

AS Sociology For AQA
[2nd Edition]



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Unit 2: Education

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1. The role and purpose of education, including vocational education and training, in contemporary society.

The Role of Education: Introduction

There's little doubt that education, as a social institution, has an important role to play in our society. Whether you view that role positively or negatively, we need to examine a range of perspectives (Structuralist, Interactionist, Postmodern and New Right) that explore the role and purpose of the formal education system in contemporary UK society.

Structuralist Perspectives: Observations

Under this general heading we can outline and examine three main Structuralist perspectives - Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism - and we can begin by identifying the major ideas that characterise each perspective.

Functionalism

Although Functionalist theory has generally declined in sociological importance in the UK over the past 20 or so years, its influence in shaping educational policy – and hence the role played by the education system - shouldn't be underestimated. This is partly because the basic ideas that sit at the heart of this perspective - ideas about *consensus*, *competition* and *achievement* through *merit*, for example - sit relatively comfortably with modern Conservative, Liberal and Labour political ideas.

As a Structuralist perspective (one that focuses on broad groups of people and their behaviour) Functionalist arguments about the role of education focus on:

Institutional relationships and *functional linkages* with wider society. In this respect, therefore, the emphasis here is on how education links to other social institutions, such as the family and the workplace. The complexity of modern social systems means the education system becomes, in effect, a *bridge* between these institutions in a couple of ways.

Firstly, on an *institutional level*, social systems with a variety of different types of employment must develop ways of managing their human resources. Thus, while a society such as our own may need doctors, accountants, police officers and manual labourers (amongst many other types of work) there's little point in producing so many trained doctors they can't find

employment because there's no demand for their services.

Secondly, on an *individual level* (in the sense of how people actually experience the impact of institutional arrangements and relationships) the education system functions as an agency of:

Secondary Socialisation: In this respect, education is an institution that "broadens the individual's experience" of the social world and, in so doing, prepares children for adult role relationships in the workplace and wider society.

For the education system to function properly on both levels it must, according to Functionalists, be:

Meritocratic - a concept that reflects the idea rewards (such as high pay, high status, jobs) are *earned* through our abilities and efforts (working hard in school to gain qualifications, for example) rather than simply *allocated* on the basis of who you know, your family background and so forth. Merit-based systems are also, by their very nature, competitive systems in the sense that different levels of reward are given for different levels of achievement – and children, in this respect, have to continually prove themselves willing to "work to achieve" whatever rewards are on offer. In the contemporary UK educational system, for example, these rewards relate to things like educational qualifications (such as GCSEs and A-levels) that in turn qualify students for certain types of work or entrance to different Universities.

Module Link Stratification and Differentiation

Educational qualifications are, as you might expect, a significant source of **social mobility** in our society. They are also, as you perhaps might not expect, a significant source of **elite self-recruitment** (the process by which the professional middle classes ensure their sons and daughters do not experience downward social mobility). By their domination of private schools and elite state schools this class effectively ensures their children achieve well-paid, high status, employment.

For a merit-based system to function there must be *equality of opportunity* between the participants since if some are disadvantaged (discriminated against or denied the opportunity to show their worth) society cannot be sure "the best people" occupy the most important, prestigious and well-rewarded adult roles. As

Parsons (1959), for example, expressed it: "...it is fair to give differential rewards for different levels of achievement, so long as there has been fair access to opportunity and fair that these rewards lead on to higher-order opportunities for the successful".

Marxism

This general perspective hasn't been particularly influential in terms of UK government policies (hardly surprising since its highly critical of Capitalist societies). However, ideas about the role of education have, arguably, filtered down into the teaching and learning process and some key ideas for Marxists include:

Cultural reproduction: This concept involves the idea of *secondary socialisation*, but with a twist. **Althusser** (1971), for example, argues the economic system (Capitalism) has to be *reproduced* from one generation to the next. In other words, each new generation has to be taught the skills, knowledge and ideas required for them to take up positions in the workplace. The twist, however, is that schools don't just *select*, *allocate* and *differentiate* children (through testing and public examinations) in the interests of "society as a whole" - education is *not meritocratic*. Rather, the role of education is to ensure the sons - and increasingly daughters - of the powerful achieve the levels of education required for them to follow in their fathers' (and mothers') footsteps into professional employment. The trick, in other words, is to educate most people "just enough" for them to be useful employees and a small number "more than enough" to take up high-powered work roles.

