to test the power of teacher expectations. The only influence on pupils were the higher expectations the teachers now had of their ability.

### How might pupils react to being 'labelled' by teachers?

- A label, backed by the authority of the teacher, might be difficult for the pupil to escape. One of the effects of being labelled in this way is the lowering of a pupil's self-esteem.
- Pupils might reject the label. Fuller's study of Afro-Caribbean girls indicated that rather than accept the negative labels given to them by teachers, they actively rejected.
- Labelling may create or reinforce an anti-school pupil sub-culture.

### What might influence the way a pupil responds to being labelled?

- Middle-class pupils may have greater ability to re-negotiate the 'label'.
- An existing anti-school pupil subculture might offer an alternative set of values.
- Parental involvement and home culture may influence the response to the label.

### Criticisms of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy

- 'Labelling' = deterministic idea - once a 'label' is attached, then the individual will act out that label. This is clearly not always the case and labels can be negotiated.
- In secondary schools when an individual pupil may have more than a dozen different teachers, it is unlikely that all these teachers will share the same 'label'.
- Rosenthal and Jacobson did not actually observe and record how this process of 'labelling' takes place in the classroom..
- 'Labels' may be accurate. A pupil labelled as 'disruptive' may, in reality, = disruptive pupil.

### Streaming and setting

- Streaming and setting is very common in almost all secondary schools.
- **Hargreaves** and **Lacey** identified the way m/c pupils over-represented in higher sets and streams, working-class pupil, under-represented.
- **Keddie** - streaming based on how pupils matched the 'ideal student' image. Because w/c pupils were more likely to challenge teachers, they were less likely to fit this image.

### Marketisation and selection

- League tables, competition between schools and formula funding affect school selection policies.
- **Gillborn and Youdell** - schools operate an 'A\*-C economy' which targets help at those on the borderline of GCSE grade C = 'educational triage'.
- **Bartlett** argues schools 'cream-skim' (take the best pupils) and 'silt-shift' (move weaker pupils out) to improve their market position.

### Pupil subcultures

- Pupils may respond to labelling collectively, forming subcultures. = set of values, attitudes and behaviours in a group which differs to the dominant culture of the school.
- Often = a counter-school culture e.g. **Willis** - 'the lads' - group of working class boys - developed behaviours to help them deal with school.
- **Hargreaves** - setting and banding created pupil subcultures. Pupils in top sets tended to create a conformist subculture which accepted school while those that did not often grouped together to form a non-conformist subculture.
- **Woods** believed that pupils adapted to school in a range of different ways. Some pupils tried to ingratiate themselves with teachers, others merely complied, some went through the motions and others rebelled.

### Class identities and Schooling

Several concepts are useful to understand how labelling and other school processes affect pupil's identities.

- **Habitus:** class-based ways of thinking and acting, including lifestyles, fashion, consumption patterns - differ between classes and the greater social power of the middle class ensures that their habitus is seen as superior. = same habitus as the school.
- **Symbolic violence:** Schools denigrate w/c habitus - leads to conflict between two lifestyles e.g. school dress codes conflicting with working-class 'style' or differences in language, accent etc. Schools = symbolically (not actually) being violent towards this group's culture.
- **Pressure to 'fit in':** academically capable w/c pupils - conflicting pressures from home/community and school. So going to university may be seen as not what people like us do or somewhere you won't fit in or it simply may just not suit their lifestyle.
- **Self-exclusion:** Evans – w/c girls inhibited from applying to top universities and from moving away from home to study. This limited future educational and career options.



## GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### The 'gender gap' in educational attainment

- Boys lag behind from Year One in all skills including literacy.
- This gap continues through KS1-3.
- Girls outperform boys at GCSE (10% more girls than boys gain 5+ A\*-C grades)
- Post-16 a higher proportion of girls gain top grades – though the gap narrows at this point.
- This 'gender gap' is not confined to Britain.

### Problems with the idea of a 'gender gap'

The picture is more complex. The 'gender gap' = not the same in all subjects, not the same at all levels of education, affected by social class and ethnicity, not necessarily translated into better jobs/careers for women, happening within improving results for both males and females.

### 'Moral panic' over 'boys under-achievement'?

- **Wiener** and others have suggested that the issue of male under-achievement has been inflated into a 'moral panic' by politicians and others.
- It is also the case, that the relationship between gender and attainment is much more complex than simply being a case of 'boys' under-achievement'. Not all groups of girls are outperforming boys.

### Explanations of achievement and girls

#### External factors (outside school factors)

- **Feminism:** social movement to improve female opportunities raised awareness and female aspirations, changes in laws relating to pay, employment and rights etc.
- **Changes to employment:** Equal pay and anti-discrimination laws + changes to occupational structure moving towards the service sector. = opportunities for women to develop careers.
- **Changing ambitions:** 1970s girls' career came behind family and marriage. = changing in the 1980/90s and now more focus on a career. = expectation of economic/social independence - need to obtain qualifications. There is a greater range of role models.
- **Changes to family structure:** important changes in family structure, increase in divorce, increased number of lone-parent families.

#### Internal factors (in-school factors)

- **Educational policies to help girls** - attempts to improve the academic performance of girls. Girls Into Science and Technology, National Curriculum, OFSTED guidelines.
- **Coursework favours girls** coursework helped female students achieve higher grades. This reflects a different approach to schoolwork than that of boys.
- **National Curriculum** The National Curriculum means that both male and female pupils have to do broadly the same courses up to age 16.
- **Marketisation:** girls are more 'valuable' to schools - can boost the school league table position. Girls benefit as they are therefore more likely to attend a successful school.
- **Gender role models in schools:** there are increasing numbers of female Headteachers and senior staff in secondary schools.

### Evaluation

- It is difficult to estimate the impact of feminism as it is so general.
- There are major class differences in girls' ambitions - working-class girls continuing to focus more on family and home than on an external career.
- Mac an Ghail and others have pointed out that women still face disadvantage in employment through the 'glass ceiling' etc. despite their better educational performance.
- Equal opportunities policies have been fairly patchy.
- Girls also outperform them in examinations as well.
- Post-16, traditional gender choices still seem to occur.
- Radical feminists argue that schools are still patriarchal.

## Boys' underachievement

- **Poorer employment prospects for males** Changes in the structure of employment have drastically reduced the number of manual jobs. This may mean that boys have lower expectations of a job/career and consequently.
- **Male overconfidence** Boys tend to be over-confident in their own abilities - leave it too late to take to do the necessary work.
- **'Men behaving badly' imagery/anti-school culture** Doing schoolwork is seen as not being masculine, especially in working-class subcultures Boys who do work get bullied.
- **Male literacy problems** Parents may not read as much to boys, their leisure pursuits may not involve much reading or writing, or these activities may be perceived as being feminine.
- **Feminisation of education** - shortage of male teachers in primary schools, school perceived as feminine + lack of male discipline that boys are more used to..

## Evaluation

- Changes to employment = mainly manual work – academic qualifications not needed.
- Male over-confidence not recent thing.
- Some would suggest that laddish cultures are nothing new.
- Many female teachers have a similar approach to discipline to that of male teachers.

## Gender and achievement Evaluation

- Labelling, anti-school subcultures, male over-confidence etc. are all not new factors.
- The cause seems to lie in society-wide changes - employment opportunities, changes in career aspirations of girls, the declining influence of traditional views of males and females in relation to work, equal opportunities laws.

## Gender identities, subject choice and schools

### Subject Choice

- National Curriculum has reduced the amount of choice pupils have up to the age of 16.
- In post-16 education, gender still seems to affect subject choice. This is particularly true of vocational choices.

## Why are girls less likely to take science, technology or mathematics courses in post-16 education?

- **Teacher direction** may channel girls away from traditionally 'male' subjects.
- Vocational courses tend to fall into 'traditionally male' and 'traditionally female' categories.
- Choice of subjects at 16 is strongly influenced by **ideas about careers**.
- Some **parental influence** may reinforce traditional gender-based choice of subjects.
- **Early gender role socialisation** shape the future career intentions of girls and boys.
- **Female experience of male domination** of the classroom
- The **absence of female role models** may discourage girls from taking certain subjects.
- Colley (1998) suggests that the **way a subject is taught**.
- **Gender domains**. A lot depends on how a subject is perceived.

## Gender identities

### How can males dominate the classroom?

- Access to limited classroom resources.
- Intimidating female pupils through verbal/body language during classroom interaction.
- The 'Male Gaze'. Girls are assessed as sexual objects – devalued and objectified.
- Claiming disproportionate attention from teachers through either negative or positive classroom behaviours.
- Double standards about sexuality exist as outside the classroom.
- Males also police each other through their peer group. Working-class boys macho culture rejected boys who worked at school.

### How might teachers reinforce male domination of the classroom?

- Teachers may accept male domination of the classroom.
- Teachers using sexist language
- Using gender-specific examples e.g. football analogies.
- Patronising female students/tolerating male behaviour

### A 'patriarchal curriculum'

- The content of the formal curriculum often reflects male concerns. In History, for example, women are largely invisible.
- Best some textbooks had become more balanced in representation of men and women, there was still some disparity in the images presented.
- Limited resources often means that schools retain textbooks with more traditional images.

### Identity and Class

- Working-class girls experience a conflict between their home/peer group values and the school.
- They get 'symbolic capital' – esteem – from their peers by creating for themselves a glamorous identity, spending a lot of money on make-up etc. They place great store in having a boyfriend.
- All this brings them into conflict with the school. They are seen as being distracted from schoolwork by spending too much time on developing this identity.
- W/c girls have choice – follow their peer group or accept the values of the school.
- Their dilemma causes them to underachieve.
- Even w/c girls who succeed at school then find it difficult to leave their home culture behind. So they tend either not to go to university or apply to local universities.

## ETHNICITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### How does ethnicity affect educational outcomes?

- 'Ethnicity' is not easy to define and measure.
- Relationship between ethnicity and attainment is more complicated than gender and class links. Many different ethnic groups in Britain and educational performance varies greatly. Chinese and Indian pupils do better than average; Pakistani and Afro-Caribbeans less well.
- Social class and gender also 'cut across' this picture, for example, Caribbean girls do better than Caribbean boys. Possibly the group giving greatest concern is white working class boys.

### Explanations of ethnic differences in achievement

#### External factors

##### Home Culture/Family structure

- 'Cultural deprivation' models = something lacking in a child's home background e.g. **Murray** (1984), a New Right theorist, argues that blacks have a high proportion of lone-parent households. = absence of male role models, family life described by **Pryce** as 'turbulent'. Asian family life is seen to be much larger and more closely knit + more closely linked into the community - high value placed on education, but also the community reinforces this. The **Swann** report connected the Asian family with high levels of educational performance. **Driver and Ballard** (1981) described it as a 'positive resource' for educational development.
- **Sewell: fathers and gang culture** Absence of strong nurturing father = street gangs of similar boys can take their place. Aspirations are channelled = successful gang member.
- **White working-class families** Low level of aspiration and achievement amongst white w/c pupils which may reflect limited parental support and working-class street culture.

