

4

Education and methods

Introduction

Why do we spend the best years of our life in school? Until recently, most people managed quite well without a formal education. They learned what they needed from family, friends, and neighbours.

This type of informal education continues to be an important part of the socialisation process. What's new is a state system of formal education. It consists of specialised institutions – schools, colleges and universities – and selected knowledge and skills transmitted by professionals – teachers and lecturers.

Education is important. It takes up a significant proportion of people's lives – at least eleven years. And it affects them for the rest of their lives. It's very expensive – in 2006/07 government expenditure on education in the UK was £71.5 billion, 12.9% of all public expenditure. And the cost rises year by year (HM Treasury, 2007).



Starting out

chaptersummary

- ▶ **Unit 1** looks at the role of education in society.
- ▶ **Units 2, 3 and 4** outline explanations for the differences in educational attainment between different social classes, gender and ethnic groups.
- ▶ **Unit 5** focuses on the classroom. It examines the hidden curriculum, pupil subcultures, teacher-pupil relationships and the organisation of teaching and learning.
- ▶ **Unit 6** looks at how government policy has shaped the education system from 1870 to the present day.

Unit 1 The role of the education system

keyissues

- 1 What are the main views of the role of the education system?
- 2 What are their strengths and weaknesses?

This unit looks at the role of education in society. In simple terms, this means what does education do? Does it benefit society and if so, how? Is it harmful to society, or to certain groups within society? Is it doing its job well or badly?

1.1 Functionalist perspectives

Functionalism is a sociological theory which is based on the following ideas. Society has certain basic needs, the most important of which is the need for social order. Without order, society would tend to disintegrate, to fall

apart. Social order is largely based on *social solidarity* – social unity. Social solidarity results from shared norms and values. Shared norms mean that social life is predictable and runs smoothly. Shared values usually result in people cooperating and pulling in the same direction.

When analysing a particular part of society, such as the family or the political system, functionalists often ask, 'What is its function?' By this they mean, 'How does it meet society's basic needs?'; 'How does it contribute to the maintenance and well-being of society?'

Functionalism is no longer fashionable. However, functionalist ideas about the role of education in society still influence some researchers. These ideas will now be examined.

Emile Durkheim

Social solidarity Writing over 100 years ago, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim argued that *social solidarity* –

activity1 social solidarity

Item A Oath of allegiance



American school children pledging loyalty to their flag and country.

question

How can Items A and B be used to illustrate the view that education helps to unite members of society?

Item B Teaching history

Davy Crockett's story has been retold on countless occasions in schools across the USA. Davy Crockett pulled himself up by his own bootstraps. He became a skilled hunter and marksman in the backwoods of Tennessee, before joining the US army as a scout. He was elected three times as a Congressman. Hearing of the Texans' fight for freedom against Mexico, he gathered a dozen volunteers to help them. He died fighting the Mexican army in 1836.

Source: Newark, 1980



Davy Crockett (right) at the Alamo

social unity – is essential for the survival of society. Social solidarity is based on 'essential similarities' between members of society. According to Durkheim, one of the main functions of education is to develop these similarities and so bind members of society together.

The USA provides a vivid illustration of Durkheim's views. Its population is drawn from all over the world. A common educational system has helped to weld this diverse mass of human beings into a nation. It has provided common norms and values, a shared sense of history and a feeling of belonging to a wider society.

History and social solidarity Durkheim sees a common history as vital for uniting members of society. American schoolchildren grow up with stories about their country's founders, eg George Washington cutting down his father's cherry tree, and their country's heroes, eg Davy Crockett who grew up in the backwoods of Tennessee, was elected to Congress, and died a hero, fighting for freedom against the overwhelming force of the Mexican army at the Battle of the Alamo in Texas in 1836.

With a shared history, people feel part of a wider social group – it is their country, made up of people like themselves. In this way, education contributes to the development of social solidarity.

Specialised skills Industrial society has a *specialised division of labour* – people have specialised jobs with specific skill and knowledge requirements. For example, the skills and knowledge required by plumbers, electricians, teachers and doctors are very different. In preindustrial societies there were fewer specialised occupations. Occupational skills were often passed from

parents to children. According to Durkheim, the specialised division of labour in industrial societies relies increasingly on the educational system to provide the skills and knowledge required by the workforce.

Talcott Parsons

Secondary socialisation Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, the American sociologist Talcott Parsons developed Durkheim's ideas. He saw the educational system as the main agency of *secondary socialisation*, acting as a bridge between the family and the wider society. Schools build on the primary socialisation provided by the family, developing *value consensus* – agreement about the values of society – and preparing young people for their adult roles (Parsons, 1951, 1961).

Individual achievement is a major value in modern industrial society. In schools, young people are encouraged to achieve as individuals. High achievement is rewarded with praise, high status, good grades and valuable qualifications. This prepares young people to achieve as individuals in the world of work.

Equality of opportunity – an equal chance for everybody – is another major value in modern society. Schools transmit this value by offering all their pupils an equal chance of success.

According to Parsons, schools are miniature versions of the wider society. They reflect the values of the wider society. Young people are required to act in terms of those values in the classroom. And, as a result, they are prepared for adult roles.

Role allocation Parsons sees *role allocation* as one of the main functions of the educational system. This involves sifting, sorting, assessing and evaluating young people in terms of their talents and abilities, then allocating them to appropriate roles in the wider society. For example, people with artistic talent are directed towards and trained for occupations such as photographer, graphic designer and fashion designer.

Role allocation involves testing students in order to discover their talents, developing those talents on appropriate courses, then matching those talents to the jobs for which they are best suited.

Functionalism and education – evaluation

The following criticisms have been made of functionalist views of education.

- Rather than transmitting society's values, the education system may be transmitting the values of a ruling class or ruling elite.
- History teaching in schools may reflect a white, middle-class view. This may discourage social solidarity. Many ethnic minority groups are demanding that history teaching reflect *their* historical experience and *their* viewpoint. For example, in the USA, African-American history is now a major part of the history curriculum.
- There is evidence that certain groups underachieve in schools – for example, the working class and certain ethnic minority groups. This suggests that a) pupils do not have an equal opportunity b) their talents have not been effectively developed and assessed and c) the system of role allocation is not very efficient.
- Is the educational system providing the knowledge and skills required in the workplace? It is difficult to see a direct link between many school subjects and the world of work.

key terms

Social solidarity Social unity.

Specialised division of labour A labour force with a large number of specialised occupations.

Secondary socialisation The process of socialisation which builds on the primary socialisation usually conducted by the family.

Value consensus An agreement about the major values of society.

Individual achievement Achieving success as an individual rather than as a member of a group.

Equality of opportunity A system in which every person has an equal chance of success.

Role allocation The system of allocating people to roles which suit their aptitudes and capabilities.

1.2 Marxist perspectives

Marxism is a theory named after its founder, Karl Marx (1818-1883). It starts from the idea that the economic system largely shapes the rest of society. So, for example the political and educational systems are largely shaped by the economic system.

Marxists argue that there are two main classes in society – the *ruling class* and the *subject class*. The power of the ruling class comes from its ownership of the economic system. Thus in today's society, capitalists – those who own private industry – form the ruling class – and workers – those who sell their labour in return for wages – form the subject class. According to Marx, the ruling class exploit the subject class – they gain at the expense of the workers. Workers produce wealth in the form of goods and services yet a large part of that wealth is taken from them in the form of profits by the capitalist class.

In Marx's words the ruling class 'rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas'. These ideas justify their position, conceal the true source of their power and disguise their exploitation of the subject class. In Marx's view this *ruling class ideology* is a far more effective means of domination than more obvious forms of control such as physical force. It presents a false picture of society which keeps the subject class in its place.

activity2 examinations



questions

How can the type of formal examinations pictured here:

- encourage individual achievement
- form part of the process of role allocation?

Education and ideology

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher, argues that no class can hold power for long simply by the use of force. Ideology provides a much more effective means of control – if people's hearts and minds are won over then force becomes unnecessary.

Althusser (1972) argues that in modern society the education system has largely replaced the church as the main agency for ideological control. In the past, people tended to accept their station in life because they saw it as God's will. Today, this acceptance comes in part from their experience of education.

First, schools transmit an ideology which states that capitalism is just and reasonable. Second, schools prepare pupils for their roles in the workforce. Most are trained as workers – they are taught to accept their future exploitation and provided with an education and qualifications to match their adult work roles. Some – the future managers, administrators and politicians – are trained to control the workforce. Their educational qualifications *legitimate* – justify and make right – their position of power. They become the 'agents of exploitation and repression'.

Althusser argues that ideology in capitalist society is

fundamental to social control. He sees the main role of education as transmitting this ideology.

Correspondence theory

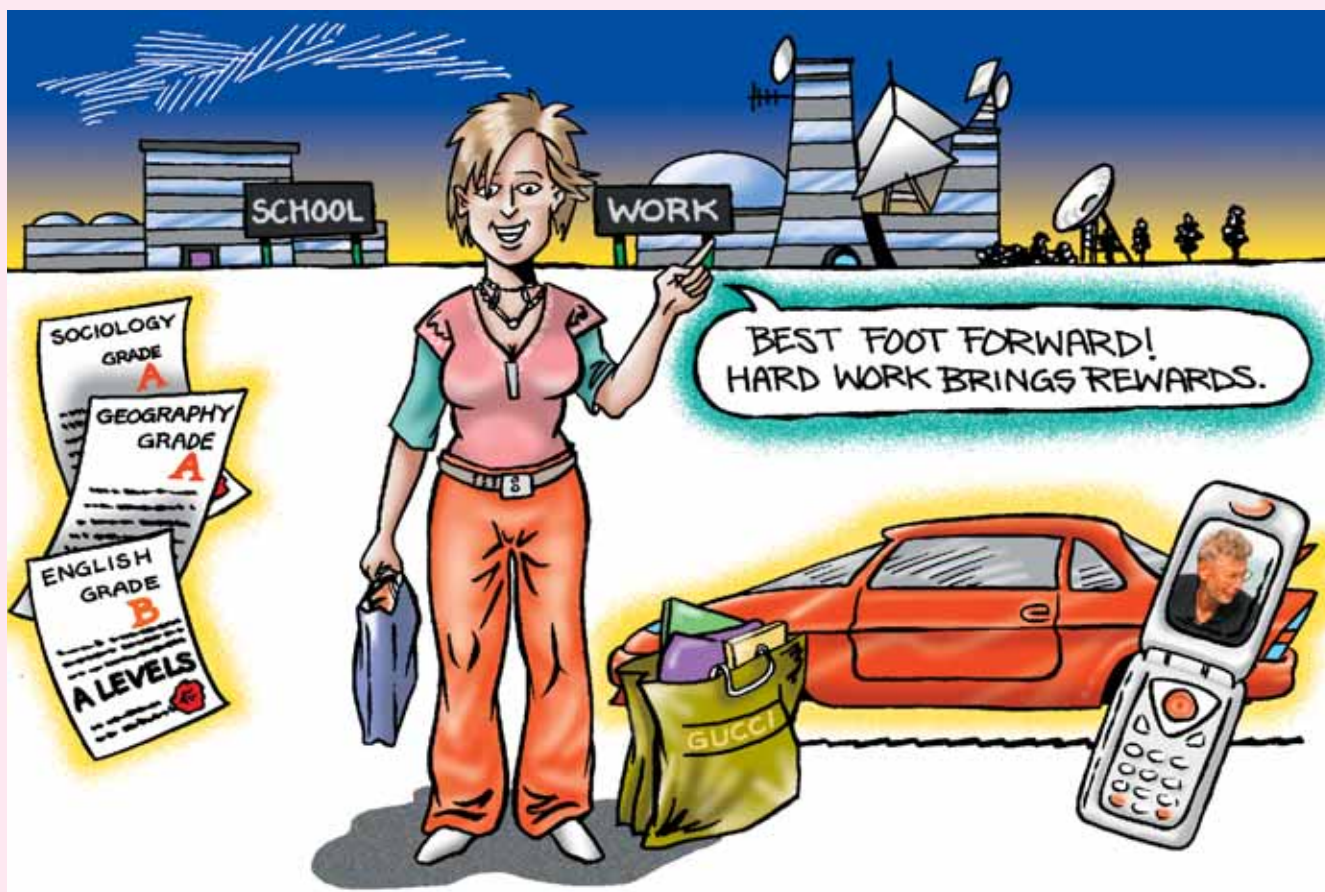
In *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis claim that there is a close *correspondence* between the social relationships in the classroom and those in the workplace. This correspondence is essential for *social reproduction* – the reproduction of new generations of workers appropriately schooled to accept their roles in capitalist society.

School and workplace Schools, like the wider society, are based on hierarchies – layers of authority. Teachers give orders, pupils are expected to obey. Pupils have little control over their work, over the curriculum they follow. This corresponds to their later experience of lack of control in the workplace. Schools reward punctuality, obedience and hard work; they discourage creativity, independence and critical awareness. This is directly in line with the kind of worker required by employers in capitalist society.

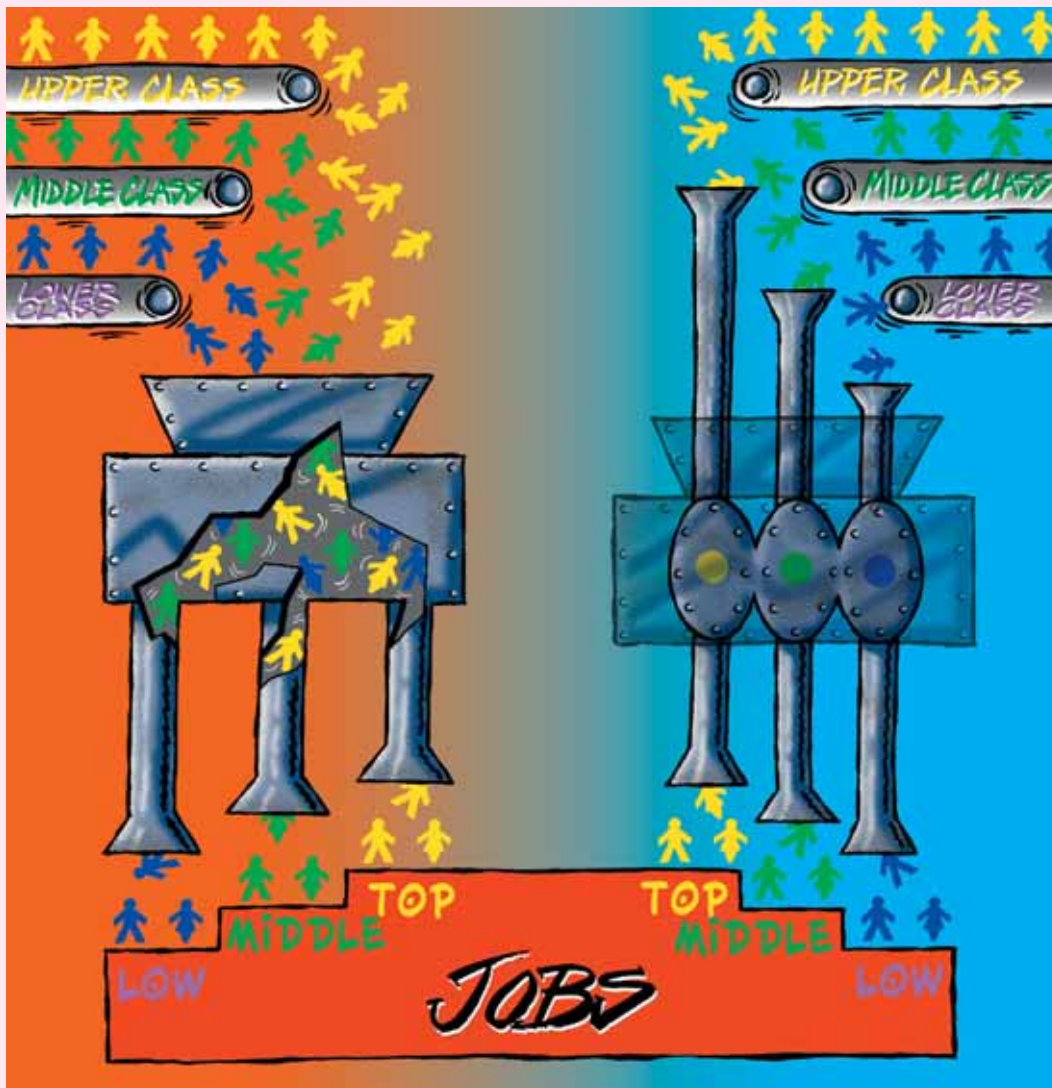
Young people get little direct satisfaction from their education. They are motivated largely by external rewards

activity3 social reproduction

Item A Role allocation and rewards



Item B Two views of role allocation

questions

- 1 How does the ideologically sound young woman in Item A illustrate Bowles and Gintis's theory of the role of education in society?
- 2 Using Item B, briefly compare functionalist and Marxist views of role allocation.

such as educational qualifications. This is reflected in the workplace – work itself provides little satisfaction, workers are motivated by external rewards such as pay. Bowles and Gintis argue that this correspondence between school and the workplace effectively reproduces workers from one generation to the next.

Social inequality Capitalist society is unequal. If this inequality were seriously questioned it might threaten social stability. One way of avoiding this is to promote the belief that inequality is justified. According to Bowles and Gintis, education legitimates social inequality by broadcasting the myth that it offers everybody an equal chance. It follows that those who achieve high qualifications deserve their success. And since high qualifications lead to top jobs, people who get those jobs have earned them. In this way social inequality appears just and legitimate.

However, Bowles and Gintis argue that rewards in education and occupation are based not on ability but on

social background. The higher a person's class of origin – the class they began in – the more likely they are to attain high educational qualifications and a top job. The class system tends to reproduce itself from generation to generation and this process is legitimised by education. In Bowles and Gintis's words, 'Education reproduces inequality by justifying privilege and attributing poverty to personal failure'.

Role allocation Bowles and Gintis reject the functionalist view of role allocation. Those who get the highest qualifications and the top jobs do so because of their social background and because they work hard and do what they're told. Bowles and Gintis found that students with high grades tend to be hardworking, obedient, conforming and dependable rather than creative, original and independent. These characteristics are rewarded with high grades because they are the very qualities required for a subordinate, obedient and disciplined workforce.

Learning to labour

In a study entitled, *Learning to Labour: How working-class kids get working-class jobs* (1977), the British sociologist Paul Willis studied a group of 12 working-class boys (the 'lads') during their last year and a half at school and their first few months at work.

Counter-school culture Willis did not find a simple correspondence between school and work. Nor did he find that the lads were shaped by the educational system. Instead, the lads rejected school and created their own *counter-school culture*. But, it was this very rejection of school which prepared them for the low-skill, low-status jobs they were to end up in.

The lads rejected educational success as defined by the school. They saw the conformist behaviour of hardworking pupils – the 'ear 'oles' – as a matter for amusement and mockery. School was good for a laugh and not much else. Boredom was relieved by mucking around and breaking rules. The lads actively created a counter-school culture

based on opposition to authority. In some respects this behaviour made sense. They were destined for low-skill jobs so why bother to work hard.

School and work Willis found a number of similarities between the attitudes and behaviour developed by the lads in school and those of the shopfloor at work. Having a laugh was important in both situations as a means of dealing with monotony, boredom and authority. And at work, as at school, a bunch of mates to mess around with and support you in an 'us and them' situation remained important.

So, like Bowles and Gintis, Willis argues for a correspondence between school and work. But this is not produced by the school – the lads are not the docile, obedient pupils of Bowles and Gintis's study. The lads themselves have produced the correspondence by their rejection of the school. And in doing so they have prepared themselves for their place in the workforce. They have learned to have a laugh, to put up with boredom and monotony, and to accept the drudgery of low-skill jobs.

methods1 methodological pluralism

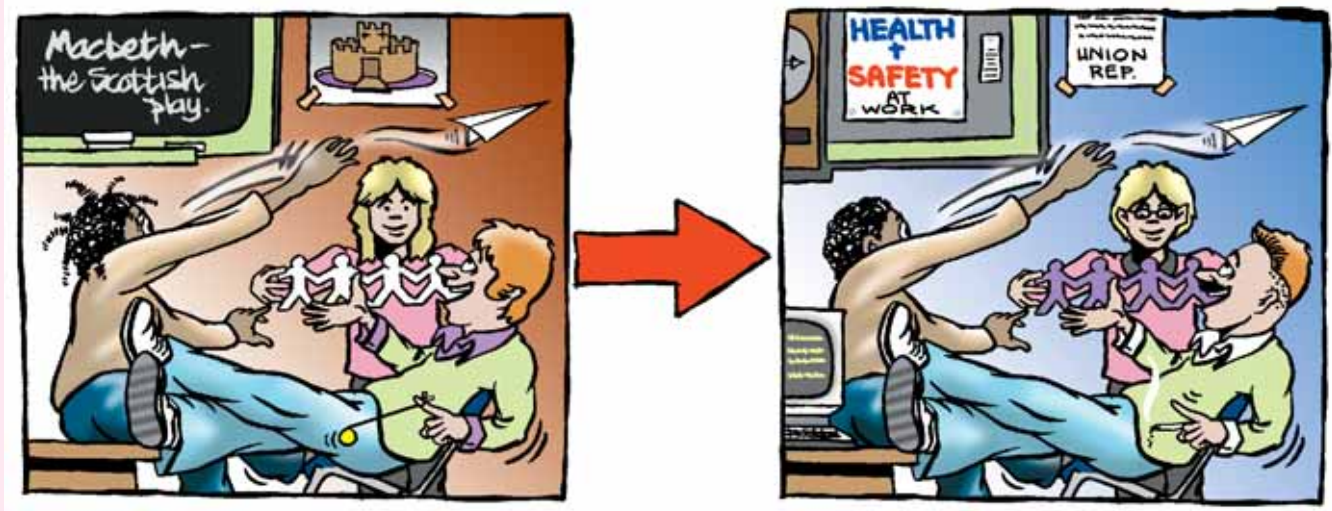
Paul Willis's study focused on 12 boys during their last 18 months at school and their first few months at work. He wanted to discover how the boys saw their experience of schooling and work. He used 'observation and participant observation in class, around the school and in leisure activities, regular recorded group discussions, informal interviews and diaries'.

Source: Willis, 1977

question

Willis's method is an example of methodological pluralism. Suggest possible advantages of this approach to his research.

activity4 learning to labour



question

How does this cartoon illustrate Willis's view of how lads adapt to low-skill, boring jobs?

Twenty years on Willis's study was conducted in a secondary school in Birmingham in the 1970s. Twenty years later, a similar study was conducted in the West Midlands by Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (1994). Some of the working-class young men – the 'macho lads' – were similar to Willis's lads. They rejected the authority of the teachers and the values of the school. However, this was a time of high unemployment when many traditional low-skill working-class jobs were disappearing. Because of this, the macho lads' behaviour was 'outdated' – the jobs it prepared them for were fast becoming a thing of the past.

Business takeover of schools

Marxist views have become unfashionable in recent years. However, Glenn Rikowski (2002, 2005) argues that they are still relevant. He claims that education is becoming increasingly privatised as more and more aspects of education – for example, school dinners – are being subcontracted to private industry. Rikowski sees this as the beginning of a 'business takeover of schools'. He argues that education will become like any other private company – it will be run 'primarily for the benefit of shareholders' and its main concern will be to produce profit.