For as long as he could remember Thompson had been groomed to be "something Big in the City"



One aspect of cultural reproduction is the:

Hidden Curriculum, a concept that reflects the way ideas about the social world - and the individual's place in that world - are transmitted through the education system. Schools, as part of the daily teaching process, don't just teach formal subjects (such as English or History) they also teach "hidden" values such as competition, individual learning and achievement, qualifications as a way of measuring people's worth and so forth.

Education and Society: The link between these ideas is that the education system responds to the demands of employers - there is a *correspondence* (to use a concept advanced by **Bowles and Gintis**, 1976 and 2002) between what employers generally want (socialised workers differentiated through qualifications, for example) and what schools provide.

Feminism

Although the main focus of feminist educational research (gender inequalities) has remained largely unchanged over the past 25 years, the emphasis of this research has shifted somewhat - from explanations about why girls achieve less than boys in the education system (because, in the main, they don't anymore) to explaining how girls learn to cope with a range of school and workplace disadvantages.

This subtle shift of emphasis doesn't necessarily mean we should dismiss historical feminist research out-of-hand, as being both outdated and irrelevant to our (present-day) understanding of the role of education. Although such studies originally focused on explanations for female *underachievement* they are, arguably, still relevant as explanations for differences in career choice and progress. In addition, these explanations assume a new relevance as political concerns about *boys' underachievement* have led to an educational focus on ways to help them "overcome the gender gap" (usually involving a resurrection of ideas and practices criticised in feminist research over the past 25 years...).

Broadly speaking therefore, current Feminist explanations of *female disadvantage*, centre around the following ideas:

Socialisation research. **Eichler** (1980) highlighted how differential socialisation experiences - and different social expectations - of males and females help to construct different gender identities and adult role expectations. In the past, for example, the education system contributed to the way women saw their primary adult role in terms of the *private sphere* of the family (as mother and housewife, for example) and, although female horizons have widened somewhat over the past 25 years, Feminists have argued traditional assumptions about masculinity and femininity continue to influence both family and work relationships.

An interesting example to illustrate this idea is that *subject choice* at the higher (non-



compulsory) levels of our education system is broadly **gendered**, in the sense we can identify different patterns of subject choice between males and females (more boys, for example, study science subjects like

Chemistry, while more girls opt for social science subjects). These educational choices are further reflected in adult career choices (engineering, for example, is male-dominated while something like nursing or secretarial work is female-dominated) and these patterns point us towards the idea of underlying social and educational processes that effectively push males and females into different career paths.

Module Link Stratification and Differentiation

Although large numbers of men and women are in full (and part) time work in our society the workplace is **stratified** in two ways. **Horizontally** - men and women generally work in different occupations (women in areas like nursing, secretarial, teaching and shop work, for example) - and **vertically**; men and women are differently-placed in the same occupation. Although primary teaching, for example, is female dominated, men proportionately occupy more of the higher status positions (such as Headteacher).



Men's work?



Women's work?

ideas like the gendering of the school curriculum, in terms of how pupils saw different subjects as “masculine” or “feminine”. Such gendered perception, it was argued by writers such as **Woods** (1976), helped to explain things like lower levels of female participation and general achievement in science subjects. Similarly, social policy initiatives, such as **Girls Into Science and Technology** (GIST), explored the general question of why girls were underrepresented in science subjects and the answers this initiative produced were informative on two levels; firstly, science was seen as both difficult and demanding and, secondly, the image of “scientists” was seen by girls to be both unflattering and, more significantly perhaps, unfeminine – and idea that keys into perceptions of both male and female identity in our society.

Norman et al (1988), for example, argued *teacher expectations*, especially in early-years schooling, emphasised female roles related to the mother / carer axis and while this may no-longer *automatically* translate into women seeing their primary role in terms of caring for their family, work roles in our society continue to be framed around the basic idea of different male and female (mental and physical) capabilities.

Thus, although over 25 years ago, **Stanworth** (1981) found both male and female A-level pupils underestimated girl's academic performance and teachers saw female futures in terms of marriage, child-rearing and domestic work (while future careers were stereotyped into “caring” work such as secretarial, nursing and so forth) the question we have to consider is the extent to which, for all the evident changes in male and female educational performance, the general picture is still *broadly similar* in terms of the adult roles performed by men and women in our society.