#### Criticisms

- Some of the claims = stereotypical and they the additional danger of 'blaming the victim'. **Sewell** (1997) - minority of black boys respond to 'cultural deprivation' in an anti-school way.
- Afro-Caribbean parents developing supplementary schooling at weekends/school holidays.
- = more a case of finding a characteristic of a particular family structure and then claiming a link between it and high or low rates of attainment.

#### Language

- Language disadvantages experienced by Asian students whose first language is not English
- The research into this relationship seems to suggest that it is an unlikely cause of differential achievement.
- **Modood** - high performance of Indian pupils = any language disadvantage is temporary.

## Social Class

- Much of the educational disadvantage experienced by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis = result of being disproportionately working class. **Swann (1985)** put the contribution of class at 50%.
- However, the impact of class seems to vary between different ethnic groups.
- Indian pupils – who tend to be from more middle-class homes - do better than Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils = correlation between material circumstances and achievement.

## Racism in society

- The material deprivation experienced by some minority ethnic groups is linked to racism and discrimination in wider society.
- This leads to social exclusion, poorer job prospects, lower income and poverty.

## Internal school factors

### Teacher attitudes and racism

- **Gillborn and Youdell** - teachers hold 'racialised expectations' of pupils and treat black pupils more negatively because they expect them to be more difficult to handle.
- **Wright** - Asian pupils in primary schools = 'invisible' and treated insensitively by teachers and white pupils. Afro-Caribbean pupils identified as being disruptive and classroom management problems. Black pupils = four times more likely to be excluded from school. The general concepts of 'labelling' and 'the self-fulfilling prophecy' can be applied.
- **Mirza** - teachers held some form of racist attitudes. There are the 'overt racists', the 'liberal chauvinists' and the 'colour-blind' who see 'no problem here' because all pupils are equal.

### Criticisms

- **Mac an Ghail** found that there was no clear relationship between students who expected to fail and those who had experienced racism.
- **Fuller** black girls response to being labelled = to reject the label and work hard.
- Asian and black pupils = defined as 'problems' by some teachers. If Asian pupils are seen as 'problems' how do most of them end up achieving better qualifications than white pupils?
- Much of the research evidence does not see teachers as being racist in their contact with ethnic minority pupils.

## Pupil responses and subcultures

**Sewell** - black male pupils respond to teacher racism in several ways, 'rebels', 'conformists', 'retreatists' and 'innovators'. Rebels = relatively small group but their activities fed into teacher perceptions of black pupils in general.

## Critical Race Theory

- **Troyna and Williams** = institutional racism in schools.
- **Gillborn** - marketisation = pressure on schools to get high results means some minority ethnic group children seen as 'liability students' and are less likely to get into high achieving schools.
- **The ethnocentric curriculum Coard** - history curriculum in schools often covers only white history or history from a white perspective.
- **Ball** - National Curriculum is Eurocentric
- **Assessment and Support** Black pupils are more likely to be entered for lower tier exams.
- Teachers tend to underestimate the abilities of black pupils in school-based assessments.
- Schools = returning to using IQ style tests for admissions and internal streaming.

### Criticisms

- However, although these explanations may work to some extent for black British pupils, why do Indian and Chinese pupils outperform white pupils even though their cultures are under-represented in the curriculum?
- Others believe it is external factors that exert the greater influence.

# SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: BASIC EDUCATION NOTES

## 1. EDUCATION POLICY IN BRITAIN

### POLICY ISSUES

#### 1 Selection and Choice

Should there be different kinds of schools? How should schools select pupils - open entry or test?

#### 2 Inequality/Equality

Should there be equality of educational opportunity? Do policies create more inequality?

#### 3 Comprehensivisation

This is where all pupils attend their local school run by locally elected councils.

#### 4 Marketisation and Privatisation

Should state education be like a 'market'? Should schools be like competing businesses? Should state education be run by private business?

#### 5 Who should influence education policies?

Teachers, parents, central government, local councils, businesses, school governors/trustees?

### Pre-1944

Working-class children only received basic education to age 13.

### 1944 onwards

Based on meritocracy (individuals should achieve their status by their own abilities and efforts, rather than their social class of birth) = tri-partite system post-11. Two types of schools run by local councils (Local Education Authorities - LEAs). 11+ exam.

- **Grammar schools** - academic education for those who passed the 11+ - mainly middle-class pupils. About 20% of pupils attended grammar schools.
- **Secondary modern school** - non-academic = mainly attended by working-class pupils.

### Criticisms

- 11+ biased towards middle class
- 'Intelligence' is impossible to measure objectively
- Idea of 'academic', 'technical' and 'practical' intelligences is very dubious

### Comprehensive education 1960s onwards

- Comprehensive education from the mid-1960s in most areas.
- Most of the pressure for comprehensives came from Labour governments.
- All pupils in an area attend the same school. No selection.

### Criticisms of comprehensive education

- New Right: comprehensives 'dumbing down' with academic students 'held back'.
- Inequality continued within comprehensive schools through setting and streaming.

### EDUCATION POLICIES UNDER CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS 1979-97

Conservative education policy aims:

Raise standards by making schools compete – creating an 'education market', increase parental choice, control what was taught in schools.

**Marketisation and 'parentocracy'** – Neoliberal/New Right: state control = lower standards and inefficiency. Introduce market forces into state education to drive up standards.

Bring in 'parentocracy' - parent power in state education.

### The 1988 Education Reform Act

National Curriculum in England and Wales.

System of national assessment primarily through SATs

- Schools can 'opt out' of their LEA.
- Open enrolment - parents right to choose which school their children attended.
- Formula funding - funding a school received is based on the number of pupils it attracted.

**Other policies:** Exam results and truancy rates published, OFSTED inspections.

### **Key marketisation policies**

**Formula funding:** money = how many pupils the school attracts.

**Parental choice:** Parents could apply to any school. So schools have to work hard to attract them.

**League tables** gives parents the information needed to choose the school for their children.

### **The impact of marketisation policies**

- Increased inequality as middle-class parents - cultural capital to take advantage.
- Has increased social segregation.
- High achieving schools can 'cream-skim' - be selective and take most able pupils.
- Formula funding also creates sink schools - take any pupils just to survive.
- Parentocracy is a myth. It may be more true for middle-class parents.

### **NEW LABOUR 1997-2010**

- New Labour: education is the key to economic success in a modern global market.
- Marketisation was needed to promote diversity and choice.
- All pupils to have good basic skills in numeracy and literacy.
- However, they were also concerned that some groups were failing in education.

Labour kept parental choice and competition between schools - also want to reduce inequality.

### **Unchanged Conservative policies**

League table, school inspections, power to take over failing schools, National Curriculum and testing, Local Management of Schools, formula funding, student loans rather than grants.

### **New policies**

Reducing primary class sizes, literacy and numeracy hours, social exclusion units to help the most deprived pupil, Education Action Zones/Aimhigher, Educational Maintenance Allowances(EMA) post-16, City Academies - a fresh start for inner-city schools.

### **Evaluation of Labour policies**

- Benn calls Labour's policies paradoxical. Some promote inequality, others try to reduce it.
- Marxists: retaining the 'education market' = Labour is perpetuating class inequalities.
- They failed to remove the charitable status of private schools or abolish grammar schools..
- However, Labour governments substantially increased education spending.

### **Conservative-led policies 2010-15 Privatisation**

- Promised to lift the 'dead hand of the state' from education.
- Marketisation became the privatisation of state education, especially post-11 schooling.

### **Neoliberalism**

- Neoliberals/New Right: state = more bureaucratic and inefficient than privately run services.
- Competition creates excellence and raises educational standards.
- Before 2010, this meant an education market. After 2010, it led to the privatisation of education.

### **Marketisation and privatisation**

- **Marketisation** = 'internal education market', schools compete with each other.
- **Privatisation:** private companies run schools and educational services.

### **Policies**

**Academies:** 2015 about 70% of secondary schools had become academies. Many were operated by academy chains. Criticisms - using public funds for highly paid management.

**Free Schools:** Parents, faith groups, charities, businesses can set up a free school using state funding. Some have been branded 'inadequate' and closed. Allen - they benefit middle-class parents and they take disproportionately fewer pupils on FSM.

**Pupil Premium:** extra money directed at disadvantaged pupils.

**Public spending cuts:** education spending has fallen for most schools.

**Changes to what schools teach:** exams more made difficult.

**Out-sourcing education services:** Prison education, supply teachers, libraries, teacher's pensions, Ofsted inspections etc are all provided by private companies, public and private sectors blurred.

**Globalisation of UK state education:** some services are provided by global corporations.

### **Compensatory education**

- ' = educational weaknesses of pupils = overcome by targeted educational assistance.
- deficiencies in material or cultural background = compensated by special initiatives.

### **Examples of compensatory education programmes.**

Labour - Education Action Zones, AimHigher programmes and EMA's.

## **2. SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION**

### **Sociological theories of the role of education:**

- Functionalism
- Neoliberalism and New Right
- Marxism

### **FUNCTIONALIST APPROCHES**

#### **Key concerns and ideas:**

- Functionalists = interested in the (positive) functions education performs for society
- For society to survive, it needs to be united. Members of society need the same norms.
- Education plays an important role in teaching individuals norms and values.
- Education also allocates individuals into work roles that match their abilities.

### **Durkheim**

#### **Linking individuals and society: creating social solidarity**

Education makes individuals feel they are part of a larger group.

**Learning social values** - School is a miniature version of society

**Specialist work skills** - teach work skills needed by society.

### **Parsons**

**Learning 'universalistic values':** within the family = treated as individuals. Society has universal rules applied equally to everyone. The school = a 'bridge' between family and society = a secondary socialising agency.

**Meritocracy** A person is judged on own merits/efforts. Status is achieved not ascribed.

### **Davis and Moore: role allocation function**

Some individuals have greater talents, positions in society require different talents, most able individuals need to be allocated the important jobs, education identifies those with the greatest ability - they get greatest rewards in order to attract them.

### **Criticisms**

- Relationship between society and individuals isn't just a one-way process – interactionists.
- Functionalism assumes agreement over the basic values in society
- It is doubtful whether schools do teach the work skills needed by the economy.
- Persisting class inequalities in educational achievement indicate lack of meritocracy.
- The New Right argues that state education fails to prepare young people for work.

### **Vocational education:**

- This is work-related education for specific jobs or types of jobs.
- This fits well with functionalism, neoliberalism and New Right.
- Vocational education initiatives criticised for not linking to work opportunities but low-paid work. W/c/minority ethnic group members are channelled into low-paid, non-career jobs.

## NEOLIBERALISM AND NEW RIGHT

### Neoliberalism:

The state = too powerful, inefficient, bureaucratic and oppressive, education left to free market, competition drive up standards, schools should be run on business lines.

These ideas have influenced all governments since 1979.