Marxism and education – evaluation

Marxists see education in a negative light. It transmits ruling class ideology and produces a passive and obedient workforce which fits the requirements of capitalism. And when young people actively reject schooling, this can prepare them for monotonous, low-skill jobs. This view of the role of education is based partly on the belief that capitalism is unjust and oppressive, and that it exploits the workforce.

However, it is possible to accept some of the findings of Marxist sociologists without accepting their view of capitalism. Both Bowles and Gintis and Willis provide evidence to support their claims. Schools *do* reward hard work, conformity and obedience. And some students who learn to live with what they see as the boredom of school are prepared for the monotony of low-skill jobs.

key terms

Ruling class ideology A false picture of society which justifies the position of the ruling and subject classes.

Legitimate Justify, make right.

Correspondence theory A theory which shows a correspondence or similarity between two things and suggests that they are causally related – for example, the experience of school and work is similar, and the requirements of the workplace shape what goes on in the classroom.

Social reproduction The reproduction of new generations of workers with the skills and attitudes required for their roles in capitalist society.

Counter-school culture A rejection of the norms and values of the school and their replacement with anti-school norms and values.

Critics argue that Rikowski has gone too far with his claim that education is heading for privatisation. While some services are being subcontracted to the private sector, there is little or no evidence that governments in the UK intend to privatise the educational system as a whole (Hatcher, 2005).

1.3 Feminist perspectives

Feminist perspectives focus on gender inequalities in society. Feminist research has revealed the extent of male domination and the ways in which male supremacy has been maintained. From a feminist viewpoint, one of the main roles of education has been to maintain gender inequality.

Gender and education

From the 1960s onwards, feminist sociologists highlighted the following gender inequalities in education.

Gendered language Reflecting the wider society, school textbooks (and teachers) tended to use *gendered language* – 'he', 'him', 'his', 'man' and 'men' when referring to a person or people. This tended to downgrade women and make them invisible.

Gendered roles School textbooks have tended to present males and females in traditional gender roles – for example, women as mothers and housewives. This is particularly evident in reading schemes from the 1960s and 1970s.

Gender stereotypes Reading schemes have also tended to present traditional gender *stereotypes*. For example, an analysis of six reading schemes from the 1960s and 70s found that:

- Boys are presented as more adventurous than girls
- As physically stronger
- As having more choices.
- Girls are presented as more caring than boys
- As more interested in domestic matters
- As followers rather than leaders (Lobban, 1974).

Women in the curriculum In terms of what's taught in schools – the *curriculum* – women tend to be missing, in the background, or in second place. Feminists often argue that women have been 'hidden from history' – history has been the history of men.

Subject choice Traditionally, female students have tended to avoid maths, science and technology. Certain subjects were seen as 'boys' subjects' and 'girls' subjects'. Often girls' subjects had lower status and lower market value.

Discrimination There is evidence of discrimination against girls in education simply because of their gender. For example, when the 11-plus exam was introduced in the 1940s, the pass mark for boys was set lower than the mark for girls in order to make sure there were roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in grammar schools. In other words girls were artificially 'failed' so boys could 'succeed'.

Further and higher education Traditionally, the number of female students going on to further and higher education has been lower than for boys. There is evidence that teachers often gave boys more encouragement than girls to go on to university (Stanworth, 1983).

Feminist perspectives – evaluation

Feminist perspectives have been valuable for exposing gender inequality in education. Partly as a result of sociological research, a lot has changed – for example, much of the *sexism* in reading schemes has now disappeared.

Today, women have overtaken men on practically every measure of educational attainment. Their grades at GCSE and A level are significantly higher than those of male students. And more women than men are going on to higher education. The concern now is the underachievement of boys rather than discrimination against girls.

methods2 content analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the way gender roles were presented in six reading schemes used in primary schools in the 1960s and 1970s. The schemes included the Janet and John and Ladybird series. The results of the study are shown under the subheading ‘gender stereotypes’ in Section 1.3 (see also Activity 5, Item B).

The content analysis listed the toys played with and the activities performed by boys only, girls only, and both boys and girls. It noted who took the lead in the activities that both boys and girls took part in. And it listed the number of adult roles presented and the gender of the people who played those roles.

The author suggests that the distinctive gender activities and roles portrayed in the reading schemes may have an important influence on gender socialisation.

Source: Lobban, 1974

question

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of content analysis in studying the effect of reading schemes on gender socialisation.

key terms

Gendered language Language which uses one gender to refer to both genders.

Stereotype An exaggerated and distorted view of the characteristics of members of a social group.

Curriculum The subjects taught in school and their content.

Sexism Bias against a particular gender – usually females.

1.4 Social democratic perspectives

Social democratic perspectives on education developed in the 1960s. They have had an important influence on government educational policy.

Social democratic theorists start from the view that everybody should have an equal chance to succeed in the educational system. This is not only fair and just, it also brings practical benefits. A well-educated workforce will lead to economic growth.

Equal opportunity

The British sociologist A.H. Halsey is one of the leading social democratic theorists. He criticised functionalist views which claimed that the education system in Western industrial societies provided equality of opportunity. Halsey's work from the 1960s onwards showed clearly that social class has a significant effect on educational attainment. In general, the higher a person's social class of origin – the class into which they were born – the higher their educational qualifications. For example, middle-class students tend to achieve higher qualifications than working-class students. This suggests that schools are not providing equality of opportunity for all young people (Halsey et al., 1961; 1980).

According to social democratic theorists, this is both wrong and inefficient. It is wrong because in a democracy everybody has a right to equal opportunity. It is inefficient because it wastes talent. If people don't have the opportunity to develop their aptitudes and abilities, then their contribution to society as a whole will be reduced. Inequality of educational opportunity means that everybody suffers.

Education and the economy

According to social democratic theorists, there is a close link between education and economic growth. Modern economies require an increasingly specialised and highly-trained workforce. The educational system reflects this requirement (Halsey et al., 1961).

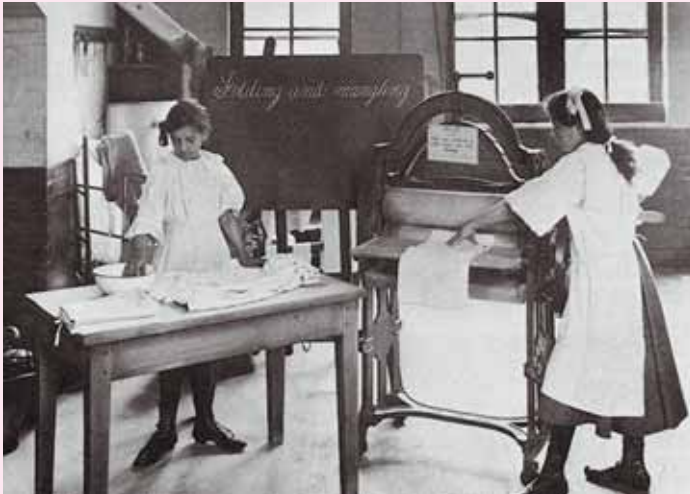
Over the past 50 years there has been more education, and more specialised education. The school leaving age has steadily risen and growing numbers of young people are continuing into further and higher education. There has also been a rapid growth in vocational education – education which aims to provide specific workplace skills.

Social democratic perspectives – evaluation

It is difficult to unravel the relationships between education and the economy. Some researchers argue that the growth in education greatly exceeds the needs of the economy. For example, Randall Collins (1972) points to studies which suggest that once mass literacy has been achieved, education makes little difference to economic growth. He claims that when companies do require specific skills, they

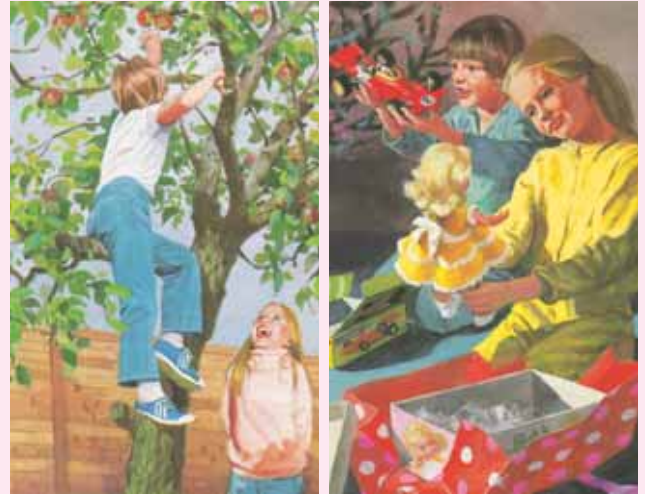
activity5 gender and education

Item A Learning to launder



Girls at school learning to do the laundry, 1908. The girl on the right is using a mangle to get water out of the clothes.

Item B Peter and Jane



These pictures are taken from the Ladybird Key Words Reading Scheme published in 1964.

Item C In the classroom

Michelle Stanworth's research looked at gender relations in A level classes at a further education college.

Interviews with teachers and pupils revealed that both men and women teachers took more interest in their male pupils, asking them more questions in class and giving them more help. Asked which students they were most concerned about, women teachers named boys twice as often as girls. Male teachers named boys ten times as often as girls. When asked which pupils they were most 'attached' to, teachers named boys three times as often as girls.

Teachers underestimate girls' ambitions. Only one girl was mentioned as likely to get a management job and male teachers could not envisage any occupation other than marriage for two thirds of the girls. One girl, who was getting the top marks in her class in both her main A level subjects, and who wanted a career in the diplomatic service, was described by her woman teacher as likely to become 'the personal assistant to somebody rather important'.

Source: Stanworth, 1983

questions

- 1 How might a feminist sociologist analyse Items A and B?
- 2 Use Item C to support the view that there is discrimination against girls in the classroom.

usually provide their own training courses.

Other researchers claim that the growth in vocational education with its focus on workplace skills is vital for economic development. And still others argue that the increased pace of technological and economic change calls for a flexible workforce with a good general education rather than specific *vocational training* (Brown et al., 1997). These points will be returned to in Unit 4 of this chapter.

key term

Vocational education Education which aims to provide specific workplace skills.

1.5 Neoliberal / New Right perspectives

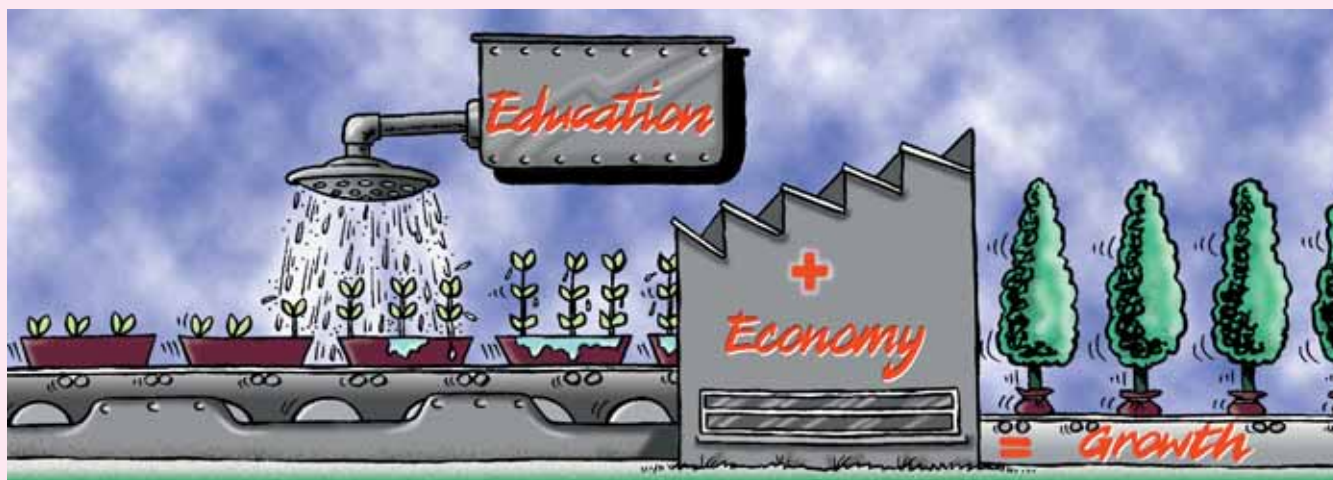
Neoliberal/New Right ideas developed in the early 1980s. They took a very different view of the route to educational and economic success.

The problem

According to neoliberal/New Right thinkers, advanced industrial economies such as the USA and Britain were declining. Much of this decline was due to social democratic policies. These policies resulted in:

- Too much state control – the 'nanny state' got too involved in people's lives.
- This crushed people's initiative and stifled their enterprise. They relied on the state rather than taking

activity6 a social democratic view



question

How does this cartoon illustrate the social democratic view of education?

- responsibility for their own lives.
- This can be seen in welfare dependency – the poor had come to depend on state ‘handouts’ rather than pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps.
- State control and welfare benefits cost a lot of money which meant high taxation.
- Because of this there was less money to invest in private industry – the really productive sector of the economy.

The solution

Neoliberal/New Right perspectives offered the following solutions to the decline of advanced industrial societies.

- Restore enterprise and initiative.
- Roll back the state and make people responsible for their own destiny rather than relying on state institutions, state guidance and state handouts.
- Increase competition not only in the private sector but also the public sector – schools and hospitals should compete in much the same way as companies in the private sector.
- This will increase productivity and efficiency, and result in economic growth.

Education

Where does education fit into all this? The job of schools is to raise educational standards and instil enterprise, drive and competitive spirit.

The neoliberal/New Right programme for raising educational standards runs as follows.

- Competition between schools and colleges – the best will attract more students, the worst won’t get any and go out of business. This means that teachers and administrators will have real incentives to improve standards. And parents and their children will have real choice.

- Allowing schools and colleges to become self-managing. This means giving teachers and administrators control over finance, staffing and school policy. This encourages grassroot initiative and enterprise rather than relying on direction from above. And this will motivate teachers to improve standards.
- The above measures will lead to better school management and higher quality teaching. This is what’s needed to raise educational standards for all (Chubb & Moe, 1997).
- Higher standards will mean higher qualifications, particularly for those at the bottom. And this will give them a better chance of escaping from welfare dependency.

Education and globalisation

Neoliberal/New Right thinkers argue that education is essential for success in an increasingly competitive global market-place. A nation’s position in the world market will depend on the quality of its education.

The way to achieve economic success is the *marketisation of schools*. This involves competition and choice – schools must compete in the market and offer a real choice. This will raise standards as parents and students will choose the most successful schools, which will expand to meet the demand for places, and reject the failing schools, which will contract or close (Lauder et al., 2006).

Neoliberal / New Right perspectives – evaluation

Neoliberal/New Right views leave a number of unanswered questions (Halsey et al., 1997).

First, does competition between schools raise standards? Measured in terms of GCSE and A level results, standards are improving. However, this may have little or nothing to

do with competition between schools.

Second, is a choice of schools and colleges available? In some areas, there is no alternative to the local comprehensive. In other areas, where choice exists, middle-class parents are in a better position to get their children into the best schools. For example, where there are limited places, they tend to be more successful at negotiating with teachers.

Third, can schools make up for inequalities in the wider society? For example, with good management and high quality teaching, can schools provide equality of

opportunity for students from low-income backgrounds? Available evidence suggests that the answer is 'no' (Halsey et al., 1997).

key terms

Welfare dependency Depending on state benefits for support and accepting this as a way of life.

Marketisation of schools Competition between schools in the educational market-place.

summary

- From a functionalist perspective, education performs the following functions:
 - Developing and reinforcing social solidarity
 - Providing the skills and knowledge required for a specialised division of labour
 - Developing value consensus and preparing young people for adult roles
 - Assessing young people in terms of their talents and abilities and allocating them to appropriate roles in the wider society.
- From a Marxist perspective, education:
 - Transmits ruling class ideology
 - Prepares pupils for their role in the workplace
 - Legitimises inequality and disguises exploitation
 - Rewards conformity and obedience
 - Reproduces new generations of workers, schooled to accept their place in capitalist society.
- From a feminist perspective, education has promoted, and to some extent still does promote, male dominance by:
 - The use of gendered language and gender stereotypes
 - Omitting women from the curriculum
 - Defining certain subjects as 'girls' subjects' and others as 'boys' subjects'
 - Discriminating against female students in terms of grammar school, further and higher education places.
- From a social democratic perspective, education:
 - Should provide every young person with an equal chance to develop their talents and abilities
 - This will benefit society as a whole by producing economic growth
 - However, social class is a barrier to equality of educational opportunity.
- According to neoliberal/New Right perspectives, the role of education is to instil drive, initiative and enterprise. This will come from:
 - Competition between schools and colleges
 - Motivating teachers to improve standards
 - Providing parents and students with a choice of schools and colleges.

activity 7 the educational market-place



question

How does this cartoon illustrate neoliberal/New Right views of education?

Unit 2 Social class and educational attainment

key issues

- 1 What are the differences in educational attainment between social class groups?
- 2 What explanations are given for these differences?

Class, gender and ethnicity make a difference to *educational attainment* – the educational qualifications and grades students achieve. If you want the best possible start, you should be born at the top of the class system, as a female, and as a member of the Chinese ethnic group. Statistics indicate that *in general* the higher your social class, the higher your attainment, that Chinese are the most successful ethnic group, and that girls do better than boys.

How important are class, ethnicity and gender?

- **Class** is most important. Its effect on educational attainment is nearly three times greater than ethnicity.

- **Ethnicity** comes next. It has about twice the effect of gender.
- **Gender** Despite capturing public attention, gender is least important. Class has over five times the effect on educational attainment (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

This unit looks at class differences in educational attainment. The next two units look at ethnic and gender differences.

2.1 Measuring class and educational attainment

In general, the higher a person's social class of origin – the class they were born into – the higher their educational qualifications. This has been shown time and time again over the past 50 years by sociological research and government statistics.

methods3 official statistics

Most of the government statistics on social class and educational attainment are provided by the Youth Cohort Study – a series of longitudinal surveys based on large samples of young people aged 16–19 in England and Wales. As the statistics in Activity 8 show, data from the Youth Cohort Study provide a comparison over time of class differences in educational attainment.

The way things are defined and measured sometimes changes. This can be a major problem when comparing official statistics over time. Social class provides an example. In 2001,

the government replaced the SEG (socio-economic group) classification of social class with the NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-economic Classification). Although similar in many respects these two classifications are not the same.

question

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using official statistics to compare class differences in educational attainment over time?

methods4 longitudinal surveys and postal questionnaires

The Youth Cohort Study is a series of longitudinal studies. It usually contacts respondents at the end of compulsory schooling, then again at aged 17, 18 and 19. In 2000, the 10th Youth Cohort Study sent postal questionnaires to a random sample of 24,500 young people. 13,720 returned the completed questionnaire. They were then sent the second questionnaire a year later. The fourth and final questionnaire was completed and returned by only 5,572 people, 23% of the original sample.

The 10th Youth Cohort Study

Year	Number of questionnaires sent	Number completed and returned	Age
2000	24,500	13,720	16
2001	13,720	10,152	17
2002	10,152	7,208	18
2003	7,208	5,572	19

Source: Youth Cohort Study, 2004, Office for National Statistics

question

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using longitudinal surveys and postal questionnaires to study social class and educational attainment?

To what extent does social class affect educational attainment? How has the effect of class changed over time? This is where we run into problems. Is it possible to directly compare statistics over the years? The short answer is 'no'. Definitions of social class vary from study to study. The official definition of class used in government research changes – the last major change was in 2001. And

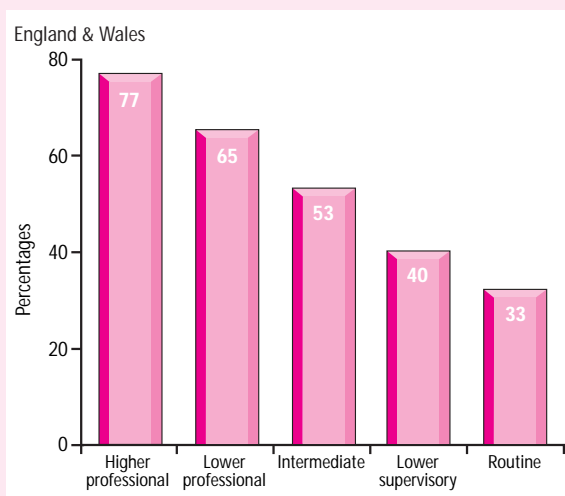
educational qualifications change – from O levels to GCSEs, from GNVQs to vocational A levels, and so on.

But whatever the level or type of educational qualification, and whatever the definition of social class, there is no doubt that class has a significant effect on educational attainment. To appreciate this effect, work carefully through Activity 8.

activity8 educational attainment and social class

Item A GCSE and social class, 2004

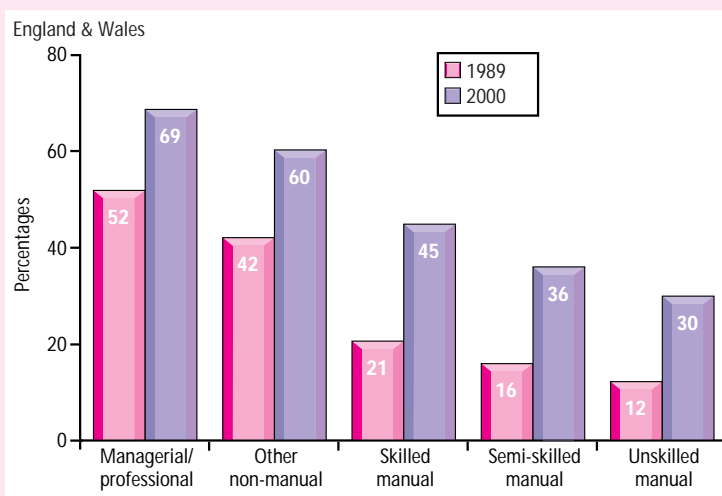
Pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C



Source: Youth Cohort Study, 2004

Item B GCSE and social class, 1989 and 2000

Pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C



Youth Cohort Studies, Social Trends, 2001, Office for National Statistics

Item C Higher education and social class

Participation rates in higher education

Great Britain												Percentages
Social class	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Gain 1991-2001
Professional	55	71	73	78	79	82	79	82	73	76	79	+24
Intermediate	36	39	42	45	45	47	48	45	45	48	50	+14
Skilled non-manual	22	27	29	31	31	32	31	29	30	33	33	+11
Skilled manual	11	15	17	18	18	18	19	18	18	19	21	+10
Partly skilled	12	14	16	17	17	17	18	17	17	19	18	+6
Unskilled	6	9	11	11	12	13	14	13	13	14	15	+9

Adapted from Age Participation Index, Department of Education and Skills, 2003

The table shows the percentage of people under 21 from each social class who enter undergraduate courses in higher education. The figures on the right show the increase in percentage points for each class from 1991 to 2001.

questions

- 1 What does Item A suggest about the relationship between social class and educational attainment?
- 2 No matter what definition of social class is used, there are significant class differences in educational attainment. Comment on this statement using Items A and B which use different definitions of class.
- 3 What changes does Item B indicate between 1989 and 2000?
- 4 Summarise the trends shown in Item C.

2.2 Explaining class differences in attainment

During the 1960s and 70s, class differences in attainment were the main focus of the sociology of education. During the 1980s and 90s, class went out of fashion. Sociologists turned to ethnic and gender differences in attainment. And some claimed that class was not nearly as important as it used to be.