Identity: Following from the above, Feminist research in the recent past focused, as we've suggested, on

Module Link

Culture and Identity

This perception links into ideas about the way **personal identities** (what we individually feel about being male or female, for example) are filtered through **social identities** (how society in general suggests males and females should look and behave, for example). An individual choice – in this instance what educational subjects to study and, ultimately perhaps, what kind of work one does in adult society – is heavily influenced by the way others see the implications of such a choice.

Despite the introduction, in 1988, of a **National Curriculum** that ensured all pupils studied subjects such as science and maths (traditionally perceived as masculine subjects) up to GCSE, the evidence from *post-16 education* suggests the type of *gendered curriculum* identified by **Woods** still exists, as the following table demonstrates:

UK A-level or equivalent entries for young people: by selected subject.Source: **Summerfield and Babb** (2004)

Subject	% Males	% Females
Physics	78	22
Computer Studies	76	24
Economics	74	26
Mathematics	60	40
Biology	38	62
English Literature	25	75
Social Science	24	76
Home Economics	03	97

The **Department for Children, Schools and Families** (formerly the **Department for Education and Skills**) (2007) has suggested that “Gender differences in subject choice become more accentuated post-16: Girls’ most popular subject is English, while boys’ is Maths. Psychology, Art and Design, Sociology and Media/Film/Television Studies are amongst the 10 most popular choices for girls (but not boys), while Physics, Business Studies, Geography and Physical Education are in the top 10 for boys (but not girls)”.

As we might expect, this difference in subject choice at A-level translates into differences in subject choice at undergraduate level. **Self and Zealey** (2007), for example, note that “...a higher proportion of women than men studied subjects allied to medicine [such as nursing], while a greater proportion of men than women studied business and administrative services...Higher proportions of men than women studied engineering and technology subjects and computer sciences”.

Thus, although the focus of feminist research in this particular area may have changed, over the years - from concerns about female underachievement to concerns about gendered participation - the post-16 evidence (where students are given a free choice of subjects to study) suggests participation levels are related to concepts of male and female identity. If this is the case, it seems unlikely the causes of this gendered participation only begin *after* the official school-leaving age. Thus, past feminist research into the:

School Curriculum still has both currency and usefulness. **Spender** (1982), for example, argued the curriculum was geared towards the needs and interests of boys, so as to render girls “invisible” within the classroom. Similarly, **Deem** (1980) argued the school curriculum and subject choices were highly gendered (which, as we’ve just seen, remains the case) and **Mahony** (1985) demonstrated how girls were frequently marginalised in the classroom by both boys and teachers. In addition, she pointed-out how staffing structures reflected male importance in the workplace (the highest status teaching jobs were - and remain - occupied by men). In the twenty or so years since **Mahony’s** observation this discrepancy remains

apparent. **Mirza et al** (2005), for example, note that “Women make up over half (53%) of the secondary teaching population, but are still under-represented in secondary school senior management positions, particularly headships” (around 30% of secondary heads are women). In the nursery / primary sector **Department for Children, Schools and Families** (2007) figures show that while 16% of teachers are male “34% of head teachers are male”.

Structuralist Perspectives: Explanations

We can develop our understanding of the perspectives we’re just outlined by looking at the concepts used by each to explain the role of education systems in society.

Functionalism

From this perspective we can note two key aspects of the role of education in society:

1. Secondary Socialisation, a process **Parsons** (1959) termed the “emancipation of the child from primary attachment to the family” – in other words, a significant aspect of the role of the education system in modern society is its functional significance for the relationship between the family (childhood) and the workplace (adulthood). Schools, in this respect, involve a range of ideas related to secondary socialisation:

Instrumental relationships - or relationships based on what people can do for us in return for the things that we can do for them. Most of our adult relationships take this form (as opposed to the *affective* relationships experienced between people who share a close, personal, friendship). In school, instrumental relationships with teachers are different to affective relationships with friends and they mirror the general way we’re expected to relate to people in wider society (outside the family).