### New Right:

- A form of neoliberalism, New Right favours meritocracy, creating shared values but the state allows poor performing schools to continue/lower standards persist.
- The state has two roles - ensuring a shared set of values is transmitted setting up a framework to monitor the actions of privatised education services (e.g. Ofsted).

### Chubb and Moe

Comparison of USA state and private schools = state education is inefficient; advocate voucher system - power is in the hands of parents/consumers as in the world of business.

### Criticisms of Neoliberalism and New Right

- Middle-class parents have the resources to gain extra educational advantage.
- Markets create inequality.
- It is not proven that lack of competition lowered standards
- The most successful become over-subscribed and selective reduces consumer choice.
- Markets work for certain products, not for a public service like education.

## MARXIST PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

### Key concerns and ideas:

- Capitalist society = exploitation of workers by owners of means of production.
- Education meets needs of capitalism - easily exploited workforce.

### Bowles and Gintis

Key messages passed through '**hidden curriculum**' - not just the content of school subjects. Education produces a docile, divided workforce motivated by money, accepts being exploited.

The '**correspondence principle**' = the school **corresponds** to the workplace:

Hierarchy, power, organisation of work, motivation, equal opportunities

The school is where '**social reproduction**' occurs - future generations of workers are prepared to accept their roles in capitalist society.

### The myth of meritocracy: legitimisation of inequality.

- Reality of capitalism = some social groups have better educational opportunities.
- Working-class pupils are taught believe that any failure is their fault.

### Criticisms of Bowles and Gintis

- = very deterministic view and not all schools/pupils may act in same way.
- Modern systems of work often demand imagination, flair, teamwork not docile workers.
- Is the 'hidden curriculum' really that 'hidden'?
- Giroux = education system is less closely tied into the demands of the economy.

### Paul Willis 'Learning to Labour' (1977)

- The 'lads' had counter-school culture. After schooling, the 'lads' became manual workers.
- The 'lads' did not accept any ideas about meritocracy so school had not prepared them to be docile obedient workers.
- But still prepared the 'lads' for exploitation - rebellion against school led them into the world of unskilled jobs because they ended up with no qualifications.

### Bourdieu : 'Cultural capital'

- Middle-class pupils have advantage over w/c pupils - share the culture of the school.
- Their language and values = like those of the school.
- This 'cultural capital' enables middle class families to reproduce their class advantage.



### **'Cultural capital' and the 'education market'**

**Ball:** open enrolment and parental choice = middle-class parents use their greater 'cultural capital' and wealth – know 'the system', could move house, could pay for private tuition.

### **Althusser: education as an 'ideological state apparatus'**

- Education transmits ideological justification of the inequality inherent in capitalist society.
- Secondly, it actually reproduces the very inequality it justifies.

### **Post-Fordism and postmodernism:**

- Bowles and Gintis - the 'assembly line' developed by Ford company - is not really much like the modern workplace. Post-Fordist businesses need skilled/flexible workforce.
- Postmodernists argue that in a globalised economy, retraining in new skills is necessary. .

### **Criticisms:**

- Although the old economic structures have largely disappeared, the relationship between the owners of capital and those who do not own capital, remains.
- In the world of zero-hours contracts, minimum wage jobs, casualisation of labour, agency work, inequalities based on class still exist.

## **THE INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION**

### **Interactionist studies**

- **Becker** teachers classify pupils against 'ideal pupil' - intelligent, motivated, well behaved - creating positive/negative labels. Middle-class pupils were more likely to fit this ideal type. This generates self-fulfilling prophecy - pupils live up to their label.
- **Hargreaves** three stages - 'speculation', 'elaborated' and 'stabilisation' stage.
- **Rosenthal and Jacobson** measured the effect on attainment of teacher expectations -they found that high expectations (unrelated to ability) led to an increase in achievement.
- **Teacher expectations Ball** - teachers differing expectations of different ability bands **Keddie** lower bands get poorer resources etc.
- **Pupil adaptations Woods** - eight ways pupils adapt to the demands of the classroom. rebellion, compliance, ingratiation, ritualism and colonisation. Teachers collaborate.
- **Gender in the classroom Stanworth** found that teachers learned boys names more quickly, held higher academic expectations of boys. **Spender** – girls= 'invisible'..
- **Ethnicity and the classroom.** Many teachers hold ethnocentric attitudes. **Wright:** primary schools noted that teachers saw Asian students as quieter - usually received least classroom attention. Afro-Caribbean students often perceived to have behaviour problems.

### **Criticisms of Interactionism**

- Labelling = deterministic model of behaviour - pupils not necessarily accept the label.
- Can a common label be applied in secondary schools?
- Rosenthal and Jacobson did not observe to see how labels were transmitted.
- The influence of wider social factors cannot be identified.

### 3. DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT - SOCIAL CLASS, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

#### SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

- There is a very close relationship between social class and educational performance = regardless of how the education system has been organised.
- The higher a person's social class, the higher their level of educational attainment.

#### **Sociological explanations of social class differences in achievement**

Sociologists tend to see two broad causes of social class differences - external and internal factors.

**External factors:** these are causes lying outside the education system.

= cultural diffs - language, reasoning skills, parental attitudes and education, w/c subcultures, 'cultural deprivation'; material deprivation; cultural capital, marketisation and parental choice.

**Internal factors:** these lie within the school.

= labelling/self-fulfilling prophecy, streaming and the A-C economy, pupil subcultures, marketisation and selection policies.

#### HOME BACKGROUND FACTORS

#### **Intellectual development, attitudes, values and language**

##### **Intellectual development**

- Early age, middle-class children have greater intellectual development.
- Cultural deprivation theorists - w/c families have fewer books, educational toys, etc.
- **Douglas** - differential socialisation and lower levels of parental interest in schooling shown

##### **Language**

- **Bereiter and Engelmann** w/c language is limited and limits abstract thought.
- **Basil Bernstein** - the 'restricted' and the 'elaborated' speech codes. 'Restricted' code. = typical of the working class. "Elaborated" = 'universalistic' as = abstract, = more typical of the middle class. Education system uses the 'elaborate' code so w/c are disadvantaged.

##### **Working-class subcultural values:**

- **Hyman** w/c parents undervalue education by adults.
- **Sugarman** - w/c culture = fatalistic -no point in investing effort. M/c pupils = deferred gratification - will get greater rewards later in life.
- **Murray** - New Right perspective - development of an underclass culture = illegitimacy, single parenthood, welfare dependency, poor socialisation of children etc. Cultural deprivation = creating pupils who are alienated from education.

##### **Level of parental education:**

- **Feinstein** argues there is a direct correlation between the level of parental education and how successful their children are in education - even amongst middle-class families.
- More highly educated parents have a parenting style that includes high expectations.
- More highly educated parents make more effective use of their (usually higher) income.

##### **Evaluation**

##### **Cultural deprivation?**

- These explanations = something missing, deficient in w/c culture blaming this social group.
- What is seen as 'cultural deprivation' may simply be more down to differences.
- W/c parents may simply have more practical difficulties in visiting schools.
- **Troyna and Williams** in terms of language, it is the school's attitude = problem.

##### **Material deprivation**

- Material deprivation refers to poverty and limited material resources.
- Educational under-performance is linked to poverty.
- Nearly 4 million children live in poverty according to government figures.
- Most failing schools are in low-income areas.

### Effects of material deprivation

- Poor housing produces overcrowding, greater health problems.
- Poor families often in temporary accommodation or move more often.
- Poor diet = poor nutrition, weakens immune system and lowers stamina.
- Lack of income means children from poor families lose out on educational visits etc.
- Low family income means children more likely to work and lose study time.
- Pupils receiving free school meals can be targets of bullying.
- Working-class children are more likely to go to local universities to reduce costs.

### Costs of education and fear of debt

- Schooling = free but necessary materials, support and affording good quality clothing not.
- Post-18 education, working-class students are more debt averse.

## SCHOOL FACTORS

### 'Labelling' and the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'

'Labelling' is an idea used by interactionist sociologists to describe the way social actors attach 'labels' to other social actors. The main 'labeller' is the teacher; the main 'labelled' the pupil.

- **Becker** - teachers judge pupils against 'ideal pupil' image, pupils experience their 'label', come to believe it. = insight into the power of teachers to have major impact on attainment. 'Self-fulfilling prophecy' refers to the way that by making a prediction, the prediction itself helps to produce the prophesied outcome.
- **Gillborn and Youdell** - teachers use notions of 'ability' linked to social class to type pupils.

**Teacher expectations** = assessment teacher makes of a pupil in terms of their behaviour, academic performance and potential. **Rosenthal and Jacobson** experiment.

**How might pupils react to being 'labelled' by teachers?** = difficult for pupil to escape, lowers pupil's self-esteem. Pupils might reject the label. **Fuller** - girls actively rejected labels. **m**Labelling may create or reinforce an anti-school pupil sub-culture.

**What might influence the way a pupil responds to being labelled?** M/c pupils can re-negotiate the 'label', anti-school pupil subculture offer alternative set of values, home culture may influence the response to the label.

### Criticisms of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy

- 'Labelling' = deterministic idea.
- In secondary schools unlikely that all teachers will share the same 'label'.
- 'Labels' may be accurate. A pupil labelled as 'disruptive' may, in reality, = disruptive pupil.

**Streaming and setting** = very common in almost all secondary schools.

**Hargreaves** and **Lacey** identified the way m/c pupils over-represented in higher sets and streams, working-class pupil, under-represented. **Keddie** - streaming based on how pupils matched the 'ideal student' image.

### Marketisation and selection

League tables, competition and formula funding affect school selection policies.

**Gillborn and Youdell** - schools operate an 'A\*-C economy' which targets borderline of GCSE grade C = 'educational triage'. **Bartlett** - schools 'cream-skim' and 'silt-shift'.

### Pupil subcultures

- Pupils may respond to labelling collectively, forming subcultures. Often = counter-school culture e.g. **Willis** - 'the lads'.
- **Hargreaves** - setting and banding created pupil subcultures. Pupils in top sets tended to create a conformist subculture.
- **Woods** Some pupils tried to ingratiate themselves with teachers, others merely complied, some went through the motions and others rebelled.

### **Class identities and Schooling.**

- **Habitus:** class-based ways of acting, lifestyles, fashion, consumption patterns - greater social power of the middle class ensures that their habitus is seen as superior.
- **Symbolic violence:** Schools denigrate w/c habitus - leads to conflict between two lifestyles  
Schools = symbolically (not actually) being violent towards this group's culture.
- **Pressure to 'fit in':** academically capable w/c pupils - conflicting pressures from home/community and school. So going to university may not suit their lifestyle.
- **Self-exclusion: Evans** – w/c girls inhibited from applying to top universities and from moving away from home to study. This limited future educational and career options.

## **GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

### **The 'gender gap' in educational attainment**

Boys lag behind from Year One in all skills, continues through KS1-3, girls outperform boys at GCSE (10% gap 5+ A\*-C grades), post-16 more girls gain top grades – though the gap narrows at this point.