Only in the last ten years have a few sociologists returned to class and attainment. Because of this, the research in this section is either recent or drawn from the 1960s and 70s. Despite the earlier research being dated, it remains important. Class is still the most significant social factor accounting for differences in educational attainment.

Class, intelligence and attainment

At every level of education – from nursery to university – upper and middle-class children tend to do better than working-class children. This remains the case even when they have the same intelligence quotient (IQ).

Most researchers believe that the same range of ability is present in every social class. This means that class

differences in educational attainment are *not* due to class differences in intelligence.

Material deprivation

During the 1960s, sociologists claimed that the low attainment of many working-class pupils resulted from a lack of something. They were *deprived*. This deprivation was *material* – a lack of money and the things that money could buy – and *cultural* – an absence of the attitudes and skills that were needed for educational success.

In general, the higher a child's class of origin, the higher their family income. High income can provide many educational advantages – a comfortable well-heated home, spacious rooms with a desk to work at, a home computer with internet access, reference and revision books, extra home tuition and the option of private education.

At the other end of the scale, children in poverty often live in cramped, cold and draughty conditions. Shortage of money means they are more likely to have part-time jobs in the evenings and at weekends, and to leave school at the minimum leaving age. Poverty often leads to ill health. And this can result in absence from school, tiredness and irritability.

activity9 material deprivation

Item A Growing up poor



question

How might growing up in poverty disadvantage children at school?

Item B Homelessness

A report on the effects of homelessness on schoolchildren by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Schools makes the following points.

Their chances of doing well are slim. 'Sustainable achievement is often beyond their reach.' Cramped sleeping conditions leave the children tired, listless and unable to concentrate. In one London school, a four-year-old boy spent a whole day sleeping outside the headteacher's office.

The inspectors found evidence of ill health caused by poor diet, and stress from permanent insecurity. For some, the crises which led to homelessness produce social and emotional difficulties.

Weak reading, writing and verbal skills among primary school children are combined with a poor self-image. 'I can't read,' a seven-year-old girl told her teacher. 'Don't you know I'm simple?'

The report notes that many hostel rooms lack such basics as chairs and table. As a result, children often find it hard to do homework. A fourth year GCSE pupil had to work on her bed and could only start when the sisters she shared the room with were asleep.

Source: *The Times*, 10.08.90

The costs of education Traditionally, many working-class students left school at the minimum leaving age because their parents could no longer afford to support them. However, since the introduction of the GCSE examination in 1988, a far higher proportion of 16-19 year olds have continued into further education.

More recently, the introduction of tuition fees and the abolition of student grants has meant that many young people with working-class backgrounds feel they cannot afford to go on to higher education. As Item C in Activity 8 shows, it is those at the top of the class system who have benefited most from the expansion of university places. Even though grants are available for students from low-income families, many are still put off by the costs of higher education (Machin, 2003).

Home and school

Many sociologists in the 1960s saw differences in primary socialisation as the main reason for class differences in attainment. In a large-scale study of British children entitled *The Home and the School*, J.W.B. Douglas (1964) claimed that middle-class children received more attention and encouragement from their parents during their early years. This provided a foundation for high attainment in their later years.

Based on questionnaires given to over 5000 parents, Douglas concluded that the degree of parents' interest in their children's education was the single, most important factor affecting attainment. His research suggested that, in general, middle-class parents showed more interest than working-class parents. They were more likely to visit the school and to encourage their children to stay on beyond the minimum school leaving age.

More recent research provides support for Douglas's conclusion. It is based on data from the National Child Development Study, an ongoing longitudinal study which follows the lives of every person born in Britain during one particular week in 1958. According to Leon Feinstein (2003), evidence from this study shows that class differences in parental interest and support is the most important factor accounting for class differences in educational attainment.

Class subcultures

Differences in *social class subcultures* – the norms, attitudes and values typical of each class – were often seen as part of the explanation for class differences in attainment.

The British sociologist Barry Sugarman (1970) described working-class subculture as:

- *Fatalistic* – accepting the situation rather than working to improve it
- *Present-time orientated* – living for the moment rather than planning for the future
- Concerned with *immediate gratification* – taking pleasures now rather than making sacrifices for the future.

By comparison, middle-class subculture was seen as non-fatalistic, future-time orientated and concerned with deferred gratification.

These differences in class subcultures were seen to place pupils from working-class backgrounds at a disadvantage. For example, fatalism will not encourage pupils to improve their grades. And present-time orientation and immediate gratification will discourage sustained effort for examination success.

Cultural deprivation theory

The views of sociologists such as Douglas and Sugarman have been used to provide support for what came to be known as *cultural deprivation theory*. This theory states that those at the bottom of the class system are deprived of important values, attitudes, experiences and skills which are essential for educational success. Their home life lacks the kind of stimulation needed for high attainment – for example, there is an absence of books and educational toys. They receive little encouragement from parents and, as a result, lack the motivation to succeed at school.

To make matters worse, what the 'culturally deprived child' does have tends to be seen as 'substandard' – well below the high quality norms and values of middle-class subculture. Deprived of what's needed for success and saddled with low standard norms and values, it's no wonder, so the argument goes, that culturally deprived children fail in droves.

Evaluation Cultural deprivation theory has been strongly criticised. There is evidence that if class differences in culture exist, then they are slight and of little significance. Much so-called culturally deprived behaviour may be due to lack of money rather than lack of the norms and values needed for high attainment. For example, working-class students may leave school earlier because of low income rather than lack of motivation and parental encouragement.

Cultural deprivation theory blames the failings of the child on his or her background. This diverts attention from the failings of the educational system which may contribute to, or account for, class differences in attainment. This view will be considered shortly.

key terms

Material deprivation A lack of money and the things that money can buy.

Cultural deprivation A lack of certain norms, values, attitudes and skills. In this case, those necessary for educational success.

Social class subcultures The distinctive norms and values shared by members of each social class.

Speech patterns and class

Cultural deprivation theory Extreme versions of cultural deprivation theory see the speech patterns of those at the bottom of the class system as inferior. For example, the American psychologist Carl Bereiter argues that the speech patterns of many low-income children are inadequate to meet the demands of the education system. As a result, they directly contribute to educational failure.

This view has been rejected by the American linguist William Labov (1973). He examined the speech patterns of low-income African-American children from Harlem in New York. He claimed that their speech patterns were not inferior to standard English, they were just different. Those who saw them as inferior simply failed to understand low-income black dialect.

Restricted and elaborated codes The British sociologist Basil Bernstein identified two forms of speech pattern, the *restricted code* and the *elaborated code*. The restricted code is a kind of shorthand speech, usually found in conversations between people who have a lot in common, eg friends and family members. It is often tied to a context, eg it cannot be fully understood outside the family circle, and its meanings tend to be particularistic, that is, specific to the speaker and listener. Sentences are often short,

simple and unfinished, detail is omitted, explanations not given and information taken for granted. This is because a considerable amount of shared knowledge between speaker and listener is assumed.

By comparison, the elaborated code spells out what the restricted code takes for granted. Meanings are made explicit, explanations provided, details spelt out. As such, the elaborated code tends to be context-free (not tied to a context such as a particular friendship group) and its meanings are universalistic (they can be understood by everybody).

Class and speech codes According to Bernstein, most middle-class children have been socialised in both the restricted and elaborated codes and are fluent in each, whereas many working-class children are limited to the restricted code. Since teachers use the elaborated code, working-class pupils are placed at a distinct disadvantage. They are less likely to understand what teachers say and are more likely to be misunderstood and criticised for what they themselves say.

Bernstein insists that working-class speech patterns are not substandard or inadequate. However, they do place working-class pupils at a disadvantage since the elaborated code is the language of education.

activity¹⁰ speech patterns



Bernstein showed four pictures to five-year-old boys and asked them to describe what was going on. Here are two examples, the first by a working-class boy using the restricted code, the second by a middle-class boy using the elaborated code.

Restricted code 'They're playing football and he kicks it, and it goes through there. It breaks the window and they're looking at it and he comes out and shouts at them because they've broken it. So they run away and then she looks out and she tells them off.'

Elaborated code 'Two boys are playing football and one boy kicks the ball and it goes through the window. The ball breaks the window and the boys are looking at it, and a man comes out and shouts at them because they've broken the window. So they run away and then that lady looks out of her window, and she tells the boys off.'

Source: Bernstein, 1973

question

How do the examples in Item A illustrate some of the features of the restricted and elaborated codes?

methods5 interviews

The boys in the following interviews are African-Americans from low-income working-class families in Harlem, New York.

Interview 1 An eight-year-old boy is interviewed by a 'friendly' White interviewer who presents him with a toy jet plane and asks him to describe it. The setting is formal. There are long silences followed by short two or three word answers, which hardly provide an adequate description of the plane.

Interview 2 Another Black boy from Harlem is interviewed. Again the setting is formal but this time the interviewer is Black and raised in Harlem. The boy responds in much the same way as the boy in the first interview.

Interview 3 The boy and the interviewer are the same as in the second interview. This time the interviewer sits on the floor, the boy is provided with a supply of potato crisps and his best friend is invited along. The change is dramatic. The boy's conversation is articulate and enthusiastic, and, in linguistic terms, rich and diverse. He provides a detailed description of the toy plane.

Source: Labov, 1973

question

What are the advantages and disadvantages of interviews in the study of class and young people's speech patterns?



Harlem, New York

Evaluation Bernstein's research shows how schools can contribute to class differences in educational attainment. Because schools demand the use of the elaborated code, middle-class pupils have a built-in advantage.

Some researchers have questioned Bernstein's view that members of the working-class are limited to the restricted code. He provides little hard evidence to support his view. And much of this evidence comes from interviews given by middle-class adults to five-year-old working-class boys. Such interviews may reveal little about the linguistic ability of young people – see Methods 5, interviews.

key terms

Restricted code Shorthand speech in which detail is omitted and information taken for granted.

Elaborated code A speech pattern in which details are spelt out, explanations provided and meanings made explicit.

Cultural capital

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) starts from the idea that there is a *dominant culture* in society. The higher people's position in the class system, the greater the amount of dominant culture they are likely to have. This

culture is generally regarded as superior because those at the top have the power to define it as such. In reality, however, it is no better or worse than any other culture. But because it is highly valued and sought after, it forms the basis of the educational system.

Children born into the middle and upper classes have a built-in advantage. Their culture is closer to the culture of the school so they will be more likely to succeed. For example, their language is closer to that of teachers so they are more likely to understand what's being taught and to be rewarded for what they say and write.

According to Bourdieu, the dominant culture can be seen as *cultural capital* since it can be converted into material rewards – high qualifications, high status jobs, high salaries, high living standards.

Bourdieu concludes that the primary purpose of education is cultural and social reproduction. The education system reproduces the dominant culture and in doing so helps to reproduce the class system. And, by creating educational success and failure, it legitimates the positions of those at the top and those at the bottom.

Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital has been influential in the renewed interest in class and educational attainment in the 1990s and 2000s. This can be seen from the following three studies.

key terms

Dominant culture The culture of those in the higher levels of the class structure which is generally regarded as superior.

Cultural capital Culture that can be converted into material rewards such as high salaries and high living standards.

Class, mothers and cultural capital

In an important study entitled *Class Work: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling*, Diane Reay (1998) states that, 'It is mothers who are making cultural capital work for their children'. Her research is based on interviews with the mothers of 33 children at two London primary schools.

All the mothers are actively involved in their children's education. The working-class mothers worked just as hard as the middle-class mothers. But it was not simply hard work that counted. In addition, it was the amount of cultural capital available. And the middle-class mothers had most.

Middle-class mothers had more educational qualifications and more information about how the educational system operated. They used this cultural capital to good effect – helping children with their homework, bolstering their confidence and sorting out problems with their teachers. Where the middle-class mothers had the confidence and self-assurance to make demands on teachers, the working-class mothers talked in terms of 'plucking up courage' and 'making myself go and see the teacher'. Where middle-class mothers knew what the school expected from their children and how to help them, working-class mothers felt they lacked the knowledge and ability to help their children.

Middle-class mothers not only have more cultural capital, they also have more material capital, ie, more money. Over half the middle-class mothers had cleaners, au pairs or both. This gave them more time to support their children. Working-class mothers could not afford help with domestic work. Nor could they afford private tuition which many middle-class mothers provided for their children.

According to Diane Reay, it is mothers who have the main influence on their children's education. Their effectiveness depends on the amount of cultural capital at their disposal. And this depends on their social class.

Education, class and choice

In recent years, government education policy has encouraged schools to compete, and offered parents and students choices between schools. Choosing the 'right' primary and secondary school is important. It can make a difference to students' examination results and their chances of climbing the educational ladder.

In *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The middle classes and social advantage*, Stephen J. Ball (2003) argues that government policies of choice and competition place

the middle class at an advantage. They have the knowledge and skills to make the most of the opportunities on offer. Compared to the working class, they have more material capital, more cultural capital and more *social capital* – access to social networks and contacts which can provide information and support. In Ball's words, middle-class parents have 'enough capitals in the right currency to ensure a high probability of success for their children'.

Strategies The aim of parents is to give their children maximum advantage in the education system. The choice of school is vital. And this is where middle-class parents come into their own. Compared to working-class parents, they are more comfortable dealing with public institutions like schools. They are more used to extracting and assessing information. For example, they use their social networks to talk to parents whose children are attending the schools on offer. They collect and analyse information – for example, the GCSE results of the various schools. And they are more used to dealing with and negotiating with teachers and administrators. As a result, when entry into a popular school is limited, they are more likely to gain a place for their child.

The school/parent alliance Middle-class parents want middle-class schools. In general, schools with mainly middle-class pupils have the best results and the highest status. And these schools want middle-class pupils. They are seen as easy to teach and likely to perform well. They will maintain or increase the school's position in the exam league table and its status in the education market.

Conclusion Many middle-class parents work extremely hard to get their children into the most successful schools. But, what they gain for their children can be at the expense of working-class children.

Class and higher education

In *Degrees of Choice* (2005), Diane Reay, Miriam David and Stephen Ball looked at the influence of social class on university choice. They found that middle-class students from fee-paying schools were most likely to choose elite universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. This reflected the amount of cultural capital they possessed – they had the knowledge and confidence to select the top universities and to see themselves as suited for and entitled to 'the best'. Middle-class students from state schools tended to choose middle-ranking 'redbrick' universities such as Manchester and Liverpool. Working-class students were more likely to choose the lower-ranking, less prestigious 'new' universities. They had less cultural capital. They lacked confidence in their academic ability and social skills – they feared failure and felt they wouldn't fit in socially at higher-ranking universities. As a result, they did not apply to and so excluded themselves from the top universities.

As more and more people are going to university, the less valuable degrees become. Attending an elite university can raise the status of a degree. In general, the higher the class position of students, the more likely they are to choose a high status university. Again the middle class come out on top.

methods6 sampling

The sample of students for *Degrees of Choice* was drawn from six schools and colleges in and around London.

- An 11-18 mixed comprehensive with a large working class intake
- A comprehensive sixth-form consortium which served a socially mixed area
- A tertiary college with a large number of A level students
- A further education college which runs higher education access courses
- Two prestigious single-sex private schools – one boys and one girls.

The educational institutions selected for the sample varied considerably in terms of the social class background of their students.

Source: Reay, David and Ball, 2005

questions

1. Judging from the institutions from which the sample was drawn, would you say it was representative? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why did the authors aim to produce a representative sample?

key term

Social capital The support and information provided by contacts and social networks which can be converted into material rewards.

2.3 Social class in schools

This section looks at social class in the classroom. In particular, it looks at evidence which suggests that schools sometimes discriminate against working-class pupils and in favour of middle-class pupils.

Labelling theory

Pupils are constantly being assessed and classified. They are defined as able or less able, placed in particular sets or streams, entered for particular examinations and given or denied access to certain parts of the school curriculum. Research indicates that teachers are more likely to define middle rather than working-class pupils as 'able', 'good students' and 'well behaved'. This may well disadvantage working-class pupils.

A *label* is a major identifying characteristic. If, for example, a pupil is labelled as 'bright', others will tend to

respond to them and interpret their actions in terms of this label. There is a tendency for a *self-fulfilling prophecy* to result. The pupil will act in terms of the label and see themselves as bright (so fulfilling the prophecy others have made).

Setting and streaming

Most secondary schools have some system for placing pupils in teaching groups in terms of their perceived ability – ie, the way teachers see their ability. These groups include *sets* in which pupils are placed in subject groups (they may be in set 1 for maths, set 3 for art) or *streams* in which they are placed into class groups (class 1, 2, 3) and taught at that level for all subjects.

A number of studies (eg Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981) have looked at the effects of ability grouping in secondary schools. In general, they have found a tendency for middle-class pupils to be placed in the higher groups and for working-class pupils to be placed in the lower groups.

Most teachers prefer to teach higher ability groups. The conduct of pupils in higher groups is likely to be better than of those in lower groups. Those in lower groups tend to develop an *anti-school subculture* in which breaking school rules is highly regarded by some pupils. Teachers spend more time controlling behaviour in these groups at the expense of teaching. They expect less from these pupils, deny them access to higher level knowledge and skills, and place them in lower level examination tiers.

Evaluation To what extent does setting and streaming advantage the largely middle-class higher groups and disadvantage the largely working-class lower groups? The evidence is inconclusive – it is not possible to reach a firm conclusion. In general, more recent research indicates that setting and streaming have little or no effect on pupils' achievement. However, there is some evidence that ability grouping may raise attainment in the top groups and lower it in the bottom groups (Ireson & Hallam, 2001). Where ability groups do have a major effect is in setting for examination entry.

Examination sets

GCSE examinations are tiered. Most are split into higher and foundation tiers. Pupils entered for the foundation tier cannot obtain Grades A* to B. In other words, the highest grade they can achieve is Grade C. Until recently, mathematics was divided into three tiers – higher, intermediate and foundation. Grades A* to B were only available to students entered for the higher level. Grade C was the highest grade possible in the intermediate exam, Grade D was the highest grade possible in the foundation exam.

Students are usually placed in sets for exam entry – for example, in the higher or lower history set for entry to the higher or foundation tier history exam. Middle-class students tend to be placed in the higher sets, working-class

activity¹¹ cultural and social capital

Item A Supporting your child

Liz, a middle-class mother, spells out how she supports her son at primary school.

'One is the support I give him at home, hearing him read, making him read every night, doing homework with him, trying to get the books he needs for his project. I see that as a support role. The other side, in the particular case of Martin, is where he has had difficulties and finds reading very, very difficult. So a lot of my time has been spent fighting for extra support for him and I mean fighting.'

Later in the interview, she discusses the tuition Martin receives.

'Well he just wasn't making enough progress in school so we decided we'd have to get him a tutor.'

Josie, a working-class mother talks about her son's reading difficulties.

'I have tried, I really have. I knew I should be playing a role in getting Leigh to read but I wasn't qualified. Therefore it put extra pressure on me because I was no good at reading myself, it was too important for me to handle and I'd get very upset and angry at Leigh.'

'I always found if I went to the class teacher, she'd take it very personal and think I was attacking her. I wasn't. I was just bringing it to her attention in case she didn't know, you know, that in my opinion he's not progressing.'

Source: Reay, 1998

Item B Choosing a school

Here are some comments from middle-class mothers about choosing schools for their children.

'You talk to other people who've got children there who come from Riverway, how are they coping. You spend a lot of time talking outside the school gates to people you know in the same situation, that's how you discover things really.'

(Mrs Grafton)

'We spoke to teachers in the schools, spoke to other parents, and spoke to my friends who are scattered across the borough and where their children went and what they thought about it.'

(Mrs Gosling)

'There was definitely a feeling that this step into secondary education would have a very, very big influence on what they do in the rest of their life. So you had to put a lot of your attention into each school and approach each school as if your child was definitely going to go there, and size it up, assess your own reactions to it and all the rest of it.'

(Mrs Cornwell)

Source: Ball, 2003

Item C The school/parent alliance

questions

- 1 Using Item A, suggest how cultural capital might give middle-class children an advantage.
- 2 Using Item B, suggest how social capital might give middle-class children an advantage.
- 3 How does the cartoon in Item C illustrate the school/parent alliance?



students in the lower sets. Set placement is based on teachers' assessment of students' ability. According to research by David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2001), teachers are more likely to see middle-class students as having the ability to enter higher level exams. And this has

more to do with teachers' perceptions of what counts as ability than students' actual ability. The result is discrimination against many working-class students. They are denied the opportunity of even attempting to obtain the higher grades.

methods 7 participant observation

David Hargreaves (1967) examined the effects of streaming on the behaviour of students and teachers in a boys' secondary school. He used participant observation as his main research method. He sat at the back of the classroom observing students and teachers.

Some of the teachers changed their behaviour when observed. Mr H made the boys work quietly from their textbooks. Mr O usually set written work and joined Hargreaves at the back of the classroom for a chat. Mr L sent boys to the back of the room with their books to show Hargreaves their work. For the most part, however, the teachers 'appeared to behave quite naturally and act as if I was not in the room at all'.

The boys noted some changes in their teachers' behaviour.

- 'When you're in he tries to act calmly.'
- 'They put on a show for you.'
- 'If you weren't there he'd get real mad.'

At first Hargreaves' presence 'also caused changes in the boys' behaviour though I am convinced that once the boys became accustomed to me, they behaved normally'.

Source: Hargreaves, 1967

question

What are the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation for conducting research in the classroom?

Conclusion

This section has looked at social class and educational attainment in terms of what happens within the school. Some researchers argue that class differences in attainment result from the sifting, sorting and assessment of pupils in terms of teachers' perceptions of social class, ability and conduct.

Others argue that class differences in attainment are primarily due to what happens outside the school – to the social inequalities generated by the class structure. Schools from this point of view do little more than reflect and rubber stamp existing inequalities.

Other researchers see class differences in attainment resulting from a combination of what happens inside and outside the school. From this viewpoint the inequalities of the class system are reinforced in the classroom.

key terms

Label A major identifying characteristic placed on a person by others. It identifies them as a certain kind of person.

Self-fulfilling prophecy A person sees themselves in terms of the label placed upon them and acts accordingly. In this way, the prophecy others have made comes to pass.

Anti-school subculture Another term for counter-school culture. A rejection of the norms and values of the school and their replacement with anti-school norms and values.

Setting The placement of pupils into subject groups in terms of their perceived ability.

Streaming The placement of pupils into class groups in terms of their perceived ability. They are taught at that level for all subjects.

summary

1. Class, ethnicity and gender make a difference to educational attainment. Class makes the greatest difference.
2. The following explanations have been given to explain why pupils with working-class backgrounds are less successful.
 - Material deprivation – a lack of money and the things that money can buy.
 - A lack of encouragement, stimulation and interest from parents.
 - Working-class subculture with its emphasis on fatalism, present-time orientation and immediate gratification.
 - Cultural deprivation – an absence of the norms, values and skills needed for high attainment. This view has been strongly criticised.
 - The use of the elaborated code in schools which disadvantages many working-class pupils.
 - A lack of cultural capital. According to Diane Reay, it is mothers who have the main influence on their child's

education. Their effectiveness largely depends on the amount of cultural capital at their disposal. Middle-class mothers have most.