Social Control: Two types are significant here: Firstly, learning things like acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and, secondly, learning *self control* - the child learns to deal with things in an even-handed way. One aspect of self control, for example, involves:

Deferred gratification – the idea that we can't always have what we want when we want it (**immediate gratification**). In educational terms, successful students put-up with things they may dislike (boring lessons, the lack of money...) in the expectation of passing exams and gaining access to high-pay, high-status occupations. This relates to a further function of education, the:

Transmission of cultural values

or, as **Parsons** (1959) puts it, the "internalisation of a level of society's values and norms that is a step higher than those learnt within the family group". Through interacting with others, children learn and internalise (adopt as part of their personality) wider cultural values. For example, they start to understand something of their history and geography as well as general cultural values (such as equality of opportunity, individual competition and so forth). This, in turn, is related to:

Social solidarity - the idea that, as unique individuals, we have to establish things "in common" with others if we are to live and work together; we have, in short, to feel we *belong* to larger social groups (such as a school or a society). The promotion of social solidarity involves *social integration* - any institution, such as a school, has to develop *mechanisms* for helping people feel they belong to that group – and there are several ways the education system tries to integrate people; these include things like uniforms (to encourage identification with a particular school), inter-school competitions and the like.

Module Link

Culture and Identity

Social integration and solidarity can be related to concept of identity in a couple of ways. Firstly, something like the wearing of a common uniform means everyone within the school is identified as belonging to same group. Secondly the idea of competition (and "friendly rivalry") between different schools creates a form of group solidarity in that it fosters concepts of both The Self (what "people like Us" have in common) and The Other (how We are different to Them).

2. The co-ordination of human resources relates to links with wider society and it involves things like:

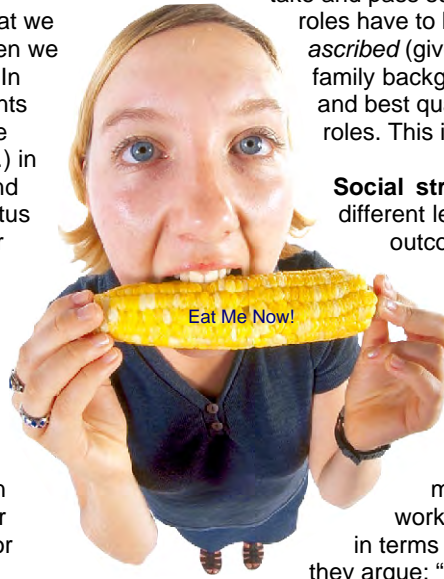
Role Allocation - preparing children for their future adult roles (especially those relating to work), which is achieved by:

Social differentiation: Since work roles are clearly different (some require higher levels of skill and

knowledge, others do not), pupils have to be "made different". One way the school does this, of course, is through *testing* and *examinations* – which, for Functionalists, have to be *objective* demonstrations of ability (everyone should have an *equal opportunity* to take and pass such tests). In modern societies adult roles have to be *achieved* (on merit) rather than *ascribed* (given on the basis of something like family background) to ensure that the ablest and best qualified take-up the most important roles. This idea lead, in turn, to the idea that:

Social stratification (groups occupying different levels in society) is the inevitable outcome of the differentiation process.

The classic Functionalist statement of the necessity for - and inevitability of - stratification in modern societies is probably **Davis and Moore's** (1945) argument that stratification represents a mechanism through which those who are intellectually most able and talented are allocated work roles that offer the highest rewards in terms of *income*, *power* and *status*. As they argue: "Education is the proving ground for ability and hence the selective agency for placing people in different statuses according to their abilities".



Education and Training

In terms of these general ideas, therefore, the primary role of the education system from a Functionalist perspective is that of preparing children for adult (work) roles and responsibilities – something that involves orientating children in two main ways:

Firstly, the education system provides a (secondary) socialising mechanism that prepares children for the sociological and psychological transition from childhood to adulthood.

Secondly, the structure and practice of the education system must reflect the nature of adult life and work. For example, in a society where work is *highly differentiated* (there are many and varied types of work) the education system exists, as we've seen, to differentiate children (through testing and exams). If we think, for example, about two basic forms of work in our society – *professional careers* that require higher levels of abstract knowledge and lower levels of practical expertise and *non-professional work* that requires the opposite (lower levels of abstract knowledge and higher levels of practical skills) it follows that the education system must function to "sift and sort" people of different aptitudes and abilities into these different spheres – hence the necessity of different forms of education; vocational training, for example, where students are prepared for a particular form of skilled employment (mechanic, electrician, plumber and so forth) that requires strong practical skills and "professional training" which requires a more-abstract skill-set (such as the ability to construct coherent written arguments and analyses).

Marxism

In developing this general perspective further, Marxist explanations for the role of education systems in Capitalist societies focus on a range of ideas.