### **Problems with the idea of a 'gender gap'**

The 'gender gap' = not same in all subjects, or at all levels, affected by social class and ethnicity, not necessarily translated into better jobs/careers for women.

### **'Moral panic' over 'boys under-achievement'?**

- **Wiener** - issue of male under-achievement has been inflated into a 'moral panic'.
- Not all groups of girls are outperforming boys.

### **Explanations of achievement and girls**

#### **External factors (outside school factors)**

- **Feminism:** social movement to improve female pay, employment and rights etc.
- **Changes to employment:** Equal pay and anti-discrimination laws + changes to occupational structure moving towards the service sector.
- **Changing ambitions:** 1970s girls' career came behind family and marriage. = changing in the 1980/90s and now more focus on a career - greater range of role models.
- **Changes to family structure:** increase divorce, lone-parent families.

#### **Internal factors (in-school factors)**

- **Educational policies to help girls** – GIST, National Curriculum, OFSTED guidelines.
- **Coursework favours girls** - reflects a different approach to schoolwork than that of boys.
- **National Curriculum** male and female pupils have to do same courses up to age 16.
- **Marketisation:** girls are more 'valuable' to schools - can boost the school league table position. Girls benefit as they are therefore more likely to attend a successful school.
- **Gender role models in schools:** there are increasing numbers of female Headteachers.

### **Evaluation**

- It is difficult to estimate the impact of feminism as it is so general.
- W/c girls continuing to focus more on family and home than on an external career.
- Women still face disadvantage in employment through the 'glass ceiling' etc.
- Equal opportunities policies have been fairly patchy.
- Radical feminists argue that schools are still patriarchal.

### **Boys' underachievement**

- **Poorer employment prospects for males** drastic reduction in manual jobs. This may mean that boys have lower expectations of a job/career and consequently.
- **Male overconfidence** Boys tend to be over-confident in their own abilities.
- **'Men behaving badly' imagery/anti-school culture** Boys who do work get bullied.
- **Male literacy problems** Parents may not read as much to boys, their leisure pursuits may not involve much reading or writing, or these activities may be perceived as being feminine.
- **Feminisation of education** - shortage of male teachers in primary schools, school perceived as feminine + lack of male discipline that boys are more used to..

## Evaluation

- Changes to employment = mainly manual work – academic qualifications not needed.
- Male over-confidence not recent thing.
- Some would suggest that laddish cultures are nothing new.
- Read - many female teachers have a similar approach to discipline to that of male teachers.

## Gender and achievement Evaluation

- Labelling, anti-school subcultures, male over-confidence etc. are all not new factors.
- The cause seems to lie in society-wide changes - employment opportunities etc.

## Gender identities, subject choice and schools

### Subject Choice

- National Curriculum has reduced the amount of choice pupils have up to the age of 16.
- In post-16 education, gender still seems to affect subject choice. This is particularly true of vocational choices.

### Why are girls less likely to take science, technology or mathematics courses in post-16 education?

Teacher direction, ideas about careers, parental influence early gender role socialisation, female experience of male domination, absence of female role models, way a subject is taught, gender domains.

## Gender identities

### How can males dominate the classroom?

Access to limited classroom resources, intimidating female pupils through verbal/body language, 'Male Gaze, claiming disproportionate attention from teachers, double standards about sexuality, males police each other through their peer group.

### A 'patriarchal curriculum'

- The content of the formal curriculum often reflects male concerns.
- Still some stereotyping in books.
- Limited resources often means that schools retain textbooks with more traditional images.

## Identity and Class

- Working-class girls experience a conflict between their home/peer group values and the school.
- They get 'symbolic capital' – esteem – from their peers by creating for themselves a glamorous identity, spending a lot of money on make-up etc. They place great store in having a boyfriend.
- All this brings them into conflict with the school.
- W/c girls – follow peer group or accept the values of the school = causes them to fail.
- Even w/c girls who succeed at school then find it difficult to leave their home culture behind.

## ETHNICITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### How does ethnicity affect educational outcomes?

Relationship between ethnicity and attainment is more complicated than gender and class links. Educational performance varies greatly. Chinese and Indian pupils do better than average; Pakistani and Afro-Caribbeans less well. Social class and gender also 'cut across'.

## Explanations of ethnic differences in achievement

### External factors

#### Home Culture/Family structure

- 'Cultural deprivation' models = something lacking in a child's home background. **Murray**, New Right theorist, argues that blacks have a high proportion of lone-parent households. = absence of male role models. Asian family larger and more closely knit + more closely linked into the community - high value placed on education. **Swann** report connected the Asian family with high levels of educational performance. **Driver and Ballard** = 'positive resource'
- **Sewell: fathers and gang culture** Absence of strong nurturing father = street gangs of similar boys can take their place. Aspirations are channelled = successful gang member.

- **White working-class families** Low level of aspiration and achievement amongst white w/c pupils which may reflect limited parental support and working-class street culture.

### Criticisms

- Some of the claims = stereotypical and they the additional danger of 'blaming the victim'. **Sewell** - minority of black boys respond to 'cultural deprivation' in an anti-school way.
- = finding a characteristic of a particular family structure and then claiming a link.

### Language

- Language disadvantages experienced by Asian students whose first language is not English
- = unlikely cause of differential achievement.
- **Modood** - high performance of Indian pupils = any language disadvantage is temporary.

### Social Class

- Bangladeshi and Pakistanis = disproportionately working class. **Swann** class = 50%.
- Indian pupils –more m/c homes - do better than w/c Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils.

### Racism in society

- The material deprivation = linked to racism and discrimination in wider society.
- This leads to social exclusion, poorer job prospects, lower income and poverty.

### Internal school factors

#### Teacher attitudes and racism

- **Gillborn and Youdell** - teachers 'racialised expectations' of pupils.
- **Wright** - Asian pupils in primary schools = 'invisible' + black pupils identified as being disruptive and classroom management problems. Black pupils = four times more likely to be excluded from school. Labelling and 'the self-fulfilling prophecy' can be applied.
- **Mirza** - 'overt racists', 'liberal chauvinists' and the 'colour-blind' teachers.

### Criticisms

- **Mac an Ghail** found that there was no clear relationship between students who expected to fail and those who had experienced racism.
- **Fuller** black girls response to being labelled = to reject the label and work hard.
- Asian and black pupils = defined as 'problems' by some teachers. If Asian pupils are seen a 'problems' how do most of them end up achieving better qualifications than white pupils?

### Pupil responses and subcultures

**Sewell** - black male pupils respond to teacher racism in several ways, 'rebels', 'conformists', 'retreatists' and 'innovators'. Rebels = relatively small group but their activities fed into teacher perceptions of black pupils in general.

### Critical Race Theory

- **Troyna and Williams** = institutional racism in schools.
- **Gillborn** - marketisation = some minority ethnic group children seen as 'liability students' and are less likely to get into high achieving schools.
- **The ethnocentric curriculum Coard.**
- **Ball** - National Curriculum is Eurocentric
- **Assessment and Support** Black pupils are more likely to be entered for lower tier exams.
- Teachers tend to underestimate the abilities of black pupils in school-based assessments.
- Schools = returning to using IQ style tests for admissions and internal streaming.

### Criticisms

- However, although these explanations may work to some extent for black British pupils, why do Indian and Chinese pupils outperform white pupils even though their cultures are under-represented in the curriculum?
- Others believe it is external factors that exert the greater influence.

# METHODS IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION: FULL REVISION NOTES

## RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATION

### EXAMINER GUIDANCE

- *The exam question will ask you to apply your knowledge of methods to the study of a particular research issue in Education. It's not an ordinary methods question, it is an **APPLIED METHODS** question.*
- *This means you have to speculate about what the likely problems and possibilities are when using that methods to investigate that particular issue.*
- *A list of strengths and weaknesses of the method, unlinked to the particular issue is not going to get you much past half marks.*

**Research Characteristics** = aspects of the research issue/those involved/contexts that might make the research easier and/or more difficult. What makes this issue easier or harder to study (or both, more likely)? If you can identify some of these in your answer, you will gain extra marks.

You need to identify the **research characteristics** of the various groups and settings that are usually found in education.

### What groups/settings are there in education?

The main ones are:

- **PUPILS**
- **TEACHERS**
- **CLASSROOMS**
- **SCHOOLS**
- **PARENTS**

In this section, we'll try to develop some ideas about the research characteristics of these research groups/settings. We should consider issues like the following.

### What sort of issues should you consider?

- Are there particular difficulties or opportunities with **access**?
- Are schools **data-rich or data-poor**?
- How **vulnerable** is the group(s) you are investigating?
- What **timescale** issues are there?
- Is the research context **spatially** limited or open?
- What are the **language capabilities** of research subjects?
- How do **power, authority and status** affect responses and behaviour?
- Are there any **memory** issues?
- Have research subjects the **knowledge** that you are after?
- Are there particular **ethical concerns** over and above the usual ones?
- Are there any **legal** constraints?
- Are research subjects **used to being researched**/interviewed/observed?

### Some useful concepts:

- **Gatekeepers**: this is anyone or anything that has the authority (legitimate or otherwise) to allow, prevent or limit your research).
- **Impression Management**: social actors try to manipulate the impression other people have of us; this can be a barrier to research as the researcher has to get behind that image.
- **Peer group pressure**: respondents may feel pressurised into conforming to the views of your main reference group; applies to teachers as well as pupils.

- **Front-stage behaviour:** Goffman suggests we put on an act when we are out there in the social world; research needs to identify this but also...
- **Back-stage behaviour:** we don't always show our true feelings when we are front-stage, research needs to get behind the public performance and get back-stage with social actors.

NB When you refer to conventional methods concepts e.g. Hawthorne Effect, you need to connect it to the study of education.

## 1 PUPILS

(Note that pupils are from a wide age range – 5 to 18; and different social classes, ethnicities, genders)

**What makes them easier and/or harder to study?**

- **Access.** In one sense, not a problem. We know where pupils are – in the schools (at least most of them) so unlike some research groups, finding where they are is not a problem. What is though, is then gaining access to them for research purposes.
- How **vulnerable** are pupils? More than most groups in society – because of their age.
- This makes them harder to study because you have to be very careful what questions you ask and how you act towards them. But, maybe they are more naive and therefore more honest in their answers?
- This raises **additional ethical concerns.** Young people are more easily damaged (emotionally, psychologically, educationally). So they need additional protection from harm. Can they give informed consent?
- **Access** is controlled by several groups – parents, the school authorities, teachers, pupils themselves, child protection laws etc. Generally, the more **gatekeepers** (see above) you have to get through, the more permissions you need and need to keep maintaining, the more difficult the research is.
- **Language capabilities** of young people are not as developed as adults. This is a problem because they may not understand questions, some words might be interpreted differently, long questions can't be asked, answers may be unfocused etc.
- The **attention span** of pupils is less than adults. Questionnaires and interviews might have to be short and therefore less productive.
- There are **memory** issues. Young people have less developed memories. They may simply not recall or have partial recall of events.
- **Knowledge** may be an issue. A young person may simply not know what it is you are after. They may then make up something as a result.
- **Power, authority and status** affect the responses and behaviour of young people. They tend to defer to adult authority. So they may give answers or behave in ways they think will be what the adult researcher wants. Or they may 'clam up' in the presence of adult authority. Pupils may see the researcher as a 'teacher in disguise' and act as they would towards a teacher. Pupils with anti-school attitudes might be very uncooperative with the researcher, seeing them as part of the school hierarchy. Other pupils however, might be very cooperative.
- Pupils are **not used to being researched/interviewed/observed.** Something which is outside their normal experience is going to be alien to them.
- Pupils have some experience of **Impression Management** as they try to manipulate the impression other people – especially teachers - have of them; this can be a barrier to research as the researcher has to get behind that image.
- Pupils are particularly influenced by **peer group pressure.** They are very conscious of the way their peers see them so there is a big pressure to conform. So the researcher would get the group response, not those of individuals.