- A lack of social capital. Stephen Ball's research argues that social capital is vital when choosing schools. Middle-class mothers, with their wide social networks, have most.
- In general, students with larger amounts of cultural and social capital will choose to attend the more prestigious universities.
- Middle-class pupils are more likely to be placed in higher streams, working-class pupils in lower streams. In general, research indicates that streaming and setting have little or no effect on pupils' achievement. However, they may raise attainment in the top groups and lower it in the bottom groups.
- What does have an effect is the tendency to enter more working-class pupils for lower level exams, so denying them the opportunity to obtain the top grades.

Unit 3 Gender and educational attainment

key issues

- 1 What are the gender differences in educational attainment?
- 2 What explanations are given for these differences?

In the 1960s and 70s, sociologists were concerned about the apparent underachievement of girls. Why weren't they

more ambitious? Why did fewer girls than boys take high status subjects such as maths, physics and chemistry? Why were girls less likely to go to university?

By the 1990s, the concern had shifted to underachieving boys. The so-called *gender gap* in education now meant failing boys and successful girls. For the late Professor of Education, Ted Wragg, 'the underachievement of boys has become one of the biggest challenges facing society today'. For the former Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris

activity 12 gender and educational attainment

Item A GCSEs

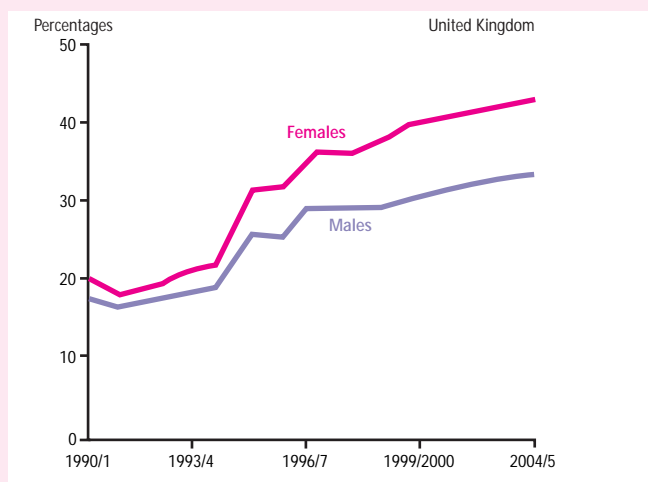
Percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C (England)

	Boys %	Girls %	Gender difference %
2007	59.7	66.8	7.1
2006	52.6	62.2	9.6
2004	48.4	58.4	10.0
2002	46.4	57.0	10.6
2000	44.0	54.6	10.6
1998	41.3	51.5	10.2
1996	39.9	49.4	9.5
1994	39.1	47.8	8.7
1992	34.1	42.7	8.6
1990	30.8	38.4	7.6

Source: Department for Education and Skills

Item B A levels

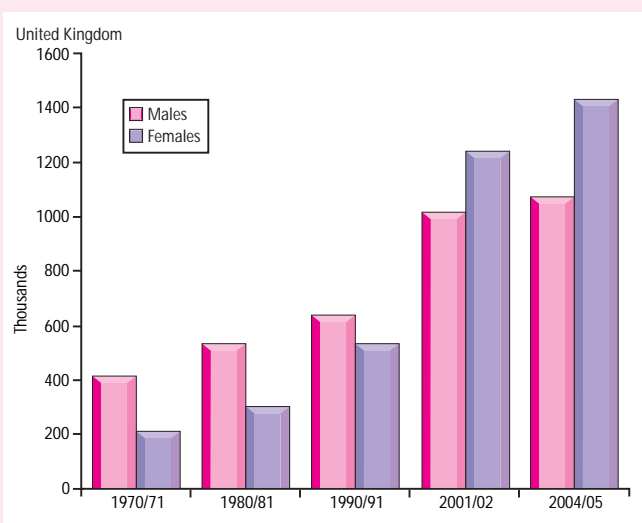
Attainment of two or more GCE A levels or equivalent qualifications (United Kingdom)



Source: National Statistics Online

Item C Higher education

Students in higher education



Source: Various issues of *Social Trends*, Office for National Statistics

question

Briefly summarise the trends shown in Items A, B and C.

Woodhead, underachieving boys are 'one of the most disturbing problems facing the education system'.

The impression sometimes given by the media is of boys failing in droves and of girls racing ahead. But is there really a gender crisis in education? Work carefully through Activity 12. It contains the kind of statistics on which claims of a gender crisis are often based. Then we'll look at various ways of interpreting this evidence.

3.1 Interpreting the statistics

The picture of failing boys and achieving girls is based on the kind of statistics presented in Activity 12. What's wrong with this picture?

Boys are doing better Over the past 50 years, the educational performance of boys and young men has steadily improved. Overall, the performance of girls has risen at a faster rate. However, this hardly justifies blanketing all boys as underachievers. Many boys are doing extremely well (Coffey, 2001).

Only some boys are failing Only certain groups of boys are underachieving. There is a close link between male underachievement and social class – compared to other groups, a high proportion of working-class boys are failing (Epstein et al., 1998).

What's new? In some respects, there's nothing new about girls outperforming boys. When the 11-plus exam was introduced in the 1940s, more girls passed than boys. The results were fiddled so that roughly equal numbers of boys and girls went to grammar schools. If the results hadn't been 'adjusted', then two-thirds of grammar school places would have gone to girls (Chitty, 2002).

Hiding girls' failure The preoccupation with so-called 'failing boys' diverts attention from underachieving girls. A high proportion of working-class girls are failing in the school system (Plummer, 2000).

What has changed? In general, the educational performance of girls has improved significantly since the 1980s. And, in general, their improvement has been greater than that of boys. But this does not mean that boys as a group are failing. As noted earlier, the educational performance of most boys is improving.

Gender, class and ethnicity Although the gender gap is significant, it is important to note that class has over five times the effect on educational attainment than gender, and ethnicity twice the effect (Gilborn & Mirza, 2000).

3.2 Explaining girls' improvement

Why are girls doing so well? Here are some of the explanations suggested by researchers.

Changes in attitudes

Judging from a number of studies, girls and young women's attitudes towards education, work and marriage have

changed in recent years. Sue Sharpe compared the attitudes of working-class girls in London schools in the early 1970s and 1990s (Sharpe, 1976 & 1994). She found that the 1990s girls were:

- more confident
- more assertive
- more ambitious
- more committed to gender equality.

The main priorities of the 1970s girls were 'love, marriage, husbands and children'. By the 1990s, this had changed to 'job, career and being able to support themselves'. And education was seen as the main route to a good job and financial independence.

Changes in the labour market and attitude to work

There has been a steady rise in the number of women in the labour market. Between 1971 and 2006, the UK employment rate for working age women rose from 56% to 70% (*Social Trends*, 2007). This has been accompanied by a rise in women's occupational ambitions – increasing numbers are looking forward to careers rather than simply jobs. This has led to a higher value being placed on education as a means to a good job. Studies of primary and secondary pupils indicate that girls are increasingly aiming for occupations which require degree level qualifications (Francis & Skelton, 2005).

In the past, women tended to see employment as a stopgap before marriage. Increasingly, they see their occupation as reflecting their identity and as a means for self-fulfilment (Francis & Skelton, 2005).

According to Sue Sharpe (1994), girls are increasingly wary of marriage. They have seen adult relationships breaking up all around them. And they have seen women coping alone in what was once a 'man's world'. Girls were now concerned with standing on their own two feet rather than being dependent on a man. As a result, they were more likely to see education as a means to financial independence.

Changes in marriage and marital breakup

Over the past 30 years, there have been fewer marriages, more divorces and more lone-parent families, most of which are headed by women (*Social Trends*, 2007).

Changes in schools

The abolition of the 11-plus exam and the introduction of comprehensive schools by most local education authorities has removed some of the barriers to girls' achievement. No longer are girls artificially 'failed' in order to get equal numbers of boys and girls into grammar schools.

There has been a growing awareness of gender bias in schools and attempts to remove it. For example, there was a recognition that girls were put off by what were traditionally seen as 'boys' subjects' such as maths, technology, physics and chemistry. This led to the introduction of equal opportunity initiatives such as Girls

into Science and Technology.

In 1988, the National Curriculum provided a compulsory core curriculum for all students up to the age of 16 – no matter what their gender. Although the compulsory core has now been slimmed down, all students still have to take maths and science.

Changes in society – risk and individualisation

A number of sociologists claim that today's society is characterised by risk, uncertainty and *individualisation*. For example, with the rising divorce rate, the future of marriage is increasingly uncertain. And the same applies to the future of work. 'Jobs for life' have largely disappeared and a person's working life is becoming more unpredictable.

At the same time, a process of individualisation is occurring. People are increasingly seeing themselves as individuals rather than as members of social groups. In an

insecure, risk-filled society, they look to themselves, becoming more self-reliant and self-sufficient. Financial independence is one way of guarding against risk and becoming self-sufficient. And education is one of the main routes to well-paid jobs which can provide this independence.

Ulrich Beck (1992) argues that women are leading the move towards the individualised self. They are 'setting the pace for change'. As a result, it is women who are in the forefront of the improvement in educational attainment.

key term

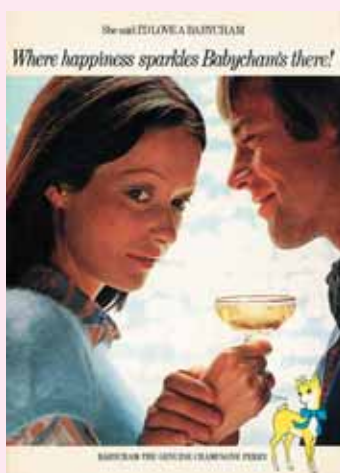
Individualisation The process whereby people see themselves as individuals rather than members of social groups.

activity¹³ changing girls

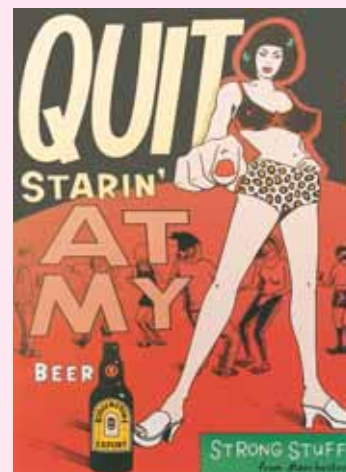
Item A Girl power



Item B Changing drinks and changing times



Early 1970s



Early 1990s



2007

question

How might Items A and B help to explain girls' rising educational attainment?

3.3 Why are some boys failing?

As noted earlier, most boys and young men are improving their performance in primary, secondary, further and higher education. However, their levels of attainment are rising more slowly than those of girls. And some boys are doing badly – in particular some working-class boys.

Working-class boys have always had problems with the educational system for the reasons outlined in Unit 2. Some researchers believe that these problems have grown in recent years for the following reasons.

Changes in the job market

Manual jobs With the decline in manufacturing and the increasing automation of production, there has been a rapid reduction in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The shrinking of this section of the job market has hit working-class males hard. In 2002, the highest unemployment rate – at 10% – was for men in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations which do not usually require formal qualifications (*Social Trends*, 2003).

Manual 'macho' jobs fitted traditional working-class masculine identities. The collapse of this sector of the job market has left these identities uncertain, threatened and confused (Jackson, 1998).

Service sector jobs The new jobs in the service sector tend to be desk jobs in offices and call centres, or jobs involving care for others which require sensitivity and interpersonal skills. These jobs do not sit happily with traditional working-class masculine identities. And even the more 'macho' jobs in the public services – eg, police, fire service and paramedics – now require higher levels of sensitivity and social skills (Mahony, 1998).

Changes in male roles

Traditionally the working man was a father, husband and breadwinner. With increasing numbers of lone-parent families, over 90% of which are headed by women, these roles are closed to many men (see pages 95–98). And boys growing up in these families lack the role models of father, husband and breadwinner.

Lone-parent, mother-headed families are concentrated in

the lower working class. Growing up in such families can threaten traditional working-class masculine identities (Jackson, 1998).

Work, home and school

In recent years, working-class boys have become increasingly vulnerable and insecure. They have seen jobless men in the neighbourhood, dependent on welfare with little hope for the future. They have seen traditional working-class jobs drying up. They have seen more and more men fail as breadwinners and fathers.

This has been seen as a 'crisis' in working-class masculinity. How do boys deal with this crisis at school?

School and working-class identity Some working-class boys attempt to deal with the identity problem by adopting an aggressive, macho 'laddishness'. They reject what they see as the middle-class values of the school. Schoolwork is defined as 'sissy' work. As one boy put it, 'The work you do here is girls' work. It's not real work' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In other words, it's not the kind of work that 'real' men do. Those who work hard are put down as 'swots' and 'keenos'.

As a result, the anti-school subculture described by Paul Willis in his study of working-class 'lads', develops and directs the boys' behaviour (see page 165). Rejecting the values of the school, some boys look for acceptance, recognition and respect by acting out the norms and values of the anti-school subculture. Reinforced by their peers, they make a considerable contribution to their own educational failure.

Laddish behaviour

The anti-school subculture of a section of working-class 'lads' has a long history. It has been described by sociologists over the past 50 years. What appears to have changed in recent years is that aspects of this subculture have spread to a far larger part of the school population.

In *Lads and Ladettes in School*, Carol Jackson (2006) examined what she calls 'laddish behaviour' among 13–14 year old boys and girls. This behaviour was based on the idea that it is uncool to work hard at school. And, if you're seen as uncool, you won't be popular. This view was held

methods8 semi-structured interviews

In *Lads and Ladettes in School*, Carol Jackson (2006) gave semi-structured interviews to 203 Year 9 pupils in eight schools. She conducted some of the interviews herself – Jackson was a white British woman in her mid-30s. The other interviews were conducted by her colleague a White British woman in her 40s.

While Jackson found the interviews provided 'rich information', she found it difficult to get students to spell out the motives for their behaviour. Why did they behave in laddish

ways? She was worried about asking leading questions and directing them to give the answers she expected and believed were correct.

Source: Jackson, 2006

question

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews in a study of laddish behaviour?

activity¹⁴ a changing world

Item A The decline of manufacturing



Derelict engineering works, Willenhall, West Midlands

Item C New opportunities



Working in a call centre

If the sort of work available to young working-class people is largely in the service industries, they will need qualities such as warmth, empathy, sensitivity to unspoken needs, and high levels of interpersonal skills to build an effective relationship with customers.

Source: Mahoney, 1998

Item B Aggressive masculinity

For many working-class boys, the traditional route to status, pride and security is closed. What some boys are left with is a bitter sense that trying to get work is pointless, and an aggressive culture of masculinity to fill in the despairing gaps.

Source: Jackson, 1998

question

Use Items A to C to provide an explanation for the educational failure of some working-class boys.

by nearly all the boys and girls in Jackson's study, whatever their social class background.

The boys based their laddish behaviour on the dominant view of masculinity – they acted tough, messed around, had a laugh, disrupted lessons and rejected school work as 'feminine'. Most wanted to do well at school but feared losing popularity if they were seen to work hard. The solution was to work secretly, usually at home. However, particularly for the working-class boys who often lacked appropriate facilities at home (eg, a computer with internet access), this was at best a partial solution. For many, laddish behaviour at school reduced their chances of success.

Why has laddish behaviour developed in recent years? First, as noted earlier, the decline of manual jobs has threatened traditional working-class masculinity. Laddish behaviour may be seen as an attempt to rebuild a masculine identity. Second, there is increasing pressure to succeed. Schools are striving to raise standards and improve their standing in league tables. This places growing pressure on pupils to attain high grades. Laddish behaviour can help to deal with the fear of possible failure and with the shame of actual failure that this pressure produces. This is summarised in the following quote: 'I'm not stupid, I just didn't do any work' (Jackson, 2006).

key term

Laddish behaviour In terms of behaviour in school, messing around, having a laugh, disrupting lessons, acting tough, public rejection of hard work.

summary

1. The educational performance of females has improved significantly since the 1980s. They have overtaken males at every level from primary to higher education.
2. Overall, the performance of males has also improved, but at a slower rate.
3. The following reasons have been suggested for the improvement in female performance:
 - Changes in attitudes – eg, increasing concern with financial independence
 - Changes in the labour market – more women in the workforce
 - Changes in marriage – rising divorce rate and growth of lone-parent families
 - Changes within schools – eg, reduction in gender bias
 - Changes in society – risk, uncertainty, individualisation.
4. The following reasons have been suggested for the relatively low attainment of boys, particularly some working-class boys.
 - The threat to working-class masculinity resulting from the reduction in traditional working-class jobs and the growth in female-headed families
 - The development of an anti-school culture which rejects the values of the school and helps rebuild a masculine identity
 - The spread of laddish behaviour as a response to the fear of failure and the shame of failure.

Unit 4 *Ethnicity and educational attainment*

keyissues

- 1 How does ethnicity affect educational attainment?
- 2 What explanations have been given for ethnic differences in attainment?

As noted earlier (see page 171) class has the most important effect on educational attainment – three times greater than ethnicity. Ethnicity comes next. It has around twice the effect of gender (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

The evidence indicates that:

- All ethnic groups have improved their educational attainment.
- There are significant differences in the attainment of ethnic groups (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

The following section looks at some of the evidence on which these statements are based.

4.1 Ethnicity and attainment – evidence

Activity 15 looks at ethnicity and educational attainment at GCSE level.

Ethnicity Activity 15 shows that all groups have improved their performance at GCSE level since 1992. Bangladeshi students have made the most significant improvement. And Indian students have the highest percentage of A*-C grades. White students have made the smallest improvement. And Black students have the lowest percentage of A*-C grades. Despite overall improvement, there are still significant differences in attainment between ethnic groups.

Ethnicity and gender Just how much are the differences in attainment at GCSE due to ethnicity? We already know that social class and gender affect attainment. Before going further, it is important to look at their influence in order to assess the effect of ethnicity.

Work through Activity 16 now in order to assess the effect of gender.

The bar chart in Activity 16 shows that in each of the ethnic groups, girls do better than boys. Clearly, there is a gender gap in attainment. But, even taking this into account, there are still important ethnic differences. For example, Chinese girls do better than Chinese boys, but they also do better than girls from other ethnic groups.

The effect of gender varies in different ethnic groups. For example, the highest gender gap is between Black Caribbean girls and boys – over 16 percentage points. And the lowest gender gap is between Chinese girls and boys – just over 9 percentage points. These figures suggest that gender does not operate in isolation. In this case, it appears to be affected by ethnicity.

Ethnicity and class Recent figures on the relationship between ethnicity, social class and educational attainment at GCSE are not available. However, figures are available for a comparison of attainment at GCSE of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) – those from low income groups – and those not eligible for free school meals (non-FSM) – those from higher income groups. The comparison gives some indication of the effects of class, since class involves income inequality. Look at the bar chart in Activity 17 to see the effect of income differences on attainment at GCSE.

activity15 ethnicity and attainment

Attainment of 5 or more GCSEs A*-C by ethnicity

England and Wales						percentages
Ethnic group	1992	1996	2000	2004	2006	Gain 1992-2006
White	37	45	50	55	58	+21
Black	23	23	39	34	48	+25
Indian	38	48	60	72	72	+34
Pakistani	26	23	29	37	51	+25
Bangladeshi	14	25	29	45	57	+43

Note: Black includes people of African-Caribbean and Black African origin.

Source: Various Youth Cohort Studies, Office for National Statistics

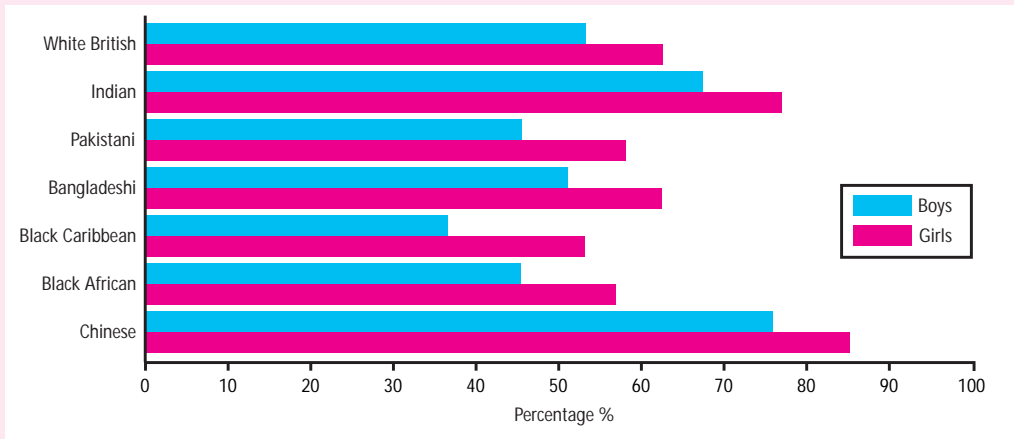


question

Summarise the relationship between ethnicity and educational attainment indicated by the table.

activity16 ethnicity, gender and attainment at GCSE

Attainment of 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C, by ethnicity and gender, England (percentages), 2006



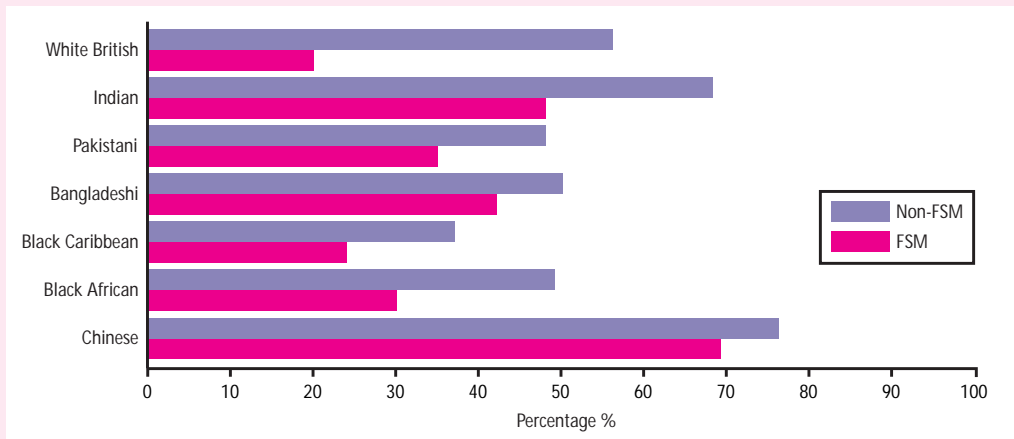
Source: National Curriculum Assessments, SFR 04/2007, DfES, London

question

What relationships between ethnicity, gender and educational attainment are indicated by the bar chart?

activity17 ethnicity, income inequality and attainment at GCSE

Pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C, by ethnic group and FSM (free school meals) status, 2003 (percentages)



Source: Ethnicity and Education, 2005 DfES, London

question

What relationships between ethnicity, income inequality and educational attainment are indicated by the bar chart?

The bar chart in Activity 17 shows that income inequality affects all ethnic groups. However, its influence varies from group to group. Coming from a low-income background appears to affect White British more than minority ethnic pupils. For example, in 2003, 56% of non-FSM and 20% of FSM White British pupils attained A*-C grades at GCSE – a difference of 36 percentage points. By comparison, 50% of non-FSM and 43% of FSM Bangladeshi pupils attained

these grades – a difference of only 7 percentage points (DfES, 2005).