## 2 TEACHERS

### What makes them easier and/or harder to study?

- In what ways are teachers **vulnerable**? They have careers, mortgages, professional self-esteem etc. They would not want these to be damaged as a result of a research project. This may mean they want to protect themselves, the school they work in, their pupils etc and so the researcher may not get full disclosure.
- There may be **ethical and legal concerns** here. Teachers have a legal and moral duty of care towards their pupils. They must be very careful not to disclose information to a researcher that may be potentially damaging to pupils or the school. They must maintain pupils' anonymity and not give the researcher any 'guilty knowledge' about pupils, teachers or the school.
- **Access** is not a problem in terms of finding teachers – they're in school. However, teachers are very busy people and may not be prepared to spend a long time involved in interviews etc. (Not a problem with being observed as it doesn't take any of their time up).
- There are some **timescale** issues in that teachers lives are determined by their teaching timetable and they often have very few free periods.
- Teachers have strong **language capabilities**. This is a benefit as they are able to understand complex questions and give developed answers to them. However, it also means they are well-placed to be able to give careful responses that possibly do not give the whole truth.
- Teachers are likely to have the **knowledge** that researchers are after. They are well-educated and informed.
- Teachers are **used to being researched/interviewed/observed**. They have their lessons regularly observed by senior staff, Ofsted etc. This may mean that they will be happy for a researcher to observe them. However, it also means that they will have developed the skills to present themselves in a favourable light – to put on a show for the observer.
- They are highly skilled at **impression management** – after all, this is a central part of the teacher role. This is something they do all day, every day, towards pupils, colleagues, senior staff, parents etc. So it may make it more difficult for the researcher to get behind this public face.
- Much of a teacher's day is spent in the classroom – a classic **front stage** context. Few teachers are going to exhibit behaviour or language which leaves them open to criticism when they know they are being observed by a researcher. They have a professional code of conduct to follow and are unlikely to deviate from it under scrutiny.
- Getting **back stage** is not easy. Even the staffroom is not a fully back stage context as that is where colleagues observe each other.
- Teachers are subject to **peer group pressure** to conform. They have to continue working at the school after the researchers have left and it is important for them to maintain good working relationships so they will not be inclined to step out of line when being researched.

### 3 PARENTS

**Access** to parents is more difficult. Although schools have lists of parents, their addresses etc. It is unlikely that these will be shared with a researcher.

- Parents are **busy** people, often juggling childcare, work and other commitments. They have limited time to be involved in research. However, if they think the research might benefit their children then they may be quite keen to give their views.
- The **language capabilities** of parents are going to vary substantially according to social class and cultural background.
- Depending on class and background, the **power, authority and status** of the researcher may be an issue. Sometimes people are deferential to those they think of as being more highly educated, sometimes not.
- Parents are keen to create the right **impression** of themselves as being good parents. So they are likely to adjust their behaviour and views towards that image when they know they are being researched.
- Parents may have personal issues with a school or they may be overly-protective of the school their children attend.
- Parents are **not used to being researched** and they may find the research process strange and unnerving. However, they will be used to returning questionnaires to the school.
- There are **ethical concerns** associated with the parental role in relation to safeguarding their children.
- **Backstage** with parents tends to be the home. There are issues of access to private spaces such as homes. However, parents may feel more relaxed in their home environment.

### 4 CLASSROOMS

- In terms of identifying where classrooms are, there is no problem. However, **access** is a major concern. The classroom is a protected space. Access requires permissions from a wide range of **gatekeepers**.
- This is because those in the classroom are relatively **vulnerable**. Pupils especially, but teachers as well. If the researcher wants to carry out classroom observation, they require these permissions.
- The classroom is **spatially limited**. As a small space, it means most observation is easy as you can observe most of what is taking place. However, it also means that the observer can be seen – there is no hiding place in the classroom. Consequently, covert or even unobtrusive observation is impossible.
- Classroom interaction is relatively straightforward as there are only two main roles to observe, that of teacher and pupil. So observation is limited to teacher-pupil interaction and pupil-pupil interaction.
- An additional adult in the classroom is going to attract attention and as a result, behaviour may change and the Hawthorne Effect may result.
- There are hundreds of thousands of classrooms in UK schools and the researcher is likely only to be able to observe a handful. This raises issues of **representativeness**.
- The classroom is a front-stage context. You are observing behaviour that is to some extent controlled by the teacher and school rules. Although this is still 'genuine' behaviour, you may not get a complete picture from behaviour of the attitudes of pupils.

## 5 SCHOOLS

- **Access** is an issue. Although there is the strength of knowing where the schools are located – easy enough to find very quickly through an internet search – getting in to research schools is more difficult.
- Schools are very concerned about their **public image**. This is vital to their success in a competitive education market. Any research issue that is potentially damaging to a school's reputation is not likely to be approved by a Headteacher, even if anonymity can be guaranteed. This is an example of **institutional impression management**. And of the **vulnerability** of apparently strong people such as Heads.
- Schools are **data-rich**. They collect huge amounts of data of kinds that sociologists may well be interested in e.g. exam results, attendance, Free School Meals. Access to this data is variable. Any individual and personal data is unlikely to be handed over to the researcher. However, some data is publicly available – schools are required to publish results, Ofsted reports etc.
- There are **timescale** issues with schools. They are open for 200 days a year and for about 8 hours each day. They have a timetable which is fixed and which the researcher has to work around. Meeting cycles are also fixed.
- Schools are **spatially** large and **organisationally complex**. It will take an outsider quite a long time to find their way around a school both physically and in terms of the social relationships in it.
- Schools operate in a **legal** context.

## METHODS IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION: REDUCED REVISION NOTES

### RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATION

**Research Characteristics** = aspects of the research issue/those involved/contexts that might make the research easier and/or more difficult. What makes this issue easier or harder to study (or both, more likely)? If you can identify some of these in your answer, you will gain extra marks.

**What groups/settings are there in education? = pupils, teachers, parents, classrooms and schools** You need to identify the **research characteristics** of the various groups and settings that are usually found in education.

### 1 PUPILS

(Note that pupils are from a wide age range – age, class, ethnicity, gender)

**What makes them easier and/or harder to study?**

- **Access** - know where pupils are = in the schools but gaining access to them for research is.
- How **vulnerable** are pupils? More than most groups in society – because of their age = harder to study because affects questions asked and how you act towards them. But may be more naive and therefore honest in their answers.
- **Additional ethical concerns**. Young people are more easily damaged so need additional protection from harm. Can they give informed consent?
- **Access** is controlled – parents, school, teachers, pupils, child protection laws. Generally, the more **gatekeepers** you have to get through, the more permissions you need.
- **Language capabilities** not as developed as adults so may not understand questions, words interpreted differently, answers may be unfocused etc.
- The **attention span** of pupils is less than adults. Questionnaires/interviews have to be short.
- Young people have less developed **memories**. They may not recall or have partial recall of events.

- **Knowledge** - may simply not know what it is you are after and then make up something as a result.
- **Power, authority and status** - tend to defer to adult authority, give answers or behave in ways they think will be what the adult researcher wants. Or they may 'clam up'. May see the researcher as a 'teacher in disguise' and act as they would towards a teacher. Anti-school pupils might be very uncooperative with the researcher.
- Pupils are **not used to being researched/interviewed/observed**.
- **Impression Management** - try to manipulate the impression other people – especially teachers - have of them; this can be a barrier to research as the researcher has to get behind that image.
- Pupils influenced by **peer group pressure** = big pressure to conform. So the researcher would get the group response, not those of individuals.

## 2 TEACHERS

- Teachers = **vulnerable** - careers, mortgages, professional self-esteem etc. They would not want these to be damaged as a result of a research project. = protect themselves, the school they work in, their pupils so may not get full disclosure.
- They have a **legal and moral duty** of care towards their pupil = careful not to disclose information that may be potentially damaging to pupils/school. Maintain pupils' anonymity and not get 'guilty knowledge' about pupils, teachers or the school.
- **Access** is not a problem in terms of finding teachers but = busy people + not prepared to spend a long time in interviews etc. (Not a problem with being observed).
- **Timescale** issues – teacher's lives determined by timetable.
- Teachers have strong **language capabilities** – can understand complex questions and give developed answers. However, also means they give careful responses - not the whole truth.
- Teachers likely to have the **knowledge** that researchers are after - well-educated.
- Teachers are **used to being researched/interviewed/observed** by senior staff, Ofsted etc. This may mean that they will be happy for a researcher to observe them. However, it also means that they will have developed the skills to present themselves in a favourable light – to put on a show for the observer.
- Highly skilled at **impression management** = part of the teacher role, done all day, every day, towards pupils, colleague etc. More difficult to get behind this public face.
- Much of a teacher's day is spent in the classroom = a classic **front stage** context. Few teachers are going so things themselves open to criticism when being observed. Professional code of conduct to follow and are unlikely to deviate from it under scrutiny.
- Getting **back stage** is not easy. Even the staffroom is not a fully back stage context.
- Teachers are subject to **peer group pressure** to conform = important for them to maintain good working relationships so they will not be inclined to step out of line.

## 3 PARENTS

- **Access**. Although schools have lists of parents, their addresses but = unlikely these will be shared with a researcher.
- Parents are **busy** = limited time to be involved in research. However, if they think the research might benefit their children then they may be quite keen to give their views.
- The **language capabilities** going to vary according to social class and cultural background.
- Sometimes parents are deferential to those they think of as being more highly educated, sometimes not.
- Parents are keen to create **impression** of as good parents = likely to adjust their behaviour towards that image when they know they are being researched.
- Parents may have issues with a school or they may be overly-protective of the school.
- Parents **not used to being researched**. However, will be used to returning questionnaires.
- There are **ethical concerns** associated with the parental e.g. safeguarding their children.
- **Backstage** with parents tends to be the home. There are issues of access to private spaces such as homes. However, parents may feel more relaxed in their home environment.