Post-16 education

Young people from minority ethnic groups are more likely to continue their education after 16 than the majority White group. Table 1 shows full-time and part-time initial

participation rates for higher education, that is rates for *starting* higher education courses. Whites have the lowest rate at 38%, Black Africans the highest at 73% (Connor et al., 2004). Members of minority ethnic groups make up 16% of home undergraduates in England, nearly double their share of the population (Modood, 2006).

However, apart from the Chinese and Indian students, minority ethnic group students are less likely to attend prestigious universities, more likely to drop out and less likely to obtain a high-grade degree (Modood, 2006).

Table 1 Higher education initial participation rates England, 2001/2 (percentages)

Ethnic group	Male	Female	All
White	34	41	38
All minority ethnic groups	55	58	56
Black Caribbean	36	52	45
Black African	71	75	73
Black other	56	72	64
Indian	70	72	71
Pakistani	54	44	49
Bangladeshi	43	33	39
Chinese	47	50	49

Source: Connor, H., Tyers, C., Modood, T. and Hillage, J. (2004)

4.2 Explaining ethnic differences in attainment

This section looks at factors in 1) the wider society and 2) within schools that may affect the attainment levels of ethnic groups.

Ethnicity, society and attainment

Explaining ethnic differences in attainment is difficult because of:

- Changes over time – for example, at GCSE Bangladeshi students have made major improvements from 1992 to 2006, significantly greater than other ethnic groups.
- Changes at different levels of the educational system. For example, the attainment of many African-Caribbean boys declines during secondary education. However, it improves significantly after compulsory schooling as a high proportion participate in further and higher education.

Social class As outlined in Unit 2, class has a significant effect on educational attainment. Ethnic groups who tend to be less successful in secondary school have a higher proportion of pupils from working-class backgrounds. Part of their level of educational attainment can therefore be explained in terms of class rather than ethnicity.

However, the influence of class on ethnic performance appears to vary from group to group. In particular, class appears to affect Whites to a greater extent than minority ethnic groups. For example, Bangladeshi pupils are most likely to come from working-class backgrounds, yet their performance at GCSE in 2006 was little different from Whites. In general working-class Bangladeshi pupils do better than working-class White pupils at age 16. The same applies to higher education. Compared to working-class Whites, a higher proportion of working-class minority ethnic group members attend higher education (Modood, 2004).

Cultural factors To some degree, ethnic groups have their own subcultures – norms, values and beliefs which are distinctive to each particular group. Does this have any effect on educational attainment?

Language differences have been seen as a reason for differences in educational attainment. As the most recent immigrant group, Bangladeshis are likely to be less familiar with the English language. However, the experience of other groups suggests that this will be a temporary disadvantage. The high attainment of Indian pupils indicates that a second language is not a barrier to achievement (Modood et al., 1997). And, as the GCSE results in Activity 15 suggest, Bangladeshi pupils appear to be rapidly overcoming any language barriers which might have slowed their progress.

The value placed on education can affect the levels of parental encouragement and pupil motivation, which, in turn, influence educational attainment. Research evidence indicates that minority ethnic parents may place a higher value on education, give their children greater encouragement and expect more from them than many White parents (Connor et al., 2004). This may explain why class appears to have less effect on minority ethnic attainment and on minority ethnic entry into higher education.

A large body of research has focused on the low attainment of African-Caribbean boys in secondary schools. Tony Sewell (1997), an African-Caribbean writer, argues that cultural factors provide part of the explanation. A high proportion of African-Caribbean boys are raised in lone-parent families, usually headed by women. Lacking the male role model of a father figure, some are drawn into gangs which emphasise an aggressive masculinity and reject authority. In schools, this version of Black masculinity can result in opposition to the authority of teachers and a rejection of academic achievement.

Sewell claims that only a minority of African-Caribbean boys adopt this approach (see page 000 for further details of his research). And, as Table 1 indicates, many may well grow out of this form of masculinity – 36% go on to higher education compared to 34% for White males.

Sewell's research has been criticised for what some see as blaming the boys rather than the schools. Critics argue that the way African-Caribbean boys are treated in schools is the main reason for their relatively low attainment at GCSE.

The influence of culture can be seen from the attainment of Chinese students. Compared to other ethnic groups, their attainment is higher, the gender gap is smaller and the effect of class is less. A study based on semi-structured interviews with 80 14-16 year-old Chinese students, 30 Chinese parents and 30 teachers from London schools reported the following findings (Archer, 2006). Both students and parents placed a very high value on education – it was seen as a ‘way of life’. For both middle and working-class families, university was ‘a must’. Parents invested considerable time, energy and money in their children’s education – ‘education is very much a family project’. A family’s standing in the community is partly due to the educational performance of the children. And children appreciated their parents’ high expectations, encouragement and support.

Ethnicity, schools and attainment

The focus now moves from the wider society to what goes on in the classroom.

School effectiveness

Some schools are better than others when it comes to exam results. In *The School Effect*, David Smith and Sally Tomlinson (1989) followed the progress of over 2,400 pupils from the age of 11 to 16 in 18 multi-ethnic comprehensives. They found that different schools achieved very different results with children of similar background and ability. According to the authors, ‘what school a child goes to makes far more difference than which ethnic group he or she belongs to’.

Evaluation Reviewing *The School Effect*, David Gillborn and David Drew (1992) state that, ‘Crucially the work reminds us that individual schools possess the power to influence the educational experiences, achievements and future life chances of their pupils’.

But they see two major problems. The first concerns methodology – in particular, the size and nature of the sample. For example, there were only 146 African-Caribbean pupils at age 16, too small a number on which to base conclusions. A second concern is Smith and Tomlinson’s view that racism was not a significant factor in the education of ethnic minorities. The results of their questionnaire given to parents and teachers suggested that racism was not a problem in school. But there is a growing body of research which suggests that racism is widespread in many schools. And it may well have a significant effect on educational attainment.

Racism in schools

Racism refers to *prejudice* and *discrimination* against groups seen as racially different. Prejudice means members of those groups are prejudged in terms of negative stereotypes – sweeping generalisations are made about all members of the group – for example, they are aggressive, lazy and so on. Discrimination means acting against

people simply because they are seen to be members of a particular group – for example, not giving them a job because of their group membership.

People may be completely unaware that they are discriminating against others. And they are often shocked when this is revealed to them.

methods9 questionnaires

In *The School Effect* Smith and Tomlinson (1989) gave questionnaires to parents and teachers.

questions

- 1 Why might a questionnaire fail to reveal racism in schools?
- 2 Why might parents and teachers be the wrong people to ask about racism in schools?

Discrimination and setting Jayleigh – not its real name – is a comprehensive school. In 1988, 41% of its pupils were of Asian origin.

At Jayleigh a greater proportion of White pupils (77%) were entered for GCSEs than Asian pupils (70%). In addition, White pupils were entered for more GCSEs (an average of 6.2) than Asian pupils (5.8). Whether or not pupils could take GCSEs depended largely on teachers’ assessment of their attainment and potential.

Pupils at Jayleigh were set in terms of ability. Asian pupils were more likely to be placed in lower sets even when they had the same assessment from the same primary school as White pupils. And to get in the top sets, Asians generally needed higher marks than Whites. Pupils tended to remain in the same sets throughout secondary school. And set placement largely determined GCSE entry. As a result, fewer Asians were entered for GCSEs, and those that were entered took fewer GCSEs.

This study by the Commission for Racial Equality (1992) concluded that, ‘Here was a school which, however unintentionally, was using a setting system that appears to have set up barriers to a significant number of Asian pupils, and, in some instances, might have discriminated against them unlawfully’.

It is impossible to estimate the extent of the ‘Jayleigh situation’. However, similar examples of systematic discrimination on ethnic grounds have been found in other schools. This can be seen from Activity 18 which looks at setting in a Midlands comprehensive school. It refers to CSEs and O levels which were replaced by GCSEs. CSE is a lower level examination. A CSE grade 1 is equivalent to an O level grade C.

activity¹⁸ ethnicity and setting

Item A Allocation to exam sets

Third year exam results (marks out of 100)						Set placement (O = GCE O level)			
Ethnicity	Pupil	English	Maths	French	Physics	English	Maths	French	Physics
African-Caribbean	A	73	44	58	---	CSE	CSE	CSE	---
	B	62	63	60	59	CSE	CSE	CSE	CSE
	C	64	45	56	72	CSE	CSE	---	CSE
	D	68	37	82	---	CSE	CSE	CSE	---
Asian	E	51	77	---	55	O	O	---	O
	F	60	56	58	---	O	O	O	---
	G	61	62	55.5	---	O	O	O	---
	H	54	55	---	40	O	O	---	O
White	I	61	62	---	62	O	O	---	O
	J	52	57	55	---	O	O	O	---
	K	75	82	77.5	72	O	O	O	O
	L	54	75	64	72	O	O	O	O

A CSE grade 1 is equivalent to an O level grade C.

Source: Education for Save by John Egglestone © Trentham Books Ltd. 1986

Item B Setting and perceived behaviour

The deputy head admitted that setting was not based solely on exam results – ‘It is the case that the school tends to put the dutiful children in O level groups’. Some teachers saw African-Caribbean students as ‘less cooperative’. One English teacher described all her African-Caribbean students as ‘a disruptive influence’. It appeared that at least some students were placed in lower sets on the basis of teachers’ views of their behaviour rather than ability.

Source: Wright, 1986

question

In view of Items A and B, do you think that racial discrimination played a part in the setting of students? Explain your answer.

Classroom interaction

Primary schools The evidence examined so far suggests that ethnic minority students experience discrimination during their school careers. Studies of classroom interaction support this. Cecile Wright’s research, conducted in 1988/89, was based on classroom observation in four inner-city primary schools (Wright, 1992). It found that teachers perceived and treated ethnic minority children differently from White children.

Asian children, especially the younger ones, were often seen as a problem, but as a problem that could be largely ignored. They received least attention, were often excluded from classroom discussions and rarely asked to answer questions. Teachers tended to assume that their command of English was insufficient for full classroom participation. Yet they also saw Asian pupils as well disciplined and highly motivated.

African-Caribbean children – especially boys – were expected to behave badly. They received considerable

attention – nearly all of it negative. Their behaviour was usually seen as aggressive, disobedient and disruptive. They were often singled out for criticism, even for actions which were ignored in other pupils. As a result, they often felt picked on and treated unfairly.

Secondary schools Research by David Gillborn (1990) largely reflects Wright’s findings. He spent two years studying an inner-city comprehensive school gathering data from classroom observation and interviews with teachers and students. He found that the vast majority of teachers tried to treat all students fairly. However, they perceived students differently and on this basis treated them differently. In particular, they often saw the actions of African-Caribbean students as a threat where no threat was intended. And they reacted accordingly by disciplining them.

African-Caribbean students were more likely to be criticised and punished, even when members of other ethnic groups committed the same offence. As a result, there was considerable tension and conflict between White teachers and African-Caribbean students.

activity¹⁹ different treatment

The following is taken from observation of a nursery class of four-year-olds.

Teacher: Let's do one song before home time.

Peter: (*White boy*) Humpty Dumpty.

Teacher: No, I'm choosing today. Let's do something we have not done for a while. I know, we'll do the Autumn song. What about the Autumn song we sing. Don't shout out, put your hand up nicely.

Mandy: (*shouting out*) Two little leaves on a tree.

Teacher: She's nearly right.

Marcus: (*African-Caribbean boy with his hand up*) I know.

Teacher: (*talking to the group*) Is she right when she says 'two little leaves on a tree'?

Whole group: No.

Teacher: What is it Peter?

Peter: Four.

Teacher: Nearly right.

Marcus: (*waving his hand for attention*) Five.

Teacher: Don't shout out Marcus, do you know Susan?

Susan: (*White girl*) Five.

Teacher: (*holding up one hand*) Good because we have got how many fingers on this hand?

Whole group: Five.

Teacher: OK, let's only have one hand because we've only got five leaves. How many would we have if we had too many. Don't shout out, hands up.

Mandy: (*shouting out*) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Teacher: Good, OK how many fingers have we got?

Marcus: Five.

Teacher: Don't shout out Marcus, put your hand up. Deane, how many?

Deane: Five.

Teacher: That's right, we're going to use five today. What makes them dance about, these leaves?

Peter: (*shouting out*) The wind.

Teacher: That's right.



question

Source: Wright, 1992

Make out a case that the teacher's treatment of Marcus is

- a) racist
- b) non-racist.

methods10 ethnography

Supporters of ethnography argue that we should study people in their normal, everyday settings.

question

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the ethnographic method for studying racism in schools.

Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (1988) studied a boys' comprehensive in the early 1980s. The school was streamed with boys being demoted to lower streams for what was seen as bad behaviour. In the words of one teacher 'There are boys of relatively higher ability in the lower sets, especially among the West Indians. I've told you before Johnson and Brian were marvellous at Maths, especially problem-solving. But it's their, it's the West Indians' attitude and that must decide it in the end. You can't promote a boy who is known to be a troublemaker, who's a dodger. It will look like a reward for bad behaviour.'

Many African-Caribbean pupils responded with resistance. They formed an anti-school peer group, the Rasta Heads, which rejected many of the school's norms and values.

Racism in schools – evaluation

Methodology Wright, Gillborn and Mac an Ghaill's studies use a research method known as *ethnography*. This involves direct observation of relatively small groups, often over fairly long periods of time. Because the samples are small, it is not possible to make generalisations – ie, to say that the findings apply to all multi-ethnic schools.

However, the insights ethnography provides are unlikely to come from research methods such as questionnaires. For example, in *The School Effect*, Smith and Tomlinson's questionnaire to parents and teachers revealed little evidence of racism in schools. Ethnographic methods often give a very different picture. But not always.

An alternative view Peter Foster (1990) conducted an ethnographic study of a multi-ethnic comprehensive between 1985 and 1987. He found no evidence of racism. Students from ethnic minorities were not treated differently from White students. In fact, minority students, especially African-Caribbean girls – achieved better results than White pupils.

Foster admitted that the school he studied was distinctive. It was situated in a community with a long history of ethnic cooperation. And, at the time of his study, the staff were involved in an anti-racist programme. Whatever the differences between this school and others, Foster's study warns against the dangers of generalising from a few examples.

Despite this warning, there is evidence of racism in schools. Ethnic minority pupils tend to be over-

represented in the lower sets and in the lower tiers for GCSE exam entry. And African-Caribbean boys in particular tend to be regarded as badly behaved and troublesome by many teachers, even when their behaviour is similar to that of White boys. This can only disadvantage ethnic minority pupils (Pilkington, 2003).

key terms

Prejudice Prejudging members of groups in terms of stereotypes – sweeping generalisations which are applied to all members of the group. Prejudice can be positive or negative.

Discrimination Acting in a certain way towards people because they are seen to be members of a particular group. Discrimination can be positive or negative.

Racism Prejudice and discrimination against groups seen as racially different.

Ethnography A research method based on direct observation of relatively small groups, often over fairly long periods of time.

summary

1. There are significant differences in the educational attainment of ethnic groups. However, these differences change over time – eg, over the past 20 years – and vary from one level of the educational system to another – eg, from secondary to higher.
2. The following factors outside the school have been seen to affect ethnic differences in attainment.
 - Social class – affects the attainment of all ethnic groups, but its influence varies from one group to the next. White students appear most affected by class.
 - Cultural factors – there is evidence that cultural factors, such as the value parents place on education and peer group subcultures, may partly account for ethnic differences in attainment.
3. The following factors within schools have been seen to affect ethnic differences in attainment.
 - Racism – particularly directed against African Caribbeans
 - Discrimination in setting
 - Discrimination in everyday classroom interaction.

Unit 5 Relationships and processes within schools

keyissues

- 1 What is the hidden curriculum and how does it operate?
- 2 What are pupil subcultures and how do they develop?
- 3 What factors shape teacher-pupil relationships?
- 4 How are teaching and learning organised?

5.1 The hidden curriculum

Look back to Activity 19 on page 000, which shows how Marcus, a four-year-old African-Caribbean boy, is given a hard time by his teacher. Let's assume that Marcus has a tendency to over-enthusiasm, but apart from this is a well-behaved and likeable boy. What message is the teacher sending to Marcus and the other children?

If she consistently puts all African-Caribbean children down, then her unspoken message states that African-Caribbean children are different, that they should not be shown the same kindness and consideration as other children, and that they are troublesome and need keeping in check. If other teachers treat African-Caribbean pupils in

the same way, then they are all transmitting similar messages. And these messages will form part of the *hidden curriculum* of the school.

Defining the hidden curriculum

The *formal school curriculum* consists of the knowledge and skills which pupils are expected to acquire. In state schools, part of this curriculum – the National Curriculum – is laid down by the government. It is spelt out in detail in official publications.

The hidden curriculum is the messages schools transmit to pupils without directly teaching them or spelling them out. It consists of ideas, beliefs, norms and values which are often taken for granted and transmitted as part of the normal routines and procedures of school life. It includes the unwritten and often unstated rules and regulations which guide and direct everyday school behaviour (Ballantine & Spade, 2001).

How is the hidden curriculum transmitted?

The hidden curriculum is transmitted in many different ways. Think about the following.

activity20 hidden messages

Item A Power and gender

In Britain's secondary schools, women tend to remain in the lower teaching ranks and in particular subject areas. Those who are promoted often end up as head of year, responsible for pastoral care – dealing with students' problems.

Source: Langham, 2000

Item C School assembly

Assembly started when teachers marched their tutorial groups to the hall, where they were expected to stand in straight lines. Here, senior house staff were much in evidence as they were concerned that pupils should stand up straight and stand quietly until the headmaster arrived. Meanwhile, other teachers stood around the edge of the hall, talking to each other, making jokes, and exchanging stories until the headmaster entered.

Source: Burgess, 1983

Item B Social control and ethnicity

Exclusion is one of the methods of social control which schools can use to deal with students they regard as troublesome. Black pupils are more likely to be excluded than White pupils. In 2004/05, 39 in every 10,000 African-Caribbean pupils were permanently excluded compared to 13 in every 10,000 White pupils.

Source: *Social Trends*, 2007, Office for National Statistics

question

What messages are being transmitted by Items A, B and C?



School organisation

- Is there a hierarchy of power, status and authority?
- Who holds the top posts (eg, headteacher, senior staff), who occupies the lowest (eg, cleaners)? What is their class, gender, ethnicity and age group?
- Are there mixed-ability classes, or are pupils divided into streams or sets? Are certain groups – eg, working-class boys – usually found in certain sets?
- Are lots of pupils excluded? If so, which pupils?

The behaviour and attitudes of those in authority

- How do the head, senior staff, other teachers and support staff (eg cooks and caretakers) relate to each other and to pupils?
- Are pupils allowed to have a say in school life?
- How do those in authority relate to pupils in general and to the class, gender and ethnicity of pupils?

Transmitting messages Messages are transmitted in all these areas. For example, if the top posts are filled by males, this says something about gender relationships. If pupils have little or no say in the running of the school, this says something about power in organisations. If disproportionate numbers of working-class boys are found in the lower sets, this says something about inequality in the wider society.

The hidden curriculum – functionalist and Marxist views

Functionalist and Marxist perspectives on education were outlined in Unit 1. Each contains a particular view of the hidden curriculum – what it is, how it is transmitted and

how it relates to the wider society.

Functionalist views As outlined earlier, functionalists see the transmission of society's core values as one of the main functions of the education system. This can be seen as part of the hidden curriculum. It is hidden in the sense that teachers and pupils are often unaware of the process. It is part of the curriculum because it's found in every school.

Talcott Parsons (1951, 1961) provides an example using the value of individual achievement, one of the major values in Western industrial society. In schools young people are required to achieve as individuals. They take exams on their own, not as a member of a team. Their individual achievements are carefully graded and assessed. High achievement is rewarded with praise, high status, good grades and valuable qualifications. In this way, young people are encouraged to value individual achievement. And this prepares them to achieve as individuals in the wider society.

Marxist views As outlined earlier, Marxists argue that the main job of schools is social reproduction – producing the next generation of workers *schooled* to accept their roles in capitalist society.

For Bowles and Gintis (1976), this is done primarily through the hidden curriculum. They claim that schools produce subordinate, well-disciplined workers who will submit to control from above and take orders rather than question them. Schools do this by rewarding conformity, obedience, hard work and punctuality, and by penalising creativity, originality and independence.

Schools are seen to transmit ruling class ideology – a false picture of society which justifies social inequality and the capitalist system.

activity21 views of the hidden curriculum

Item A Prize day



Awards for academic excellence in an American school

Item B Learning to submit

In a study of 237 students in their final year at a New York high school, the researchers claimed that high grades were linked with perseverance, obedience, consistency, dependability and punctuality. Students with high grades were often below average when measured in terms of creativity, originality and independence of judgement.

Source: Bowles & Gintis, 1976

questions

- 1 How can Item A be used to support a functionalist view of the hidden curriculum?
- 2 How can Item B be used to support a Marxist view of the hidden curriculum?

Conclusion

The idea of a hidden curriculum is useful. Clearly, there's a lot more being taught and learned in schools than the formal curriculum of English, maths, science, and so on. And clearly much of this is 'hidden' – teachers and learners are often unaware of what's going on.

The content of the hidden curriculum is open to interpretation. Have the functionalists got it right? Have the Marxists got it right? This partly depends on how you see capitalist society.

5.2 Pupil subcultures

Pupil subcultures are the distinctive norms and values developed by groups of young people in schools. The anti-school subculture identified by Paul Willis in his study of working-class boys in a secondary school is an example of a pupil subculture (see page 165).

This section asks what subcultures exist in schools and where do they come from. Are they a reflection of life outside the school – do pupils bring their subculture from the neighbourhood into the school? Or, do subcultures develop in response to pupils' experiences within schools – for example, their placement in particular sets? Or, do they develop from young people's experiences both inside and outside the school?

A white, male, middle-class subculture

One of the earliest studies of pupil subcultures was conducted in the late 1950s/early 60s by Colin Lacey (1970). The pupils were mainly middle class and attended Hightown Grammar School (not its real name). Many had been high achievers at their local primary school – they were the 'top scholars, team leaders, head boys and teachers' favourites'.

In their first year, all new boys showed high levels of commitment to the school, proudly wearing their school caps and jackets, and enthusiastically attending school functions and clubs. In class, they were eager, straining to answer questions, cooperating with their teachers and competing among themselves. Six months into the second year, one class was seen by their teachers as difficult to teach. In the words of one teacher, 'They're unacademic, they can't cope with the work'. What had happened to transform a group of high-achieving, academically-able first year pupils into 'unacademic' second year pupils? To help explain this, Lacey introduced two concepts – *differentiation* and *polarisation*.

Differentiation This is the process by which teachers judge and rank pupils in terms of their academic ability (as perceived by the teacher) and their behaviour. On this basis, they are differentiated into streams. As time goes on, pupils get a sense of how both teachers and fellow pupils rate and rank them.

Polarisation Gradually, a gap opened up – and kept growing – between the pupils who were defined as

successful and those defined as unsuccessful – the two groups became polarised.

The subculture of success Pupils in the top stream accepted the value system of the school – they worked hard and were well-behaved. The system rewarded them with prestige – they were praised and respected by teachers. And the boys reinforced each other's behaviour – they were members of a successful peer group sharing the same values.

The subculture of failure Pupils in the bottom stream developed an anti-school subculture which became more extreme as the years went by. The school's values were turned upside down – boys gained prestige for giving cheek to a teacher, truancy, refusing to do homework, and for smoking and drinking.