## 4 CLASSROOMS

- No problem identifying where classrooms are. However, the classroom is a protected space. Access requires permissions from a wide range of **gatekeepers**.
- Those in the classroom = **vulnerable**. Pupils especially, but teachers as well..
- The classroom is **spatially limited**. = small space, so observation is easy, can observe most of what is taking place. However, observer can be seen – there is no hiding place in the classroom, covert/unobtrusive observation is impossible.
- Classroom interaction = only two main roles to observe, that of teacher and pupil. So observation = limited to teacher-pupil interaction and pupil-pupil interaction.
- An additional adult in the classroom is going to attract attention = Hawthorne Effect.
- Researcher only to be able to observe a handful. This raises issues of **representativeness**.
- The classroom is a front-stage context = behaviour controlled by the teacher. Although this is still 'genuine' behaviour, you may not get a complete picture.

## 5 SCHOOLS

- Know where the schools are located are, but getting in to research schools is more difficult.
- Schools = very concerned about their **public image** in competitive education market. Any research issue that is potentially damaging to a school's reputation is not likely to be approved by a Headteacher = **institutional impression management**. Shows **vulnerability** of apparently strong people such as Heads.
- Schools = **data-rich**, huge amounts of data of kinds that sociologists want e.g. exam results, attendance, FSM. Access to this data varies - personal data is unlikely to be handed over but some data is publicly available – schools are required to publish results, Ofsted reports.
- There are **timescale** issues = open 200 days a year and for about 8 hours each day. There have a timetable which is fixed. Meetings cycles are also fixed.
- Schools are **spatially** large and **organisationally complex**. It takes a long time to find way around a school both physically and in terms of the social relationships in it.
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## METHODS IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION: BASIC REVISION NOTES

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What groups/settings are there in education? = pupils, teachers, parents, classrooms and schools  
**You need to identify the research characteristics of the various groups and settings that are usually found in education. What makes them easier and/or harder to study?**

### 1 PUPILS

(Note that pupils are from a wide age range – age, class, ethnicity, gender)

- **Access** - know where pupils are = in the schools but gaining access to them for research is.
- More **vulnerable** because of their age = harder to study because affects questions asked and how you act towards them. But may be more naive and therefore honest.
- **Extra ethical concerns** = more easily damaged so need additional protection from harm. Can they give informed consent
- **Access: Gatekeepers** – parents, school, teachers, pupils, child protection laws.
- **Language capabilities** not as developed may not understand questions etc.
- The **attention span** of pupils is less than adults. Questionnaires/interviews have to be short.
- Young people have less developed **memories** - may not recall events.
- **Knowledge** - may simply not know what it is you are after - make up something instead.
- Tend to defer to adult authority or may 'clam up'. May see researcher as a 'teacher in disguise'. Anti-school pupils might be very uncooperative with the researcher.
- Pupils are **not used to being researched/interviewed/observed**.
- **Impression Management** - try to manipulate the impression other people.
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- Teachers are **used to being researched**/interviewed/observe so happy for a researcher to observe them. However, will have developed the skills to put on a show for the observer.
- Highly skilled at **impression management** = part of the teacher role.
- Professional code of conduct to follow and are unlikely to deviate from it under scrutiny.
- Getting **back stage** is not easy. Even the staffroom is not a fully back stage context.
- Teachers are subject to **peer group pressure** to conform.

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- Parents are keen to create **impression** of as good parents.
- Parents may have issues with a school or they may be overly-protective of the school.
- Parents **not used to being researched**. However, will be used to returning questionnaires.
- There are **ethical concerns** associated with the parental e.g. safeguarding their children.
- **Backstage** with parents tends to be the home = access to private spaces = difficult.

## 4 CLASSROOMS

- No problem identifying where classrooms are. However, the classroom is a protected space.
- Those in the classroom = **vulnerable**. Pupils especially, but teachers as well.
- The classroom is **spatially limited**. = small space, so observation is easy but observer can be seen – there is no hiding place, covert/unobtrusive observation is impossible.
- Classroom interaction = only two main roles to observe, that of teacher and pupil. So observation = limited to teacher-pupil interaction and pupil-pupil interaction.
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- The classroom is a front-stage context = behaviour controlled by the teacher.

## 5 SCHOOLS

- Know where the schools are located are, but getting in to research schools is more difficult.
- Schools = very concerned about their **public image**. Headteacher = **institutional impression management**. Shows **vulnerability**.
- Schools= **data-rich**, access varies - personal data is unlikely to be handed over but some data is publicly available – schools are required to publish results, Ofsted reports.
- **Timescale** issues = timetable which is fixed. Meetings cycles are also fixed.
- Schools are **spatially** large and **organisationally complex**.
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# RESEARCH METHODS: BASIC REVISION NOTES

## KEY IDEAS ABOUT RESEARCH METHODS

### Research methods – Key concepts

Reliability, representativeness and validity help assess the usefulness of a particular research method.

**RELIABILITY:** replicable, re-testing, common measurement, objective, scientific.

**REPRESENTATIVENESS:** Generalisable to a larger group from smaller sample, cross-section, proportionately similar.

**VALIDITY:** meanings held, authentic, measures what it seeks to measure.

**Structured research:** structured interviews, surveys/questionnaires, structured observation and official statistics = high in reliability and representativeness, low in validity.

**Unstructured research:** unstructured interviews, participant observation, personal documents = high in validity but low in reliability and representativeness,

## PRIMARY RESEARCH METHODS

**Quantitative Research:** experiments (field and laboratory), structured observation, surveys (structured interviews and questionnaires).

**Qualitative research:** observation (overt, covert, participant), unstructured interviews.

**Primary research** can be: Covert – Overt Large-scale-Small-scale Researcher-led - subject-led Statistical-Descriptive Structured - Unstructured

## SECONDARY DATA

**Quantitative secondary:** official statistics, existing quantitative research.

**Qualitative secondary:** public documents, personal documents (diaries, memoirs etc.)

## THE TWO METHODOLOGIES: POSITIVISM and INTERPRETIVISM

**Methods** = research techniques used by sociologists. **'Methodology'** = ideas behind the choice of method. Does the sociologist think quantitative or qualitative data is best?

The two methodological approaches in sociology are:

### **Positivism/Quantitative and Interpretivism/Qualitative sociology**

Each of the 'two methodologies' is based on a set of assumptions about the nature of society, the most appropriate type of data to collect. This determines which research methods are chosen.

### **Positivism**

Quantitative research and surveys, structured interviews, structured observation, experiments and official statistics.

#### **Positivism: main assumptions**

Social world has an objective reality, external social forces direct behaviour, seen in patterns in human behaviour, these show cause-and-effect relationships, need quantitative data.

#### **Impact on choice of method**

Need systematic, objective, replicable, statistical from experiments, questionnaires, structured observation and structured interview, official and other pre-existing statistics. These use fixed questions/categories convertible into Statistics; samples = representative.

### **Interpretivism**

Qualitative research = participant observation, unstructured interviews and documents

#### **Interpretivism: main assumptions**

Social world has no single objective reality, each social actor/group defines 'reality' differently, aim = uncover meanings by going to the groups, qualitative data.

## **Why do Interpretivists prefer to use participant observation, unstructured interviews and documents in their research?**

Immersing themselves in group, experience first-hand what group does rather than what they might claim to do, getting behind the public face. Or, unstructured interviews - respondents speak freely, expressing themselves in own words. Documents written by research subjects for their own purposes - their personal meanings are more likely to be expressed.

## **CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHOD**

### **What influences a sociologist's choice of research method?**

- **theoretical/methodological preference of the sociologist**
- **practical considerations**
- **ethical issues**

### **1 Methodological preference**

'Methodological preference' - Positivism vs Interpretivism?

Methodological concerns are the first consideration - the type of data that they think is most appropriate. ***This is restricted by practical and ethical limitations.***

### **2 How do practical considerations affect choice of method?**

**Time** - PO and unstructured interviewing take more time than social surveys. *How important?*

**Finance** Postal questionnaires = most cost-effective

**Source of funding** Few researchers have a completely free hand.

**Personal concerns** of the sociologist, careers, family commitments etc.

**Nature of the research subject** - social groups may not welcome intrusion.

**Research opportunity** sometimes suddenly appears so

### **3 Ethical issues**

**Informed consent** not easy to get especially vulnerable, groups, 'gatekeepers', harder for covert methods. Justified to avoid the Hawthorne effect?

**Anonymity** Right to anonymity to avoid any negative effects.

**Impact on research subjects** e.g. psychological damage e.g. Milgram. May have legal or economic consequences for the group.

## **CHOICE OF RESEARCH TOPIC**

**1 Funding body** - they are paying for the study, so = major influence on the research.

**2 Theoretical perspective** e.g. feminist researchers likely to study issues affecting women.

**3 Practical issues** - especially time and access - may limit what issues can be studied.

**4 Contemporary issues** - what is seen as currently important in society.

**5 Researchers career**

## **EXPERIMENTS**

= method of natural sciences, variables identified and controlled, cause-and-effect relationships, key = control exercised by the researcher. Should sociologists use experiments?

= reliable and representative but can't 'put society in the laboratory'.

Interpretivists: people have free will and consciousness, laboratory lacks ecological validity.

### **Laboratory Experiments**

#### **Problems**

- **Artificiality** = highly artificial situation, do results apply to the real social world?
- **Identifying and controlling variables** too many variables in social life
- **Ethical problems** Most mislead people so informed consent not given.
- **'Experimental effect'/Hawthorne Effect'** Damages validity
- **Narrow focus** on one issue e.g. teacher expectations.
- **Humans are not objects** - have ability to make own decisions
- **Lack of representativeness** = small-scale so unlikely to be representative.
- **Inability to study the past.**

**Examples of studies to refer to:**

**Milgram** on obedience to authority, **Mayo's** Hawthorne study, **Zimbardo** on prison/authority.



## Field experiments in sociological research

Field experiments = amending existing real life situations for research purposes.

### Strengths

- **More 'real' than laboratory** Real-life situation = greater validity.
- **Controlling a single variable** is relatively easy.

### Limitations

- **Lack of scientific credibility** All variables not identified and controlled
- **Ethical problems** Usually no consent is obtained.
- **Limited scope** confined to single issue in a single context e.g. discrimination,
- **Interpretation** of responses

### Examples

Studies of racial discrimination, Rosenthal and Jacobson, Rosenham.

### The Comparative method

A 'thought experiment' - no actual experimentation. Compares groups of people that are similar in all ways except one e.g. Durkheim on suicide, Avoids artificiality and most ethical problems and can be used to study the past.

## SOCIAL SURVEYS - QUESTIONNAIRES

The social survey = structured, large-scale research, quantitative data, representative/generalisable, reliable, structured interview or self-completion questionnaire.

### Fixed response questions

Researcher decides response categories, limited range of response categories, quantitative data, everyone asked same questions, respondent has to choose a response category

### Open-ended questions

No fixed response categories, respondent decides how to respond, unlimited range of responses, respondents asked different questions, qualitative data, more valid data, cannot be placed in categories

### Problems with designing questions

Words are open to interpretation, technical terms, too long or contain more than one question, 'leading questions'. Which are more useful, closed or open-ended questions?