This was a group thing – boys gained respect from other members of the group for anti-school behaviour. In this way, they reinforced each other's behaviour. And in the process, their school work steadily deteriorated.

Conclusion Lacey's study suggests that pupil subcultures develop within the school. They are a response to the way pupils are perceived by teachers, by other pupils, and by themselves. And they are a reaction to the way school classes are organised – in this case, streamed – and all that this 'says' about pupils in different streams.

key terms

Pupil subcultures The distinctive norms and values developed by groups of young people in schools.

Differentiation Separating pupils into groups on the basis of their perceived ability and behaviour.

Polarisation The widening gap in terms of measured ability and behaviour between top and bottom classes.

White, male, working-class subcultures

The lads As outlined earlier, Paul Willis studied a small group of working-class boys – the 'lads' – during their last year and a half at school (see page 165). In many ways the anti-school subculture developed by the lads was similar to the behaviour of the boys in the bottom stream in Lacey's study of Hightown Grammar. However, Willis's explanation of the subculture's development is very different.

According to Willis, the lads' behaviour reflected a) their expectations of future employment and b) the working-class subculture they brought to school with them. The lads were keen to leave school as soon as possible and looked forward to 'real' work – adult, male, manual jobs. School was a waste of time.

- The lads didn't need academic qualifications for the jobs they wanted.
- They despised those who conformed to the school's values – who they called the 'ear 'oles' – seeing them as cissies.

- They wanted a context – manual work – where they could be real men.

The lads' anti-school subculture reflected the working-class culture they'd learned from their fathers, elder brothers and other men in the neighbourhood. Having a 'laff', a lack of respect for authority and messing around are aspects of manual working-class male subculture. The lads are attracted to this kind of behaviour and reproduce it in the classroom.

For Willis, the lads' anti-school subculture is shaped mainly by their expectations about the jobs they hope to get and by the working-class subculture they bring with them to school.

Working-class peer groups Willis has been criticised for basing his conclusion on a very small sample – 12 boys – and for ignoring other pupil subcultures in the school. Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (1994) studied Year 11 students in the early 1990s, in Parnell School (not its real name), a comprehensive in the West Midlands. He identified three working-class male peer groups, each with a distinctive subculture.

Mac an Ghaill argues that to some extent these subcultures are shaped by:

- the way students are organised into sets
- the type of curriculum they follow
- the teacher-student social relations which result from the above.

Macho Lads The Macho Lads were relegated to the bottom two sets for all their subjects. They were academic failures and treated as such by their teachers. Like Willis's lads, they rejected the school's values and the teachers' authority. Their concerns were acting tough, having a laugh, looking after their mates and looking smart. The teachers viewed them with suspicion and policed their behaviour, banning certain clothes and hairstyles, and making constant demands – 'Sit up straight', 'Look at me when I'm talking to you' and 'Walk properly down the corridor'.

Academic Achievers Apart from the Macho Lads, Mac an Ghaill identified two other working-class pupil subcultures. The Academic Achievers saw hard work and educational qualifications as the route to success. They were in the top sets, and received preferential treatment in terms of timetabling, books and experienced teachers. The Academic Achievers tended to come from the upper levels of the working class.

New Enterprisers The New Enterprisers saw a different route to success. They focused on vocational subjects such as business studies and technology and looked forward to a future in high-skilled areas of the labour market.

White, female subcultures

Most of the research has focused on male subcultures. However, the following studies suggest some interesting

activity22 the Macho Lads

Darren: It's the teachers that make the rules. It's them that decide that it's either them or us. So you are often put into a situation with teachers where you have to defend yourself. Sometimes it's direct in the classroom. But it's mainly the headcases that would hit a teacher. Most of the time it's all the little things.

Interviewer: Like what?

Gilroy: Acting tough by truanting, coming late to lessons, not doing homework, acting cool by not answering teachers, pretending you didn't hear them; that gets them mad. Lots of different things.

Noel: Teachers are always suspicious of us (the Macho Lads). Just like the cops, trying to set you up.

Source: Mac an Ghaill, 1994



Messing around

question

Provide a brief explanation for the attitudes expressed above.

methods **11** involving participants

Mac an Ghaill's research at Parnell School was based mainly on participant observation. He also used informal group discussions, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and diaries kept by the students. He aimed to break down the barriers between himself and the research participants. There was give and take as they shared their life histories. And the students directly contributed to the research process by helping Mac an Ghaill construct the questionnaire that they later completed. Involving the research participants seemed to

work. As one student said to Mac an Ghaill, 'I've talked to you in a way that I've never talked to anyone and still don't, can't'.

Source: Mac an Ghaill, 1994

question

How effective do you think Mac an Ghaill's research methods were? Give reasons for your answer.

contrasts between male and female pupil subcultures.

Exaggerated femininity Research by Scott Davies (1995) in Canada indicates that girls' resistance to schooling is less aggressive and confrontational than male anti-school behaviour. Where the 'lads' display an 'exaggerated masculinity', the Canadian girls adopt an 'exaggerated femininity'.

They expressed their opposition to school by focusing on traditional gender roles. In Davies's words, 'Girls accentuate their femininity in exaggerated displays of physical maturity and hyper-concerns with "romance" on the one hand, and prioritise domestic roles such as marriage, child-rearing and household duties over schooling on the other hand'. So they wrote school off and invested their hopes in romance and future domestic roles.

You're wasting my time John Abraham's study of an English comprehensive indicates a different strategy of resistance. The girls pushed the school rules to the limit and responded to discipline by suggesting that it prevented them from getting on with their work. Teachers' objections to their behaviour were rejected as a waste of their valuable time (Abraham, 1995).

African-Caribbean male subcultures

Anti-school subcultures A number of studies have identified African-Caribbean anti-school subcultures. These subcultures are seen to develop from factors both inside and outside the school (Gaine & George, 1999).

Within schools, teachers tend to see African-Caribbean males as aggressive, challenging and disruptive. Often this is a misreading of African-Caribbean youth subculture – ways of walking, talking and dressing are sometimes interpreted by teachers as a challenge to their authority when none is intended. As a result of these misconceptions, African-Caribbean students tend to be singled out for punishment when White and Asian students are just as guilty. This leads some pupils to suspect teachers of racism. And this can lead to anti-school subcultures (Connolly, 1998).

As a result of both their class and ethnicity, a disproportionate number of African-Caribbean students are

labelled as less able and placed in lower sets. Again, this can lead to anti-school subcultures.

As noted earlier, African-Caribbean students sometimes bring Black street culture into the classroom. And this can be seen by some teachers as disruptive with its emphasis on aggressive masculinity.

A variety of subcultures Sociologists tend to focus on anti-school subcultures. In some ways, they are more interesting and colourful than conformist subcultures. Particularly in the case of African-Caribbeans, this tends to overlook the variety of responses to schooling.

In a study of African-Caribbean students in a boys-only, 11-16 comprehensive school, Tony Sewell (1997) identifies four main responses.

- **Conformists** These pupils (41%) accepted the value of education and the means to achieve educational success – behaving well and working hard. Conformists felt they couldn't succeed educationally *and* embrace the values and norms of their own Black peer group. This is a gamble, because if they don't succeed, they may lose the security which comes from being seen as a part of the Black community.
- **Innovators** These students (35%) accepted the value of education and wanted academic success but rejected the schooling process. Although anti-school, they tried to keep out of trouble. They attempted to distance themselves from the conformists and from teachers.
- **Retreatists** A small group (6%) of loners who made themselves as inconspicuous as possible. Many had special educational needs.
- **Rebels** These students (18%) rejected the school and projected an image of aggressive masculinity. Some modelled themselves on the Jamaican Yard Man, noted for his supposed physical and sexual prowess. They treated the Conformists with contempt, they were challenging and confrontational, and sometimes violent. Many saw academic qualifications as worthless – White racism would prevent them from achieving high status occupations.

Conclusion The above study is important because it shows the variety of African-Caribbean pupil subcultures rather

activity²³ African-Caribbean students

Item A Working for himself

Calvin has set up in business as a 'mobile barber'. Although still at school, he says he can make up to £300 a week.

Interviewer: How important is it for you to own your own business?

Calvin: It is important for Black people to make money because White people don't take us seriously because we're poor.

Interviewer: Is education important to you?

Calvin: Not really. I know what I need to know from the street. I'll give it three years and I bet no-one will bother with school. There ain't no jobs for no-one and they don't want to give jobs to Black people.

Source: Sewell, 1997

Item B Setting a good example

Interviewer: Do you belong to a gang?

Kelvin: No, because my mum says I shouldn't hang around students who get into trouble. I must take my opportunity while I can.

Interviewer: What students in this school do you avoid?

Kelvin: They are fourth years, you can easily spot the way they walk around in groups, they are mostly Black with one or two Whites. They're wearing baseball hats and bopping (*Black stylised walk*).

Interviewer: Don't you ever bop?

Kelvin: Sometimes for a laugh, but it's really a kind of walk for bad people. I wouldn't walk like this in school in front of the teachers. It sets a bad example.

Source: Sewell, 1997

Item C Celebrating



Celebrating successful GCSE results

questions

- 1 It is important not to see the anti-school subculture as the typical response of African-Caribbean young men. Discuss with some reference to Items A and B.
- 2 Briefly explain why African-Caribbean girls often do well at school and college.

than simply focusing on anti-school subcultures.

This study also shows how pupil subcultures are influenced by what goes on inside and outside the school. For example, the Rebels drew on Black street culture, arriving at school with patterns in their hair. This was banned, despite White boys being allowed to wear ponytails. This is seen as a lack of respect and pupils responded aggressively. Teachers punished them and so an anti-school subculture developed, shaped by factors from both inside and outside the school (Sewell, 1997).

African-Caribbean female subcultures

A number of studies of African-Caribbean female pupil subcultures have produced the following picture (Mac an Ghaill, 1988, 1992; Gillborn, 1990; Mirza, 1992). These findings apply to many, though by no means all, students.

Generally, African-Caribbean girls are pro-education – they are ambitious, determined to succeed, and are aiming for high-status, well-paid occupations. However, they tend not to identify with their teachers and school. This is partly

in response to the open racism of a small number of teachers and the clumsy, well-meaning but often unhelpful 'help' offered by many teachers in response to the girls' ethnicity (Mirza, 1992) – see page 200.

African-Caribbean girls usually keep a low profile, keep their distance and avoid confrontation. In this way, they maintain their self-respect and don't have to compromise.

5.3 Teacher-pupil relationships

This section looks at the relationships between teachers and pupils. It focuses on the way teachers define, classify and evaluate pupils and how these processes affect pupils' behaviour.

Teacher expectations

A famous study conducted in 1964 by Robert Rosenthal and Leonora Jacobson, looked at the effects of teachers' expectations on pupils' behaviour. The researchers told teachers in a primary school in California that they had

identified a number of pupils – the ‘spurters’ – as likely to make rapid progress. Unknown to the teachers, these pupils were selected at random. Yet, judging from the results of intelligence tests, the spurters made greater progress than their classmates over the next year.

Rosenthal and Jacobson concluded that their progress was due to the way they were defined. Their teachers expected more from them, conveyed this expectation to them, and the pupils acted accordingly. Yet, in Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) words, the only difference between the ‘spurters’ and their classmates was ‘entirely in the minds of teachers’.

Rosenthal and Jacobson used the idea of a *self-fulfilling prophecy* to explain their results. If people are defined in a certain way, this definition includes a prediction or prophecy of their future behaviour. If others act as if the prophecy is true, then there is a tendency for it to come to pass – to fulfil itself.

The definition acts as a *label*. According to *labelling theory*, if someone is labelled as a certain kind of person, others will respond to them in terms of the label. And there is a tendency for the person to adopt that identity and act in terms of it.

Evaluation Rosenthal and Jacobson’s research has been extremely influential. However, attempts to replicate (repeat) their study have produced mixed results with some suggesting that labelling was of little or no significance. However, many researchers argue that labelling is important, that the self-fulfilling prophecy is real, and that it can help to explain differences in educational attainment.

methods12 replication

question

Using Rosenthal and Jacobson’s study as an example, suggest why it is important to replicate studies.

Teachers’ perceptions and social class

How do teachers assess pupils’ ability? To some extent by their exam results and the reports of other teachers on pupils’ progress and potential. But, as Units 2, 3 and 4 indicate, teachers’ assessments can be affected by pupils’ social class, ethnicity and gender. And this in turn, can affect teachers’ relationships with pupils.

Class and the ‘ideal pupil’ An early study looking at the influence of pupils’ class on teachers’ perceptions was conducted in the early 1950s by the American sociologist Howard Becker. He interviewed 60 teachers from Chicago high schools and found they tended to share an image of the ‘ideal pupil’.

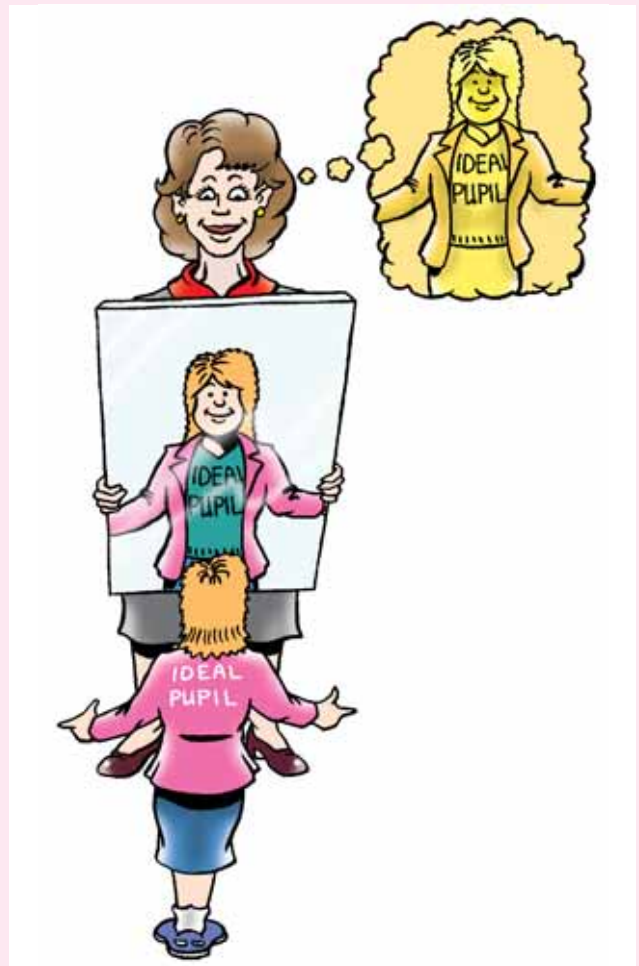
Teachers perceived middle-class pupils as closest to this ideal, and pupils from the lower working class as furthest

from it. Those in the lowest class grouping were seen as less able, lacking motivation and difficult to control. As a result, teachers felt the best they could do was ‘just try to get some basic things over to them’ (Becker, 1971).

Teachers were unaware that the social class background of pupils influenced their assessments. Nor did they realise that perceptions of class also influenced the level of work they felt appropriate for pupils.

Class in a nursery school An American study of children starting nursery school shows how early and how quickly the link between class and ability can be made. By the eighth day, children had been allocated to one of three tables depending on the teacher’s perception of their ability. And this perception, unknown to the teacher, was

activity24 an ideal pupil



questions

How does this cartoon illustrate:

- the ideas of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy
- teachers’ expectations of and relationships with pupils?

based on the child's class background, with working-class children being placed on the 'lower-ability' table (Rist, 1970).

Class and 'ability' Research in Britain presents a similar picture. David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2001) conducted research in two London secondary schools from 1995 to 1997. They discovered that teachers had a 'common sense understanding of ability'. Using this as a yardstick, they allocated pupils to different examination sets.

Working-class pupils were more likely to be seen as disruptive, as lacking in motivation and lacking in parental support. As a result, they 'face a particular problem in convincing teachers that they have "ability"'. And because of this, they are more likely to be placed in lower level sets and entered for foundation tier examinations.

As a result of making a link between so-called 'ability' and social class, teachers systematically discriminated against working-class pupils (Gillborn & Youdell, 2001).

Class and teacher-pupil relationships As the section on pupil subcultures indicated, teachers' perceptions of students can have an important effect on day-to-day relationships. Generally, teachers prefer to teach pupils they see as able and highly motivated. They place these students in higher sets and respond more favourably towards them. As a result, teacher-pupil relationships tend to be positive.

Conversely, teachers' views of students who have been defined as less able and placed in lower sets tend to be less favourable. These students may respond with resentment and hostility. And this can result in discipline problems and negative relationships between teachers and pupils.

Teachers' perceptions and ethnicity

African-Caribbeans Gillborn and Youdell's (2001) findings about working-class pupils outlined above apply equally to African-Caribbean pupils, no matter what their social class. Thus, there was a tendency to see African-Caribbean pupils as less able and more disruptive. This reflects the findings of a number of studies, particularly of African-Caribbean boys (see pages 00 and 00).

Primary schools As noted earlier, Cecile Wright's research in inner-city primary schools indicated that teachers tended to see African-Caribbean children, especially boys, as aggressive and disobedient. They were singled out for criticism and punishment, for which they felt picked on and unfairly treated. As a result, teacher-pupil relationships tended to be negative – abrasive and sometimes hostile (Wright, 1992).

Secondary schools Wright's findings from primary schools are mirrored in studies of secondary schools. For example, Tony Sewell's (1997) study of a boys' 11-16 comprehensive school suggested that African-Caribbean boys' were singled out for punishment. For example, they made up 32% of the student population but comprised 85% of those excluded.

Relationships with teachers were often strained and difficult. According to Sewell, teachers were sometimes frightened by the physical size and aggression of some of the more assertive pupils. There was a tendency to lump all African-Caribbean boys together. Those who conformed to the school's values and those who rebelled against them were often judged and treated in terms of the same negative stereotypes.

Sewell divided the teachers into three groups in terms of their relationships with African-Caribbean pupils.

- 1 **Supportive teachers** About 10% of staff. They did their best to support and guide pupils and usually established good relationships.
- 2 **Irritated teachers** About 60% of staff. Although they could be supportive, they felt firmer discipline was needed. They blamed the boys' street culture for many of the school's problems.
- 3 **Antagonistic teachers** Around 30% who were either openly racist or objected to African-Caribbean street culture – for example, hairstyles and 'bopping' (a stylised walk). As the term 'antagonistic teachers' suggests, their relationships with African-Caribbean pupils were strained and sometimes hostile.

African-Caribbean girls A study by Heidi Mirza (1992) of two south London comprehensives focused on 62 young Black women, aged 15-19. Mirza identifies five types of teacher in terms of their relationships with and attitudes towards Black students.

- 1 **Overt racists** A small minority who the girls avoided where possible.
- 2 **The Christians** Tried to be 'colour blind', claiming to see no difference between ethnic groups and the White majority, and refusing to see racism as a problem. They sometimes expected too little of the girls and gave them glowing reports for average achievement.
- 3 **The crusaders** Anti-racists who tried to make their lessons relevant to Black students. Because they knew little about their students, lessons tended to be confusing and irrelevant.
- 4 **Liberal chauvinists** Like the crusaders, they were well-meaning, but tended to underestimate their students' ability.
- 5 **Black teachers** A small group who showed no favouritism and were liked and respected. The girls found their help and advice extremely valuable.

In general, the young women in Mirza's research were ambitious, hard-working and determined to succeed. They rejected the negative views of their blackness, the low expectations of their potential, and the patronising and unhelpful 'help'. They tended to keep their distance and maintain a cool relationship with their teachers.

South Asian pupils Cecile Wright's study of four inner-city primary schools gives the following picture of the relationship between teachers and Asian children in the nursery units.

Asian children, especially the younger ones, were often seen as a problem, but as a problem that could be largely ignored. They received least attention, were often excluded from classroom discussions and rarely asked to answer questions. Teachers tended to assume that their command of English was insufficient for full classroom participation. Yet they also saw Asian pupils as well disciplined and highly motivated (Wright, 1992).

Paul Connolly's (1998) study of a multi-ethnic, inner-city primary school gives the following picture of the relationship between South Asian five and six-year-olds and their teachers. The children were seen as obedient, hard working and conformist. Teachers expected them to produce high quality work.

Girls were seen as models of good behaviour. When the boys did misbehave, this was seen as 'silly' rather than a challenge to the teacher's authority. As a result, they were not punished as much as African-Caribbean boys. Boys were often praised for good work, while girls tended to be left alone – teachers felt they didn't need the same help and encouragement (Connolly, 1998).

Teachers' perceptions and gender

'Girls get much less attention than boys 'cos boys make a fuss and make themselves noticed – they wanna be noticed so they make a racket' (quoted in Lees, 1986). This complaint finds support from a number of studies.

Typical boys and girls In his study of a comprehensive school, conducted in 1986, John Abraham (1995) asked teachers to describe a typical boy and a typical girl. The typical boy is not particularly bright, likes a laugh, sometimes deliberately misbehaves and always wants to be noticed. The typical girl is bright, well-behaved and hardworking, doesn't say much, can be timid, silly and gigglish.

Boys tend to be seen as behaviour problems. They were told off for misbehaviour much more often than girls. However, not all this attention was negative. Boys were asked many more questions than girls in maths and in some English classes. Maybe as a result of this imbalance, girls asked teachers far more questions than boys.

Attending to boys In *Invisible Women: The schooling scandal*, Dale Spender (1983) tape-recorded lessons given by herself and other teachers. Boys received over 60% of teachers' time – 62% in her case even though she tried to divide her time equally between boys and girls. Compared to boys, girls were 'invisible'. They tended to blend into the background, a strategy encouraged by the fact that boys often poked fun at their contributions to lessons. And teachers usually allowed boys to get away with insulting and abusive comments to girls.

Michelle Stanworth's (1983) study of A-level students and teachers in a college of further education reflects this focus on boys. Stanworth found that teachers gave more time and attention to boys, were more likely to know boys' names, and expressed more concern and interest in them

(for further details, see page 00).

Gender and society Some studies suggest that if only teachers got rid of their sexist attitudes then everything would be alright. Boys and girls would then be treated equally. But classroom interaction is a two-way process. It is not simply teacher led.

Jane French (1986) argues that pupils bring their own behaviour patterns to the classroom, patterns which differ for boys and girls. Basing her research on video recordings of children in infant schools, French found that boys were more mobile and active, they were more disruptive and demanded more attention. Although girls were eager and interested, they were more likely to obey rules, for example, raising their hands and waiting for permission to speak. Simply because their behaviour was more problematic, boys got more attention.

Gender behaviour is shaped by the wider society and brought into the classroom. In French's view, 'the most determined action taken within the school cannot effectively counter the influence of peer group, magazines, television and family'.

5.4 The organisation of teaching and learning

This section looks at how pupils are allocated to teaching groups, and how this shapes what they are taught and the examinations they take. It draws together and develops material from various parts of the chapter.

There are two main types of teaching groups – *ability groups* and *mixed-ability groups*.

Ability groups These are groups of pupils who are seen to have similar abilities. *Setting* and *streaming* are two ways of dividing students into ability groups. Setting allocates pupils to subject groups – a pupil could be in set 1 for English and set 3 for maths. Streaming places pupils in the same ability group for all subjects – for example, a pupil is placed in class 3 and taught at that level for all subjects.

Mixed-ability groups In these groups, pupils are randomly or intentionally mixed in terms of their perceived ability.

Setting is the most common form of ability grouping in schools in England and Wales. It becomes increasingly common as pupils approach GCSE. Streaming was typical of primary schools in the 1940s and 50s. It began to die out with the decline of the 11-plus exam. Mixed-ability teaching throughout pupils' school careers is found in only a small number of schools.

Ability groups

Supporters of ability groups make the following points.

Different abilities – different teaching Young people have different abilities. This means they need to be taught:

- At different speeds

- In different ways
- At different levels.

The most efficient way of doing this is to create teaching groups of pupils with similar abilities.

Different abilities – different tasks There's no point in giving the same tasks to pupils of different ability. For example, only some can cope with higher level maths.

Different abilities – different exams Because pupils have different abilities, they need different exams at different levels – for example, GCSE at higher and foundation levels.

Mixed-ability groups

Supporters of mixed-ability groups make the following

points.

Social benefits Mixed-ability groups encourage cooperation and friendly relationships between students. For the wider society, they reduce class differences and class conflict.

Ability is not fixed In practice, most pupils remain in the same set or stream. This assumes that their ability is fixed – that it won't change. However, there is a lot of evidence which suggests that ability – as measured by tests – is not fixed.

Setting affects attainment The set or stream in which a pupil is placed can affect their attainment. For example, it can raise attainment in the top set and lower attainment in the bottom set. This is unfair – all pupils should have an

activity²⁵ teachers and pupils

Item A Social class

Teacher A: Some of the class have written to Oldham Town Council for material for the New Town project.

Teacher B: They're really bright, are they?

Teacher A: Mostly from middle-class families, well motivated.

Source: Keddie, 1973

A Head of Faculty in a secondary school explains the school's poor showing in the 'league tables'. 'We are weighted down the lower end, unfortunately, because we are a working-class school.'

Source: Gillborn & Youdell, 2001

Item C Gender

Alison: All the teachers I didn't like, they always favoured the boys and never taught us – the girls.

Researcher: How did they favour the boys in their teaching?

Alison: It was usually the boys who were noisy in the class and if a girl put her hand up they always keep her waiting and just never get round to it. And if a boy and a girl put up their hand at the same time they'd always talk to the boy. They'd never have time for the girls.

Source: Abraham, 1995

Item B Ethnicity

Samuel, a seven-year-old African-Caribbean pupil, talks to a researcher.

Samuel: I always get done and always get picked on. I want to go to a Black school with all Black teachers, it's better. I want to go to a school with just Black people.

Researcher: Why?

Samuel: Because when you go to a school with White people they give you horrible food and you're always picked on when you don't do nothing. When it's White people, they just say stop that and stop doing this.

Researcher: How does this make you feel?

Samuel: (Long thoughtful pause) Sad.

Source: Wright, 1992



questions

- 1 What does Item A suggest about teachers' perceptions of middle and working-class pupils?
- 2 Read Item B. Samuel may deserve everything he gets or he may not. Briefly discuss.
- 3 In what ways do Alison's comments in Item C reflect the findings of research?

equal chance.

Setting discriminates Those allocated to lower sets or streams tend to be from working-class or minority ethnic backgrounds. This can prevent them from obtaining the knowledge required for a high grade in examinations – for example, at GCSE level. In contrast, a disproportionate number of White, middle-class pupils are placed in the upper sets/streams. Ability groups discriminate in favour of the White middle-classes and against those from working-class and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Behaviour rather than ability This can be used as a basis for allocating pupils to ability groups. For example, there is evidence that African-Caribbean pupils have been placed in examination sets which were below their measured ability because their behaviour was seen as unsuitable for higher sets (see pages 189–190).

What are the effects of ability grouping?

A large number of studies have been carried out on the effects of ability grouping on pupils' attainment. Here are the conclusions of two surveys of these studies.

- 'In general, the research findings indicate that streaming and setting compared with mixed-ability teaching have no effect, either positive or negative, on average pupil achievement (across the ability range) at either primary or secondary level' (Sukhnandan & Lee, 1998).
- 'The weight of evidence from research on ability groupings within schools indicates that they have rather little impact on overall attainment' (Ireson & Hallam, 2001).

So, what's all the fuss about? It appears that allocating

pupils to ability groups makes little or no difference. There is *some* research, however, which indicates that it does make a difference. This research suggests that although the *overall* attainment level may remain the same, this is because those in the top sets do better and those in the bottom sets do worse. Possible reasons for this have already been outlined – labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy, teacher expectations, and pupil subcultures.

Where does this leave us? The short answer is we don't really know. Research evidence on the effects of ability grouping is inconclusive – it is not clearcut.

Setting and tiered exams

League tables and setting From 1992 onwards, the test and examination results of every secondary school in the country were published. Results from primary schools were published from 1997. This led to local and national 'league tables' as schools were ranked in terms of their results. In

key terms

Ability groups Groups of pupils who are seen to have similar abilities.

Setting Allocating pupils to ability groups in terms of subjects – for example, set 1 or 2 for English.

Streaming Placing pupils in the same ability group for all subjects – for example, class 1 or 2.

Mixed-ability groups Groups in which pupils are randomly or intentionally mixed in terms of their ability.

Tiered exams Exams with two levels. The maximum possible grade varies with each tier.

summary

1. The hidden curriculum transmits messages to pupils which are not spelled out. It consists of ideas, beliefs, norms and values which are embedded in the normal routines and procedures of school life.
2. From a functionalist view, the transmission of society's core values can be seen as part of the hidden curriculum.
3. From a Marxist view, social reproduction and the transmission of ruling class ideology are part of the hidden curriculum.
4. Pupil subcultures can reflect:
 - Neighbourhood subcultures
 - Ability groupings within the school
 - A combination of both.
5. Pupil subcultures are influenced by:
 - Social class
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity.
6. The way teachers define, classify and evaluate pupils can affect pupils' behaviour and teacher-pupil relationships.
7. Teachers' evaluation of and relationship with pupils is affected by their perception of pupils' ability.
8. Teachers' views of ability are affected by pupils':
 - Social class
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity.
9. There are two main types of teaching groups – ability groups and mixed-ability groups.
10. Research indicates that in general ability groups, eg sets or streams, compared with mixed-ability groups have no significant effect on overall attainment.
11. However, there is some evidence that higher ability groups increase attainment levels and lower ability groups decrease attainment levels.
12. The pressure in schools to improve exam results has led to an increase in setting.
13. Setting for exams can have a real effect on attainment – for example, placing students in sets for GCSE foundation tiers denies them any opportunity of achieving the higher grades.

the words of one Head of Year in a London comprehensive, 'A school now lives or dies on its results' (quoted in Gillborn and Youdell, 2001).

The pressure to improve results led to an increase in setting in the belief that this would lead to improved examination performance. This belief was reinforced by government policy. The Labour Party's election manifesto of 1997 stated that:

'Children are not all of the same ability, nor do they learn at the same speed. That means "setting" children in classes to maximise progress, for the benefit of high fliers and slower learners alike.'

Tiered exams and setting GCSE exams are tiered. Pupils

are allocated to sets for examination entry. For example, they may be allocated to the higher or foundation set for English. And this is where ability grouping in terms of sets has a major effect. It actually prevents those in lower sets from having *any* chance of attaining higher grades.

GCSEs have two levels – higher and foundation. The highest grade that pupils entered for foundation level can attain is grade C. There is no way they can get an A*, A or B.

According to David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2001), this system discriminates against pupils in lower sets. And it discriminates against working-class and African-Caribbean pupils who are disproportionately allocated to lower sets.

activity26 setting

Item A Tony Blair



Tony Blair visits the Ridings School in Halifax

'Different children move at different speeds and have differing abilities. The modernisation of the comprehensive principle requires that all pupils are encouraged to progress as far and as fast as they are able. Grouping children according to ability is an important way of making that happen.'

Source: *The Guardian*, 08.06.96

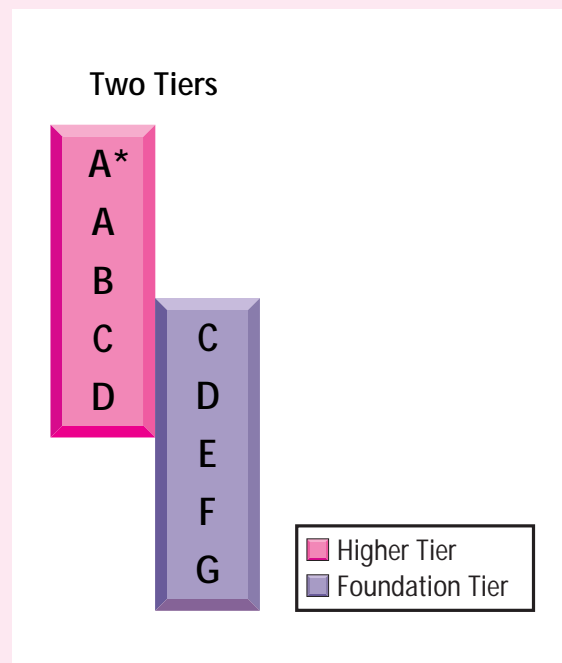
Item C Teachers' comments

Teacher A: You don't find any behaviour problems with the top set – they've got the intelligence.

Teacher B: When you get your next year's timetable and you see that it is a top or bottom set then you get certain images. If you get a top set you tend to think that their behaviour will be better. You tend to think with a bottom set you will get more discipline problems. I look forward to teaching my top-set third year but dread my bottom-set third year. With the bottom group I go in with a stony face but I know that with the top set if I say fun's over they will stop. But if I give a bottom set rope they'll take advantage of you.

Source: Abraham, 1995

Item B Tiered exams



Source: Gillborn & Youdell, 2001

questions

- 1 Write a letter of no more than 100 words to Tony Blair about his views in Item A.
- 2 Using the information in Item B, state why setting for examinations can make a real difference to pupils' attainment.
- 3 How might the teachers' views in Item C affect pupils' attainment?

Unit 6 Social policy and education

key issues

- 1 What have been the main policies on education from 1870 onwards?
- 2 What effect have they had on the role of education and students' experience of education?

6.1 The 1870 Education Act

Before 1870, public schools educated the children of upper classes, and grammar schools taught the children of the middle classes. Both types of school were fee-paying. Working-class children were limited to elementary schools run by churches and charities. Standards were often appallingly low and around one third of children received no schooling at all (Royle, 1997).

The 1870 Education Act aimed to 'fill the gaps' left by church and charity schools. It provided state-run elementary schools for five to eleven-year-olds. They charged a maximum fee of nine pence a week.

In 1880, elementary education was made compulsory up to the age of 10. It aimed to teach basic literacy and numeracy, 'morality' and Biblical knowledge. In 1891, elementary education was made free. The school leaving age was raised to 12 in 1889 and to 14 in 1918.

The 1902 Education Act This Act made local authorities responsible for secondary education. It encouraged the building of fee-paying grammar schools, many of which offered free places to children from low-income backgrounds who passed a scholarship exam.

In broad terms, up to the Second World War (1939-1945), there were three types of school for children from different class backgrounds:

- elementary schools for the working classes
- grammar schools for the middle classes
- public schools for the upper classes.

6.2 The 1944 Education Act

During and after the Second World War, there was widespread debate over the kind of society that should follow the war. Education was a central issue in this debate. It was felt that the nation was not making full use of the talents of its people, particularly those in the lower classes. Changes in the education system were seen as a way to remedy this.

The 1944 Education Act aimed to give every pupil an equal chance to develop their abilities to the full within a free system of state education. The Act reorganised the structure of education in England and Wales into three stages.

- Primary for 5 to 11-year-olds
- Secondary for 11 to 15-year-olds
- Further/higher education.

The tripartite system

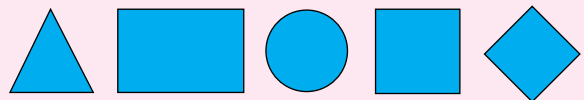
The major changes were in the secondary sector. The question was, what sort of secondary education would provide equality of educational opportunity for all children from the age of 11?

Types of pupil The response owed much to the theories of psychologists and educationalists of the 1920s and 1930s. These theories were based on the idea that there were different types of pupils, with differing aptitudes and abilities, and that a child's type could be identified by intelligence testing. On the basis of this, the 1944 Act

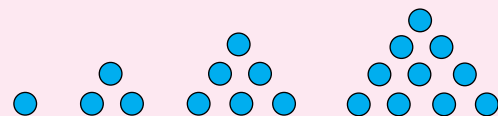
activity27 intelligence tests

- Underline the odd one out:
House Igloo Bungalow Office Hut
- Underline which of these is not a famous composer:
ZOTRAM SATSURS REVID MALESO
- Insert the word missing from the brackets:
Fee (Tip) End
Dance (....) Sphere

- Underline the odd one out:



- Draw the next one in the sequence:



questions

- 1 Answer the test questions.
- 2 What are the problems of forecasting children's academic ability on the basis of intelligence tests?

introduced a national test for 11-year-olds – the 11-plus test – as a means of allocating children to one of three types of secondary school.

Types of school The three types of secondary school were grammar schools, technical schools and secondary modern schools. This became known as the *tripartite system* of secondary education.

Grammar schools were intended for pupils defined as bright and academic – those whose abilities lay in reasoning and solving logical problems. They were to study classics, mathematics, science and other ‘difficult’ subjects in preparation for GCE O and A-level exams. Around 20% of the school population went to grammar schools. Technical schools were intended for children with an aptitude for technical subjects. These schools emphasised vocational training and technical skills and were attended by around 5% of the school population. Most children went to secondary modern schools. These children were seen as less academic and more practical. They were given a basic education with little opportunity to take external examinations until CSEs – a lower level exam – were introduced in the 1960s.

The tripartite system was intended to provide separate but equal types of schooling geared to the particular talents of the child. The Act stated that each type of school should have equal status, or ‘parity of esteem’, with buildings, equipment and staffing being of similar quality. However, these ideals did not work in practice.

Criticisms of the tripartite system

The 11-plus was unreliable It became increasingly clear that a young person’s educational future could not be predicted by an IQ test at 11. When secondary modern pupils were finally allowed to take GCE O levels, some were getting better results than many grammar school pupils.

The selection process was unfair and wasteful Selecting pupils at 11 was unfair – it denied many the opportunity of continuing their education beyond 15. It was also a waste of ability, both for the student and for the nation.

No parity of esteem Secondary modern schools were seen as second-rate by parents, pupils and employers. Grammar schools always had higher status because they specialised in academic subjects which led to well-paid, high-status occupations. As a result, there was no parity of esteem – no equality of status – between the schools in the tripartite system.

Three-quarters of students ‘failed’ For most pupils, the alternatives at age 11 were a grammar or secondary modern school. There were relatively few technical schools. The 11-plus was intended as a selection device for allocating pupils to appropriate schools. It was soon seen as a pass/fail exam. Three-quarters of the school population ‘failed’ and went to secondary modern schools. And with this ‘failure’ came the danger of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Social class divisions One of the main aims of the 1944 Act was to widen educational opportunities for working-class pupils. But the class divide in education remained. Research indicates that two-thirds of boys from middle-class backgrounds went to grammar schools compared to only a quarter of boys from working-class backgrounds (Halsey et al., 1980).

6.3 The comprehensive system

Educational policy in the 1960s was directed by social democratic ideas (see pages 167–168). From a social democratic perspective, everybody should have an equal chance to succeed. Clearly, the tripartite system was not providing equality of educational opportunity.

This was seen as both wrong and inefficient. A well-educated workforce leads to economic growth. The tripartite system wasted talent. This reduced people’s contribution to the economy, which meant that everybody suffers.

Three into one The tripartite system had provided three schools of unequal quality and unequal status. Why not replace them with a single school for everyone? This simple solution would end inequality between schools. It promised equal opportunities for all young people to develop their talents and abilities in schools of equal status – in *comprehensive schools*.

In a comprehensive system, young people of all abilities and from all social backgrounds attend the same type of school (except for those in private education). They are provided with the same opportunities to obtain qualifications and training. There is no entrance exam, no selection at age 11.

The development of comprehensives

In 1965, the newly elected Labour government sent a circular to local authorities requesting them to submit plans to reorganise secondary education along comprehensive lines. In 1970, when the Labour government was defeated, around one-third of young people in secondary education were attending comprehensive schools.

The Labour Party returned to power in 1974 and passed legislation requiring local authorities to go comprehensive. By the end of its period in office (May, 1979), over 80% of secondary school pupils attended comprehensives.

The limitations of comprehensives

There was a lot of hope riding on comprehensives. To some extent, this hope was justified. But it was too much to expect comprehensives to compensate for the inequalities in the wider society and provide equal opportunities for all.

Examination results Critics of the comprehensive system claimed it would lower educational standards. They believed that the ‘high academic standards’ of the grammar schools would be diluted in the comprehensives. Table 2

activity28 successes and failures

Item A Failing



As a youngster, I was a product of the 11-plus examination. In 1955, I failed the exam and still today remember the trauma, grief and unhappiness it caused. I can remember how, as 11-year-olds, we were called into the school hall and a list was read out of who had passed the exam. When my name was not read out, I was devastated. I can remember running out of the school gates, home. Because I had failed the 11-plus, my mother was distraught and I can recall the feeling of failure. It took many years to get over the trauma. I was fortunate to go to a secondary modern school that took GCEs and it was not until I had successfully passed those exams that the feeling of failure partially disappeared.

Source: *The Guardian*, 22.01.96

Item B Pigeon-holed



questions

- 1 Why did Gerald Steinberg feel a failure?
- 2 What does the cartoon suggest about the tripartite system?

suggests that they were wrong. Educational standards were higher in 1983, when less than 4% of secondary school pupils went to grammar schools, than in 1969, when 21% went to grammar schools.

Social class divisions Supporters of comprehensive education hoped that class differences in educational attainment would be reduced by the comprehensive

system. In particular, they hoped that the examination results of working-class pupils would improve compared to those of middle-class pupils. Although the educational qualifications of *all* school leavers improved, class differences remained largely unchanged. In other words, examination results in general got better but the gap between top and bottom stayed more or less the same (Ferri et al., 2003).

Breaking down class barriers Many of those who supported the comprehensive system looked forward to schools attended by pupils from across the entire social class spectrum. They hoped that this social mix would help to break down class barriers. However, most comprehensives recruit from a local catchment area. Often, these areas are largely middle class or working class. As a result, many comprehensives are primarily 'single class', so tending to reinforce rather than break down existing class divisions.

Streaming and setting Many comprehensives divide pupils into ability groups. A disproportionate number of middle-

Table 2 Highest qualifications of school leavers

	1969 (%)	1983 (%)
One or more A levels	12	14
5 or more O levels (A-C grades)	7	10
1 to 4 O levels (A-C grades)	18	28
1 or more O levels (D-E grades)	37	52
No qualifications	50	10

Source: *Social Trends*, 1972 and 1986, Office for National Statistics

class pupils are placed in the top streams and sets and a disproportionate number of working-class pupils in the bottom streams and sets. Some see this as another form of selection, not unlike the tripartite system.

6.4 Conservative educational policy, 1979-1997

In May 1979, the Conservative Party, led by former Education Minister Margaret Thatcher, were elected. Their aims were to:

- Develop an educational system which met the needs of industry
- Raise standards throughout Britain's schools and colleges.

The new vocationalism

Until the 1970s, vocational training – training for work – was seen as the responsibility of employers. They would teach new recruits the skills needed in the workplace. This view began to change with the rise in youth unemployment in the 1970s. Schools, it was argued, were producing young people who lacked the skills required by industry. And industry in turn was suffering from a skills shortage. This

line of argument led to the *new vocationalism* – direct government involvement in youth training.

Training schemes Conservative governments introduced a number of training schemes for young people. For example, the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), started in 1983, was a one-year, work-based training scheme for school leavers. It was replaced by Youth Training (YT) in 1990. In addition to workplace training, YT offered young people the chance to take vocational qualifications.

Vocational qualifications The development of training schemes was accompanied by new vocational qualifications. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications, set up in 1986, established National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for a range of specific occupations.

More general vocational qualifications were also introduced. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) allowed young people to keep their options open rather than specialise in a particular occupation. GNVQs assessed skills, knowledge and understanding in broad occupational areas such as Art and Design, Business, Health and Social Care, Manufacturing, and Leisure and Tourism. They have now been replaced by Vocational GCSEs and Vocational A levels.

activity29 class in the comprehensive



question

What problems of comprehensive schools are illustrated by this cartoon?

The new vocationalism – evaluation

Jobs not training are needed A number of critics argued that youth unemployment was due to a lack of jobs, not to a lack of skills. In other words, the problem was with the economy, not with young people and their education (Finn, 1987).

Quality and relevance of training According to Phil Cohen (1984), many trainees spent most of their time 'running errands' and 'being useful'. Few received any real occupational training, most were a source of cheap labour.

Not all youth training fitted this description. The better schemes and employers offered effective training in skills that were in demand in the labour market.

A second-best option Middle-class students usually avoided Youth Training, seeing it as a second-best option to staying on at school or college. In practice, YT students tended to be young people from working-class backgrounds who couldn't get a job. It has been argued that YT was training for the less able which channelled them into low status, low paid occupations (Lee et al., 1990).

Status of vocational qualifications Traditionally, vocational qualifications have been seen as inferior to GCSEs and A levels. The introduction of NVQs and GNVQs may have

improved their status. Vocational GCSEs and Vocational A levels may continue this improvement.

Raising standards

The first major aim of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government was to make education more responsive to the needs of industry. The second major aim was to raise standards throughout Britain's schools and colleges.

Where Labour had been influenced by social democratic ideas, Conservative governments were influenced by neoliberal/New Right perspectives (see pages 168-170). In line with neoliberal/New Right ideas, the aim was to create an education market-place in which the providers – schools and colleges – competed, and the consumers – parents and students – made choices. This would drive up standards since the consumers would choose successful schools and colleges, leaving unsuccessful institutions to go out of business.

To put these ideas into practice, the Conservatives gave schools more freedom and self-government in some areas and increased government control in other areas. This can be seen clearly from the Education Reform Act.

activity³⁰ youth training

Item A Training at the bank

Each year about 20 young people, many with no qualifications, are recruited from the inner-city area to train under the Bank of England's clerical youth training scheme.

18-year-old Elton Thomas is in his second year, and came in without any qualifications. However, he's working towards achieving an NVQ this summer.

'I use computers a lot at the moment. I spend a lot of time on the phone chasing statements and invoices. I've worked in four different offices and gained a variety of experience. It's great working here. I really like wearing a suit to work and looking sharp. I'm in the bank's football team. We play other banks and companies and win a few and lose a few!'

Source: Employment Department Group and BBC Radio One, 1991

Item B Cheap labour

Well, the thing is, my son's education was all right until he left school and he'd got no job to go to. So he went to these job creation schemes, which is the biggest con there ever was. All it was was cheap labour, I mean, I saw all this because the firm I worked for actually got kids in and they were working as hard, if not harder, than the men that earned the money, but they never got paid for it. He was a damn good worker, keen to learn, but as soon as the training period was over, they got rid of him and started a new one, because it was cheap labour.

Source: McKenzie, 2001



Trainees at the Bank of England

question

The quality of youth training depends on who's providing the training. Briefly discuss with reference to Items A and B.