### Closed/fixed response questions – Positivists prefer them

= more reliable as same questions in the same order generates quantitative data.

### Closed/fixed response questions – why Interpretivists criticise them

Low validity, different interpretation, not communicate meanings respondents hold, limit the ways in which the respondent can answer = reduces validity.

### Open-ended questions – why Interpretivists prefer them

Higher in validity, explain in their own words, introduce own ideas and issues.

### Open-ended questions – why Positivists criticise them

Positivists: lacks reliability, impossible to categorise, open range of responses.

## SAMPLING

**Sample** = smaller part of the whole group, can't investigate everyone, needs a sample.

**Research population = everyone in the group being researched.**

**Sampling frame** = full list of the research population.

### 'Representativeness' and generalisations

Can research only a small proportion of the whole group but want to **generalise** about the whole group so sample has to be representative of the whole group - same characteristics, in the same proportions, as the whole group.

### **Do all sociologists want to use samples which are representative?**

However, interpretivists are interested in meanings = less important to study representative samples. Not always practicable either.

### **Size and representativeness**

Sometimes assumed a large research sample must be representative but representativeness depends more on the social characteristics of the sample reflecting those of the whole group being researched than on sample size.

### **What kind of samples are used?**

Random, stratified, opportunity/snowball, quota, multi-stage, cluster, purposive.

### **Postal Questionnaires – the mailed dimension**

#### **Strengths (and counter-limitations)**

**Geographically dispersed sample** *but no way of checking who has completed the questionnaire - out of researcher's control.*

**Large** sample contacted cheaply and quickly. *But response rate is often low.*

**Representative** sample more likely.

**Removes any 'interviewer bias'**. *However, this means no rapport can be built.*

**Standardised**, pre-coded questions - statistical - analysed – comparisons.

**Reliable** - can be **replicated** and results **verified**. *But validity is limited.*

#### **Limitations (and counter-strengths)**

Once questionnaire mailed, **passes out of researchers control**.

**Low response rate** - difficult to identify how representative. *However, follow-up letters, telephone contact etc can be used to boost the response rate.*

Generalisability is reduced.

**Questions open to interpretation** *but respondents have time to contemplate the questions.*

**Researcher not present** - no way of knowing who filled in the responses. *Follow-up interviews can get around this but are costly.*

### **Questionnaires: strengths and limitations**

#### **Strengths (and counter-limitations)**

**Practical strengths**: cheap and quick to distribute, contact large numbers. Identify complex correlations between factors very quickly. *However response rate can be less than 10%.*

**Testing hypotheses**. Test hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. Predict future behaviour. *However, correlations can be accidental and don't tell us about the reasons.*

**Representativeness** If a large enough sample generalisations can be made. *However, certain types of people are more likely to respond so skews sample.*

**Reliability** Same questions asked, same order and same response categories = re-testing, verification and comparative data.

**Few ethical issues** voluntary and anonymous = informed consent. No ethical issues of harm, right to withdraw etc *although chance of some deception.*

**Detachment** maintains objectivity and detachment - *but this means no rapport is created.*

#### **Limitations (and counter-strengths)**

**Response rate** Low, especially if mailed. Certain types more likely to reply = reduce representativeness. *However, the response rate higher when distributed and collected in.*

**Fixed questions** - new issues, problems with questions etc can't be addressed. *However, pilot study can get around this.*

**Lack of validity** Researcher determines questions, answer categories, sequence etc - so whose meanings are you getting? No researcher present = no way of explaining them. *However, this is balanced by greater reliability and representativeness.*

**Question types** Both closed- and open-ended questions can be used.

**Limited data** Questions brief and simple. This limits the quantity of data you receive. *However, good for getting basic information.*

**Right answerism** People may not be fully honest, 'right answerism'.

## INTERVIEWS

### Types of interviews

Unstructured/Formal - Structured/Informal – Group – combination.

#### Structured/formal interviews:

Verbal, face-to-face delivery of fixed questions, set response categories, data in quantitative form, analysed for trends and correlations, preferred by Positivists.

**Positivists:** standardised questions and responses are reliable and create statistical data, cause-and-effect relationships can be seen. More likely to be representative.

#### Strengths (and counter-limitations)

- Training interviewers inexpensive.
- Good for collecting basic information *however, this is very basic information.*
- Larger numbers can be interviewed because are quick. *Less depth of response.*
- High in reliability/replicability, standardised same questions asked in same order. *However, validity is lost as questions limit the responses interviewees can offer.*
- Quantitative data.
- Pre-coded questions reveal patterns and statistical correlations. *No insight.*
- Less 'interviewer effect'. *However, social interaction still takes place.*
- Still some interviewer effect. *However, limited as the questions are fixed.*
- Interpretivists question the validity as no scope for interviewees to fully explore their thoughts. *However, what is lost in validity may be gained in reliability.*
- Sociologist is imposing their views but = *only way to generate quantitative data.*
- Response categories can be limited, overlap or be open to interpretation.
- Interviewer can't explain questions to interviewees.
- Statistical data - no indication of the meanings individuals attach to events.
- What people say they do may not be an accurate reflection of what they actually do.

#### Unstructured/informal Interviews Characteristics

Open-ended, free-flowing, interviewees can raise issues they feel are important and respond in own words = qualitative data, personal and vivid.

**Interpretivists** favour this - open-ended questions meet need for validity. **Feminists** favour these interviews - they empower the interviewee and reduce gender power differences.

#### Strengths (and counter-limitations)

- Interpretivists - high in validity. *However, consequent loss of reliability.*
- Rapport, honesty, trust. *However, increases likelihood of the interviewer effect.*
- Respondents reply in own words. *But this is then very difficult to categorise.*
- The informal interview uncovers meanings held.
- Respondent can go in new direction. *But this makes data difficult to analyse.*
- Can check that interviewees have understood the question - follow-up questions.
- Flexibility - can explore unfamiliar topics. *However, the interviewee go off at tangent.*

#### Limitations (and counter-strengths)

- Positivists - low in reliability - nothing standardized *but more valid responses.*
- Open-ended interviewing requires substantial skills.
- No statistics. *However, data may give greater insight into reasons behind behaviour.*
- Small-scale and unrepresentative. *But aim is to obtain insights into meanings held.*
- Not as high in validity as claimed – interpretation of responses. *But at least meanings are uncovered and explored.*
- Interviewer bias can seriously affect the responses given.

#### Social interaction

- **Interviewer bias** reduces validity.
- **Status and power inequalities** affect way interviewees respond.
- **Artificiality** those involved know it's an interview so not like a normal situation.
- **Social desirability** - interviewee meets what they see as the interviewer's needs.

## Group interviews

**Advantages:** group dynamics, clarify meanings, interview more people, less artificial.

**Disadvantages:** Individuals dominate, difficult to quantify, move off issue.

## OBSERVATION

Participant - non-participant, structured - open-ended, covert – overt.

### Participant Observation

#### Strengths

Interpretivists argue participant observation = high in **VALIDITY**.

- **Naturalistic** - group is studied in normal social setting. If covert, observes group + not affect their behavior. *However, deception and lack of informed consent.*
- More **authentic** account - you see what a group does rather than what it says it does.
- **Open research process** - fluid, flexible, 'goes with the flow'. *But no structure.*
- **Insight** - layers of social norms peeled back. Sharing the experiences gives insight. *Can you rely on the interpretation of usually a sole observer?*
- **Flexible** enough for opportunity to be taken (e.g. **Patrick**) - *is just a chance event.*
- **Less planning required** *So there's no structure and organization.*

#### Limitations

##### Doesn't really achieve validity

- Even a skilled observer can mis-interpret events.
- The presence of an observer affects behaviour. *Fairly limited in covert research.*
- The observer is also going to be affected by the group, identifying with them or not. *But the observer will be aware of this danger and can prepare for dealing with it.*
- Observation is limited by what the observer sees and how they interpret actions.

##### Lacks reliability

- Positivists - PO flawed non-replicable. *But don't impose the researcher's values.*
- Cannot be replicated. *But this increases the likely validity of the research.*

##### Unrepresentative/cannot generalise

PO = 'one-off' studies, no way of knowing how representative, can't generalise.

**Costly/Time-consuming** *Some PO is relatively short-lived – a few weekends.*

**Difficulties in joining groups/sustaining covert roles** Some groups are secretive.

### Covert Observation

#### Advantages

- Does not disturb the normal behaviour of the group = valid data
- Observer as member dig deeper into the group's behaviour.
- Access to certain areas of the groups' behaviour may be only be possible in secret

#### Disadvantages

- Real purpose of the observer is uncovered = the whole research ends.
- Ethical issues of trust, lack of informed consent etc
- Recording difficult
- Hard to sustain - danger in maintaining secret identity
- May not be a suitable role for the observer

### Overt Observation

#### Advantages

Can ask questions - clarify meanings, informed consent, freedom to join in.

#### Disadvantages

Knowing observer's identity affects behaviour, reducing validity, some aspects of group closed to overt researchers, group may refuse access.

#### Structured observation

= behaviour recorded systematically way on record sheet.

**Advantages** : Quantifiable data, patterns can be identified, less time-consuming, replicable.

#### Disadvantages

Difficult to be covert, hard to maintain distance from group, overt observation changes behavior, lack of validity, depends upon interpretations, categories used may overlap.

## SECONDARY DATA

### OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Created by government, wide range of social issues, quantified, = monitoring the day-to-day activities of government but some surveys using sociological methods e.g. the Census.

#### Using official statistics in sociological research

= background information, generate research hypotheses, representative, reliable, comprehensive, published regularly, already in existence, cheap, large samples, usually pre-analysed, large-scale data e.g. Census = as complete a sample as possible. Ditto divorce, marriage, births, deaths. The state involved in many areas of social life of use to the sociologist.

#### Problems with official statistics in sociological research

##### Lack of control by the researcher

= based on official definitions, data presented in form needed by government depts, structured to meet official aims/objectives, interpreted in terms of government aims.

##### It is unlikely that official definitions match those of the sociologist

Interpretivists argue that official statistics are socially constructed not = 'facts' but result of social processes. Crime stats = result of a process of social interaction that results in a 'dark figure' of unrecorded crime.

##### Political bias in official statistics

Marxists = official statistics are politically biased e.g. definitions e.g. suppression of data e.g. Black Report into health inequalities, selective recording of crime by ethnic group, school league tables that make no consideration of social class differences.

### Evaluation

- **'Hard statistics'**: some official statistics are simple 'head counts' e.g. births, deaths. These do not have the same problems as other types of 'soft' official statistics.
- Official statistics have often been the focus of research itself e.g. Durkheim/suicide.

### Documents

Personal and historical documents; many forms, = mainly qualitative in nature, = tends to have a fairly limited application to sociology.

**Types of documents:** media reports, personal documents, oral histories, historical documents.

#### Personal documents - advantages

Fairly high degree of validity – especially if the author writes them without any foreknowledge of later use, insight = from those 'on the inside', sometimes = only records of a particular.