The Education Reform Act

The 1988 Education Reform Act is the most important and far reaching educational legislation since the 1944 Education Act. It established a national curriculum for all state schools in England and Wales and a national system of testing and assessment. It reduced the role of local education authorities by giving greater control to individual schools and their governing bodies. It established city technology colleges and grant maintained schools, both independent of local authority control.

Competition and choice Part of the thinking behind the Education Reform Act can be seen from a government circular entitled *Our Children's Education: The Updated Parent's Charter* (Department of Education, 1994). It tells parents that, 'Your choice of school directly affects that school's budget; every extra pupil means extra money for the school'. And 'the right to choose will encourage schools to aim for the highest possible standards'. From this point of view, parental choice means that schools will compete in order to attract pupils (and money) and in the process standards of education will rise.

Diversity and choice Will parents have a real choice? Aren't all comprehensives much of a muchness? In an attempt to offer real choice, the Education Reform Act encouraged diversity. It introduced two new types of school.

- **Grant maintained schools** are created when sufficient parents vote to withdraw the school from local authority control. They are financed directly by central government. They are self-governing with governors and headteachers taking decisions about the employment of staff, the curriculum, the provision of goods and services and the way pupils are selected for entry. The idea was to free schools to specialise – for example, in particular subjects or particular types of pupils such as the 'more academically able'. In this way, the choice for parents was seen to be widened.
- **City technology colleges** for 11 to 18-year-olds are financed by central government and private sector sponsorship. Located mainly in inner-city areas, they teach the National Curriculum while concentrating on maths, science and technology.

In the 1990s, the Conservatives introduced two further types of schools – schools specialising in either languages or technology. They were called colleges to indicate their prestige and importance.

By 1996, there were 1,100 grant maintained schools, including 660 secondary schools, accounting for one in five of all secondary students. There were 15 city technology colleges, 30 language colleges and 151 new technology colleges (Chitty, 2002).

The National Curriculum The Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum. For the first time in the history of state education, the government told teachers

in England and Wales exactly what to teach. From the age of 5 to 16, all pupils in state schools must study three *core subjects* – English, maths and science – and seven foundation subjects. Pupils were tested in the core subjects by Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs – now renamed National Tests) at the ages of 7, 11 and 14. SATs results provided parents with information on which to judge the performance of schools.

League tables In 1992, all state secondary schools were required to publish the results of their SATs, GCSEs and A levels. In 1997, primary schools had to publish their SATs results. Local and national 'league tables' of schools were based on these results. They provided parents with information on which to base their choice of school. They were also intended to encourage competition between schools by spurring headteachers and staff to improve their position in the league.

Evaluation of Conservative policy

Choice Do parents have a real choice of schools? Popular schools are likely to be full, or to have only limited places. Where places are available, it is the articulate middle-class parents with their social and cultural capital who tend to obtain them. And in this situation, schools have more choice than parents – they are likely to choose middle-class pupils to maintain their position in the league tables. As a result, what choice exists is not equal – it operates on class lines and favours the middle class (Ball, 2003; Smith & Noble, 1995).

League tables Parents often look closely at examination results when assessing and choosing schools. But a simple league table which ranks schools in terms of results can be very misleading. There is evidence that some of the best schools in Britain do poorly on this kind of league table. These schools, often in run-down inner-city areas, are achieving extremely good results given the social background of their pupils. They may be doing a far better job than schools well above them in the league table (see Activity 32).

Selection There is some evidence of selection on academic and/or social grounds in popular schools. They may be reluctant to accept pupils with special needs, low academic ability or so-called behaviour problems, seeing them as a threat to their standing in the league tables. In the early 1990s, around one-third of grant maintained schools selected pupils on the basis of interviews with parents and/or pupils and reports from previous schools (Bush et al., 1993).

Critics have seen this as a means of 'back door selection'. They see a return of the grammar school in the guise of the grant maintained secondary school. And there will be no need for a selection process like the 11-plus. The government will have provided the evidence with SATs at age 11.

Marketing schools Increased competition has led to schools using a variety of marketing strategies to present

activity³¹ the education market-place



question

How does this cartoon illustrate the aims of the Education Reform Act?

themselves in an attractive and positive light. These include glossy brochures, mission statements, open evenings and adverts in the local press. The resources devoted to marketing mean that less money is available to spend on things which directly benefit pupils – for example, teachers and textbooks (Gewirtz et al., 1995).

However, this emphasis on marketing has its benefits. Schools now give more attention to academic standards, to pastoral care, to discipline, and the state of their buildings. In the words of one researcher, schools have had to 'address their academic weaknesses and capitalise on their strengths' (Coffey, 2001).

6.5 Labour educational policy, 1997-2008

During the election campaign of 1997, Tony Blair proclaimed that Labour's top three priorities were 'education, education, education'. Labour was elected in May 1997 with surprisingly little in the way of new policies for education. Some of their policies were influenced by neoliberal/New Right perspectives, others by social democratic ideas.

Diversity and choice

In many ways the Labour government continued the Conservatives' policies of diversity and choice which were based on neoliberal/New Right thinking.

Modernisation and comprehensives Tony Blair rejected what he called the 'one-size-fits-all' idea of comprehensive education. He saw the existing comprehensive system as providing the same type of school for everyone. Past Labour governments had seen this uniformity and standardisation as a way of providing equal opportunities for all. Labour now rejected this view, arguing that schools should reflect the diversity of young people – their particular aptitudes and talents, and their varying abilities.

Comprehensives should be 'modernised'. And part of this process involved more specialist schools.

Specialist schools In May 1997, Labour inherited 196 specialist schools from the Conservatives. By late 2002, they had almost 1000 in place. By 2003, sports, arts, business and enterprise, engineering, maths and computing, music, and humanities colleges had been added to the Conservatives' specialist schools. By 2007, there were over 2,500 specialist schools – over 75% of all secondary schools in England (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools, 2007).

The idea of specialist schools is to provide centres of excellence and expertise in particular subject areas. They are intended to raise standards of teaching and learning in these subjects. They can select up to 10% of their pupils, choosing those who have an aptitude for their specialist subject.

Diversity within schools The diversity of aptitude and ability must also be reflected *within* schools. Tony Blair

rejected mixed-ability groups, arguing that ability grouping is the best way of making sure that *all* pupils progress as far and fast as they can. In his view, this was essential for the modernisation of comprehensive schools.

Evaluation Many of the criticisms of Conservative policy also apply to Labour's policy of diversity and choice – see pages 209 and 210–211. Choice usually means limited places and selection at the more popular schools. In this situation, the middle class with their cultural and social capital have the advantage.

Standards have risen in many specialist schools. This may be due to specialisation, but standards have often risen in subjects outside the school's specialist area. Rising standards may be due to the additional government funding given to specialist schools and/or to a growing middle-class intake (Select Committee on Education and Skills, 2005).

Competition and league tables

Labour accepted the neoliberal/New Right view that competition between schools would raise standards. And they accepted school league tables as a means for parents to assess a school's performance. In 2006, an additional table based on social factors was introduced. This measure indicates what pupils might be expected to achieve given their social background. It means that schools in low-income areas with average exam results might score highly because their results are better than expected in view of the background of their students (Crace, 2006).

Evaluation Despite alternative league tables, parents tend to accept the original measure – exam results. This encourages schools to prioritise results and 'teach to the

test' rather than improving understanding and developing a wide range of talents (Thrupp & Hursh, 2006).

Equality of opportunity

Part of Labour's education policy was based on social democratic views, with an emphasis on equality of opportunity.

Within three months of their election, in 1997 the new Labour government published a policy document entitled *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997). It stated that they intended 'to overcome economic and social disadvantage and to make equality of opportunity a reality'. This involved finding new ways of motivating young people in deprived inner-city areas and doing something about 'underachieving schools'. New types of schools and new programmes were developed for this purpose.

Sure Start This programme is aimed mainly at pre-school children and their families in disadvantaged areas of England. It assumes that the early years are vital to a child's future and looks to improve their health, education and job prospects. It provides home visits, play centres and financial help for childcare. The first Sure Start local programmes were set up in 1999. By 2003, there were over 500 programmes involving around 300,000 children.

Evaluation Sure Start is difficult to evaluate because each local programme is different and only short-term results are available. Its effects may only become apparent in early adulthood. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (2005) examined 150 local programmes and found that, after three years, they had little impact on parents and children. However, it is too early to assess their effect on children's education in the school system (Anning, 2006).

activity³² an alternative league table

This league table refers to the top 20 local education authorities in England. The figures in brackets are taken from the 'official' league table based on exam results from secondary schools. The 'unofficial' placings from 1 to 20 are based on 'value-added scores'. These scores look at pupils' attainment levels when they first arrive at secondary school then see how much schools improve on these levels – that is, how much value is added.

The results show that schools can – and do – make an enormous difference. There are local authorities with a high proportion of very poor children who do badly in both tables. But the most significant finding is the number of inner-city authorities, languishing in the lower regions of the Department for Education table, who do exceedingly well in the new table.

Source: *The Observer*, 20.3.1994

1	Wirral	(31)	11	Bolton	(42)
2	Camden	(57)	12	Hackney	(102)
3	Barnet	(3)	13	W. Sussex	(2)
4	Kingston	(1)	14	E. Sussex	(17)
5	Sutton	(9)	15	Dorset	(12)
6	Bromley	(4)	16	Wigan	(30)
7	Liverpool	(98)	17	Harrow	(7)
8	Tower Hamlets	(105)	18	Cheshire	(18)
9	Lambeth	(100)	19	Redbridge	(23)
10	Bucks	(5)	20	Herts	(10)

question

Why is a league table based on value-added scores important?

activity³³ diversity and choice

Item A Specialist schools

'Specialist schools and colleges will have a key contribution to make in raising standards and delivering excellence in schools. They will help thousands of young people to learn new skills and progress into employment, further training and higher education, according to their individual abilities, aptitudes and ambitions.'

Former Education Minister Estelle Morris quoted in Chitty, 2002



Item B Diversity and inequality

In a class-divided and competitive society, specialisms are not equal: they rapidly become ranked in a hierarchy of status.

A divided secondary system, with its hierarchy of schools firmly established, will continue to work to the advantage of the powerful, the influential and the articulate; while large numbers of children find themselves in less favoured institutions which attract the sort of criticisms once levelled at the secondary modern schools.

Source: Chitty, 1997

questions

- 1 How does the cartoon illustrate Labour's policy of diversity and choice?
- 2 With some reference to Item B, discuss how diversity can lead to inequality of educational opportunity.

Education Action Zones (EAZs) These zones were located in deprived urban areas with low levels of educational attainment. By April 2003 there were 72 EAZs, each run by an Action Forum made up of parents, representatives from local schools and businesses and from local and national government. Each zone was given £1 million to spend. Teachers and schools were encouraged to be flexible and innovative – for example, running Saturday classes and a

variety of work-related courses.

Evaluation Education Action Zones ploughed money and energy into disadvantaged areas, they encouraged innovation, and brought together expertise from local and national government. An Ofsted report found some improvement at Key Stage 1 in EAZ areas, but no change at Key Stage 3 or GCSE (McKnight et al., 2005). Like similar experiments in the 1960s, such as Educational Priority

Areas, EAZs may fail to make up for the economic and social disadvantages of pupils from low-income, inner-city areas (Kirtton, 1998).

Excellence in Cities (EiC) This programme steadily replaced Education Action Zones. It aimed to raise standards in low-income inner-city areas by providing:

- Resources to stretch the most able pupils
- Learning mentors to support and work with pupils
- City learning centres with high quality ICT facilities
- Encouragement for schools to specialise and network with neighbouring schools
- Learning support units within schools for pupils at risk of exclusion.

Evaluation An Ofsted report (2005) praised Excellence in Cities for raising standards at Key Stage 3 and 4. In EiC areas, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE increased by around 11 percentage points from 39.8% in 2001 to 50.6% in 2005. This compares to around 5 percentage points in non-EiC schools – from 52.2% in 2001 to 57.5% in 2005 (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/eic). The EiC programme ended in April 2006. All EiC funding is now paid to schools as part of their overall School Development Grant.

Academies The aim of academies is to raise achievement in deprived areas by replacing poorly performing secondary schools or by providing new school places where they are needed. They are sponsored by individuals, businesses, faiths, charities and city education authorities. Sponsors contribute around £2 million and central government around £25 million for each new academy. The first three academies were opened in 2002, by 2006 there were 46, with a total of 200 planned for 2010 (National Audit Office, 2007).

Evaluation In terms of GCSE results, academies are doing well. In most cases, they have achieved better results than the schools they replaced, they have improved at a faster rate than other secondary schools, and in terms of value added measures they are doing better than the average for all secondary schools. However, their performance in 16-19 education is well below the national average (National Audit Office, 2007).

Critics claim that the improvement at GCSE is largely due to extra money pumped in by central government and to academies taking fewer pupils with special needs or behavioural problems (Tomlinson, 2005).

methods 13 measurement

question

Why is it difficult to measure the effects of education policy? Refer to Sure Start and academies in your answer.

key terms

Sure Start Programmes designed to give pre-school children in low-income areas a head start in the school system.

Education Action Zones (EAZs) Programmes designed to raise teaching standards and attainment levels in schools in deprived inner-city areas

Excellence in Cities (EiC) Replaced EAZs. Same aims, but more targeted programmes.

Academies A new type of school designed to raise standards in low-income urban areas by replacing poorly performing secondary schools. Academies are financed by central government and sponsors – individuals, businesses, faiths, charities and city education authorities.

Further and higher education (FE and HE) Labour has attempted to reduce inequality of educational opportunity by increasing 1) the number of students and 2) the proportion of working-class students in FE and HE. It has succeeded in increasing numbers. For example, the number of full-time students in higher education in the UK increased from 748,000 in 1990/91 to 1,456,000 in 2004/05 (*Social Trends*, 2007).

However, Labour has failed to increase the *proportion* of working-class students in FE and HE. In fact, the opposite has happened. It is the middle classes who have gained most from the expansion of places. For example, in Britain in 2001, 72% of young people from professional backgrounds were in HE compared with 55% in 1991 – a gain of 24 percentage points. At the other end of the scale, 15% of young people from unskilled manual backgrounds were in HE in 2001, compared with 6% in 1991 – a gain of only 9 percentage points (Galindo – Rueda et al., 2004). This trend has since continued.

Loans and tuition fees The widening class gap in higher education may have something to do with the replacement of grants by student loans and the introduction of tuition fees in 1998. A survey of nearly 2000 prospective higher education students found that fear of debt was greatest among students from low-income backgrounds. And students who were afraid of debt were four times less likely to go on to higher education (Callender & Jackson, 2004).

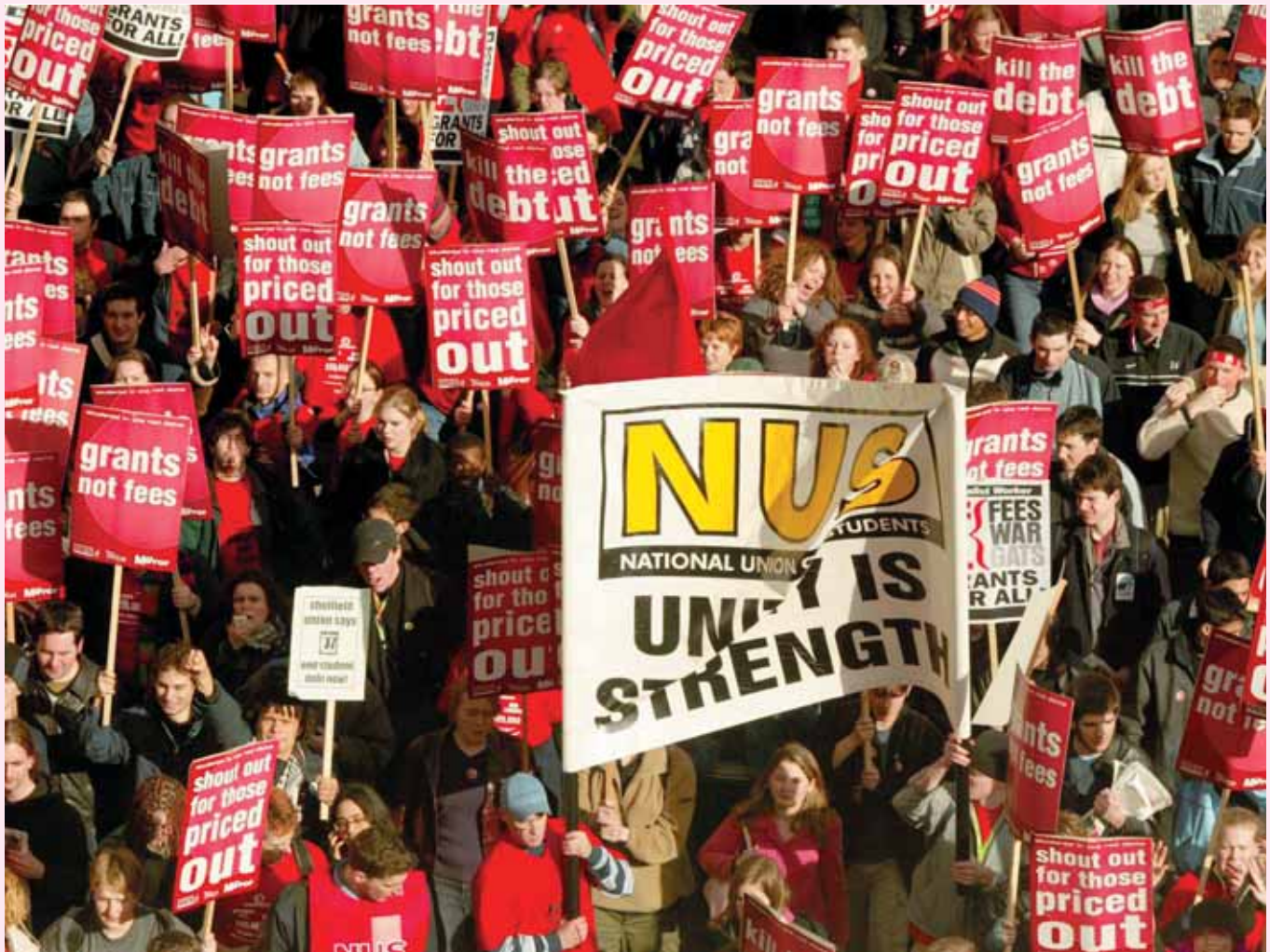
Vocational education and training

Aims Labour's policies for vocational education have focused on two main areas.

- First, to provide the training needed for a high wage/high skill economy, so that the UK can compete successfully in world markets.
- Second, to reduce unemployment, particularly for young people (Strathdee, 2003).

New qualifications GNVQs were replaced by Vocational GCSEs and Vocational A levels. Part of the reason for this change was to raise the status of vocational qualifications

activity³⁴ grants not fees



National Union of Students demonstrate against tuition fees and the student loans scheme.

question

Would you support this demonstration? Refer to the conclusion on page 216 in your answer.

to the level of academic qualifications.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were extended. They now ranged from an Initial Award – gained after a 26 week introductory training period – to a Level 5 award which is equivalent to a degree. The aim of NVQs is to raise skill levels in a wide range of jobs.

Evaluation NVQs have yet to prove themselves. Surveys suggest that about two-thirds of employers see little value in these qualifications. The government may have overestimated the demand for highly-skilled workers. In the 1990s, the fastest growing job was care assistant in hospitals and nursing homes, not a particularly high-skilled job (Strathdee, 2003).

The New Deal Labour introduced the New Deal in 1998. It

offered education and training for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who had been out of work for more than six months. It was later extended to older people.

The New Deal provided personal advisors who offered direction and support to the unemployed, guiding them through the various options – academic courses, vocational training, self-employment, or voluntary work.

Evaluation The New Deal got off to a good start. Two years into the scheme, Tony Blair claimed that it had helped more than 250,000 young people find jobs. And it helped others move into higher education. Critics question this optimistic view. Some argue that youth unemployment was falling steadily when the New Deal was introduced and further reductions were simply a

continuation of this trend. Others see the New Deal as moderately successful, resulting in a fall in youth unemployment of around 17,000 a year (Van Reenen, 2004).

Globalisation and equal opportunity

Prime Minister Gordon Brown sees the various aspects of Labour's education policy working together (Brown, 2008). In his words, 'The challenge this century is the global skills race and that is why we need to push ahead faster with our reforms to extend education opportunities for all'. It is crucial for Britain to be able to compete successfully in the global economy. This means developing the talents of and teaching high level skills to *all* young people.

According to Gordon Brown, 'A precondition for unleashing talent is to eradicate failure across our education system'. Academies have a major part to play as 'a means of advancing opportunity for all' and as 'engines in disadvantaged areas for social mobility and social justice'.

Universities will be encouraged to sponsor academies and to become directly involved with secondary education. This is the next step in widening access to higher education for working-class students. These policies will contribute to the twin goals of social justice and success in the global skills race (Brown, 2008).

Conclusion

Government policies come and go, but one thing stays the

same – the middle class gains! Whether it's the tripartite system, the comprehensive system or specialist schools, the attainment gap between the middle and working classes shows little change. And in higher education, the gap has widened. A longitudinal study has followed the lives of two groups of British children, one born in 1958 and the other in 1970 (Ferri et al., 2003). It shows that the chances of a young middle-class person gaining a degree have grown at a higher rate than those of a young working-class person. And this is despite the rapid expansion in university places from the 1980s onwards.

Many sociologists believe that changes in the educational system are unlikely to reduce the attainment gap between the middle and working classes. They argue that a reduction in inequality in the wider society is necessary to reduce inequality of educational opportunity and close the class attainment gap.

methods 14 longitudinal studies

question

Why are longitudinal studies important for studying the effects of government education policy?

summary

1. The 1870 Education Act provided the first state-run schools.
2. The 1944 Education Act set up the tripartite system of secondary education – grammar, technical and secondary modern schools.
3. The tripartite system provided schools of unequal status and unequal quality. Middle-class pupils tended to go to high-status grammar schools, working-class pupils to low-status secondary modern schools.
4. The comprehensive system was designed to provide equality of opportunity by replacing the tripartite system with a single type of school for all young people.
5. Class differences in attainment remained, partly because pupils were placed in streams or sets with a disproportionate number of middle-class pupils in higher ability groups and working-class pupils in lower ability groups.
6. Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997 introduced work-related training schemes and vocational qualifications.
7. The Education Reform Act of 1988 aimed to provide competition between schools, a variety of schools, and choice for parents. In theory, standards would rise as parents chose successful schools, while failing schools would go out of business.
8. Choice usually meant limited places and selection at the more popular schools. In this situation, the middle class with their cultural and social capital have the advantage.
9. The National Curriculum, introduced in 1988, was assessed by SATs in its core subjects. The results of these tests provided parents with information to judge the performance of schools.
10. Labour's education policy was influenced by both neoliberal/New Right and social democratic perspectives.
11. Labour continued the Conservatives' policy of diversity and choice in a competitive educational market-place. Standard comprehensives were steadily replaced by specialist schools.
12. Labour introduced a range of measures designed to raise standards in low-income, inner-city areas. These included Sure Start, Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities and academies.
13. The number of places in higher education was rapidly expanded by Labour. The middle class gained most from this expansion.
14. The New Deal offered education and training for young people who had been out of work for over six months.
15. It is difficult to measure the effects of Labour's education policy. In some cases, it is too early to make a judgement. In other cases, the evidence can be interpreted in different ways. One thing is clear – class differences in educational attainment have remained largely unchanged.