#### Personal documents - disadvantages

All personal documents are written for an audience so some bias, no way of knowing how representative a particular document is, difficult to evaluate validity.

#### Historical documents

Sometimes an historical perspective is useful = wrongly assume some social activity to be a recent development. Problems = representativeness, accuracy, language and interpretation.

## EXEMPLAR ANSWERS TO 10 AND 20/30 MARK QUESTIONS

### AS 10 mark question:

Outline and explain two roles that education performs according to Marxists.

(10 marks)

*“Marxists argue that education is structured in such a way as to re-create educational and social inequality. The class inequalities in education are reproduced down through the generations by the education system. In particular, working-class pupils are failed by schools on a consistent basis. Whatever education system there has been – tripartite, comprehensive, marketised, privatised – working-class pupils underachieve compared to middle-class pupils. Marxists argue that middle-class pupils have in-built educational advantages. Their parents have the economic, educational and social capital necessary to give their children extra advantages. For example, they are more likely to know how the system works and be able to get their children into the best schools, even to the extent of being able to afford to move to the areas where these schools are located. Teachers also see working-class pupils as more likely to be failures and treat them accordingly. Within the tripartite system, most middle-class pupils passed the 11+ and went to grammar school whilst most working-class pupils attended secondary modern schools. This reflected the class bias of the 11+ and also the ability of middle-class parents to afford extra tuition for their children.*

*Secondly, according to Marxists, education legitimates inequality. This is an important part of creating false class consciousness. Where there is inequality, there is always the possibility that those on the receiving end will rebel against the system. However, if they can be convinced that their position is justified, then this is less likely to happen. Bowles and Gintis see education as a giant myth-making machine. One of the greatest myths is that education is meritocratic, in other words, set up so that anyone can succeed, it all depends on the individual’s abilities and effort. So if you fail, it is not the fault of system, it is your own fault. This leads working-class pupils and parents to accept educational inequality as legitimate. It also prepares the way for occupational failure to be legitimated.”*

**Mark 10/10**

### Comments

There is no need for an introduction to this kind of question. It does require a piece of extended writing but it is not a full essay. The candidate takes the required number of explanations and does each in depth. There is a lot of explanation which will gain Analysis marks. There is no evaluation but this still gets maximum marks by offering a lot of analysis and application. A little bit of evaluation is always useful but not required to get top marks.

## A level 10 mark question:

### Item A

Boys are under-achieving compared to girls in many school subjects. As a result there have been concerns that boys are falling behind. Some sociologists have suggested that changes in employment opportunities have contributed to this pattern. Others have looked inside schools at changes to teaching and teachers or how male pupils themselves behave.

### Applying material from Item A, analyse two explanations why boys under-achieve in schools. (10 marks)

*“As Item A suggests, some sociologists believe that an important cause of boys’ underachievement is the changes to employment in the UK. The process of globalisation has led to a rapid decline in the traditionally ‘male’ types of employment. Mining used to employ ne million men, now it hardly exists. Shipbuilding, the steel industry and engineering have all declined to a point where they employ relatively few people. Cheap imports from China and the Pacific rim countries are now imported rather than made in the UK. The result is a large-scale identity crisis for men and consequently for boys. What is their future now there are no jobs of this kind to go to after school? With little likelihood of getting a job, many boys see no point in studying at school. With this lack of motivation they can enter a cycle of failure. However, some argue that jobs like these did not require academic qualifications so their decline could not have any effect on boys’ attitudes towards school and education. Secondly, as item A says, there have been changes to teaching and to teachers that negatively affect boys. There is a major lack of male teachers especially in primary education. Many boys never have a lesson with a male teacher until they go to secondary school and the vast majority of early years teachers are women. This lack of a male role model has been put forward as an explanation for why boys fall behind girls educationally. The suggestion is that a lack of male discipline in the classroom fails to keep boys focused on their work. This is part of what Sewell calls the feminisation of education. However, research shows that many female teachers employ the disciplinarian mode of classroom control as well – it not something confined to male teachers.*

**Mark: 10/10**

### Comments

There is no need for an introduction to this kind of question. It does require a piece of extended writing but it is not a full essay. The candidate takes the required number of explanations and does each in depth. Crucially these are both taken from points made in the Item. The candidate is careful to point out at the start of each paragraph where in the Item the starting point for each explanation. This gains marks for Application. There is a lot of explanation which will gain Analysis marks. There is a little bit of evaluation at the end of each explanation – you could achieve full marks without this but it is always useful to stay on the zone and evaluate as you go.

### AS 20 mark/AL 30 mark question:

Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that ‘the main aim of education policies in the last 25 years has been to create an education market’.

*“Government policies over the past twenty five or so years have introduced a market in education. The Conservative government began this in the 1980s and New Labour continued it in the 1990s and the 2000s. However, New Labour also brought in policies that tried to directly help the most disadvantaged groups as well.*

*The 1988 ERA brought in several main marketisation policies. Sats at different ages and GCSEs enabled schools’ performance to be compared. They are used to produce league tables which show which schools are doing best in terms of exam results. Later versions of league tables took students on free school meals into account because otherwise schools with middle-class pupils usually did best automatically.*

*League tables are linked to parental choice. In the old system, schools had catchment areas and parents sent their children to the local school. Now they could choose which school they went to and of course, parents now use league tables to find out the best performing schools and try to send their children there. This makes parents and pupils into consumers of education - one side of the education market.*

*The other side of the market is the way schools have to operate like businesses trying to attract consumers. The main way this has been done is through formula funding. This means that schools get money for each pupil they attract. The better performing the school, the more pupils they attract and the more money they get – just like a business. However, this has been criticised for being unfair to schools with working-class pupils. They do less well in exams so the image of the school drops. Parents send their children elsewhere and the school loses money. The school becomes a sink school and the pupils still these lose out.*

*More recently, policies that give schools more freedom to act in ways they think will bring in more pupils have been introduced. These include schools having subject specialisms and academies. The way the education system now works is a long way from the old comprehensive system where schools had catchment areas and everyone went there. Whether or not it has raised standards is another question.*

*In conclusion, although there have been some policies that have attempted to reduce inequalities, most education policies have aimed to create a market. The claim is that this drives up standards. Although standards have risen, critics argue that the main group to benefit has been the middle-class. They are able to use their economic and cultural capital to win in the market.”*

### Mark 18/20 Commentary

Overall, a good answer based on sound knowledge with good analysis and evaluation. It gets a good mark but doesn’t quite get to the top of the mark range.

A way to move up to the top mark would be to inject some theory into the answer. Here’s how it could be done. This paragraph offers a theoretical basis for marketisation – that of the New Right. It also gives a basic Marxist criticism of the New Right claim. Marks here for theory and for evaluation.

*“Behind the policy push for an education lie the ideas of the New Right. People like Chubb and Moe believe that the only way to increase standards in schools is by as much competition as possible, even to the point of a voucher system which effectively privatises every school. Marxists argue that this is just a front for penalising the most disadvantaged groups in society. These groups will end up in the weakest, under-funded schools in a marketplace.”*

Alternatively, another paragraph could focus on the issue of whether all policies have created an education market. The paragraph below picks up on the word ‘main’ in the question and asks whether all education policies have been directed at creating a market. Having pointed out that some have not, though evaluation, the answer comes back to the argument that although some policies are not marketisation policies, the main thrust of policy has been to create a market.



*“Although the main aim of education policy in the last 25 years has been to create an education market, other policies have worked against a market. For example, Sure Start, Aim Higher and EMAs were brought in to help the least able to give them assistance. In doing so, these actually work against a market because they are helping one group (the disadvantaged) against another (the advantaged). Marxist critics of New Labour argue that these policies were just sticking plasters that had little effect and did not really help the disadvantaged. The education market still won through.”*

At A level, you would expect an answer to have this kind of challenge to the question and reference to theory.

## Item B

Sociologists have identified the existence of anti-school subcultures in which pupils involve themselves, sometimes as a way of gaining status denied to them by the school. As these are group activities, some sociologists have used group interviews to investigate them. This kind of qualitative, informal interview makes it easier for a bond to develop between interviewer and interviewees. There is also the likelihood of interplay between participants creating a range of responses.

**Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the strengths and limitations of using group interviews for investigating pupil anti-school subcultures.**

**(20 marks)**

*“Group interviewing is a method favoured by interpretivist sociologists. They look for methods that allow them to dig deep in to people’s feelings. Group interviews are less pressurised than many research methods and give people the time to answer questions.*

*Item B states that group interviews give younger pupils in particular greater confidence to speak. This is important because young people are generally less articulate than adults so sitting in an interview with several of their peers may make pupils more relaxed. This is especially true of pupils with anti-school attitudes as they often suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.*

*Group interviews are usually open-ended and free-flowing which allows for the creation of data that is high in validity. However, it is unlikely that the same group interview can be repeated in a similar way so the study is likely to be low in reliability. Although the group interview covers several interviewees at one time, they take a long time so the study is likely to be unrepresentative as well.*

*It could be argued that because pupils, especially younger ones, have poorer literacy skills than adults, an interview is better suited to them. What they may not be able to write about in a questionnaire, they may be able to discuss in a relaxed group interview. Pupils in anti-school subcultures are particularly likely to have poorer literacy as they truant and lack motivation to learn to be literate.*

*Pupils may not feel happy to talk to someone who is an adult and who might look like a ‘teacher in disguise’. Because of their young age, pupils are more vulnerable and tend to go along with adult authority. This means they’re more likely to give answers they think the adult interviewer wants to hear.*

*Of course, many pupils who are members of anti-school subcultures will be truants – that is part of being anti-school. So they will not always be around when the interviewer wants to interview them. That means the group in the group interview will keep changing – or maybe no-one will turn up!*

*There are many important gatekeepers to researching in schools – head teachers, teachers, governors, parents – more than in most social situations. This will make getting permission to carry out research more difficult as so many permissions will be needed.*

*Group interviews can also be carried out with teachers and used to explore their feelings about anti-school subcultures. One problem however, is that teachers have professional roles to maintain and they will usually try to keep up a ‘front’ which reflects these rather than their real feelings. So a teacher might have negative attitudes towards pupils in anti-school subcultures but keep these hidden because they are supposed to treat all pupils fairly.*

*Both pupil subcultures and group interviews are group actions. They involve a lot of peer group pressure on individuals. The interviewer is unlikely to see any individual differences of opinion when they are interviewing members of a group of anti-school pupils – anyone who stepped out of line would feel the peer pressure on them. Similarly, any pupil with pro-school attitudes would feel that they couldn’t show them in the presence of a group like ‘the lads’.*

**Mark 20 /20**

## Commentary

Paragraphs 2, 4 and 8 are very good example of ‘Level 3’ responses. For example, truanting is a characteristic of anti-school pupils rather than a characteristic of pupils in general. Furthermore, the student has connected this to group interviews and how it might affect research.

There are also several other times when a research characteristic of pupils or teachers is indicated - examples of Level 2 responses.