Cultural Reproduction

For **Althusser** (1971) cultural reproduction didn't simply relate to the general problem faced by any society of how to "reproduce itself over time" (how to transmit cultural norms and values from one generation to the next); rather, as with most Marxists, he was concerned with understanding how a *dominant social class* (the **ruling class** in Capitalist society) managed to reproduce its political and economic domination of the lower classes from one generation to the next – and one way this was achieved, he argued, was through the education system. For **Althusser** education was an *instrument* of class oppression and domination (although, to be fair, he did include institutions like the mass media and religion as, in their different ways, additional forms of cultural reproduction). For Althusser education performed its cultural reproduction purpose in a range of ways:

Formal education: Children have to learn the skills and knowledge (literacy and numeracy, for example) they will need in the workplace.

Access to knowledge, for example, is restricted through control of subjects appearing on the curriculum. The higher you go in the education system, the greater your access to knowledge. Restricting access is also useful as a way of limiting children's ambitions and expectations by:



Structuring knowledge: Preparing people for the differing levels of knowledge required in the workplace involves creating different levels of knowledge in the school. For example, academic (theoretical) knowledge (such as AS-levels) is valued more than practical (*vocational*) knowledge because the former is the type most useful for professional workers (those who, for Marxists, control both what is taught in the education system and how it is taught). Similarly, some forms of knowledge are more *valid* than others (the ability to do algebra, for example, is considered more-valid than the ability to remember who played in goal for Chelsea in the 1970 Cup Final - Peter "The Cat" Bonetti, just in case you're wondering).

Social control: Children have to learn to accept and respect "authority", since this will be important in the workplace. As you'll know from your own education, the higher you go, the *looser* are the controls on your behaviour (by the time you reach A-level you can be largely trusted to "do the right things").

Commodification of knowledge: testing and exams are part of a process where knowledge is given

an *economic value*; in other words, it can be bought and sold. This is important because knowledge, unlike skills (such as the ability to mend a car – something whose usefulness can be easily measured; before the mechanic looks at it the car won't move and after it's been mended it will...), can't be easily valued unless you *certify* it. Your knowledge of Sociology, for example, will be economically worthless unless you pass your AS level.

Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA's): The content of education is controlled by the State and, for Marxists, the means by which people think about the world is conditioned by what they learn in school (both in the formal and **hidden curriculum**). This, in turn, is related to:

Social learning, which refers to the role played by teachers in "transforming pupil consciousness" - to ensure they accept "the realities of life" and, by extension, their likely future social positions.

Althusser's characterisation of the general role of education systems as being concerned with cultural reproduction has been widely shared with other Marxist theorists – albeit in slightly different ways. **Gramsci** (1971) and his followers, for example, developed a different way of viewing the role of education – not as an instrument of class oppression but as an institution in Capitalist society concerned with:

Hegemony: **Gramsci** (1971) used this concept to describe the idea of *legitimate leadership*. In other words, people obey authority because they believe it right to do so. For example, most people would accept that the Prime Minister, **Gordon Brown**, has a right to exercise political leadership because he was democratically elected. As **Strinati** (1995) puts it: "Dominant groups in society...maintain their dominance by securing the spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups". This idea is important, when thinking about the role of education because if people believe education is *meritocratic* they will believe failure is their fault, not that of a system designed to ensure their failure.

Correspondence Theory: **Bowles and Gintis** (1976 and 2002) argued education is a *proving ground* in which the organisation of the workplace is reflected in the organisation of



The commodification of knowledge through qualifications

schools. Education, therefore, becomes a test of control and conformity - those who conform are allowed into the higher areas of education (and, by extension, work) whereas those who do not are excluded.

The *unstated role* of education, therefore, is *cultural reproduction*: workplace inequality is reflected and reproduced in the organisation of schooling.

In this respect the distinction between academic forms of education and vocational training merely reflects the education – workplace correspondence; academic education is the preserve of those (largely upper and middle class) students destined for professional employment while working class students (in the main) are encouraged to pursue various forms of vocational training that will prepare and qualify them for (lower-paid and lower status) employment.

Module Link Stratification and Differentiation

The theory of cultural reproduction has been used by writers such as **Bowles and Gintis** (1973) and **Willis** (1977) to explain the relative lack of **social mobility** at the lower levels of modern British society. It can also, of course, be applied to the idea of **elite self-recruitment** to explain how those at the top of the social scale “close off” mobility for those lower down the class structure.

Social Reproduction

Bourdieu (1986) attacks the (Functionalist) idea that education systems are *meritocratic*; like **Bowles and Gintis** he sees their real role as being that of helping to reproduce the power and domination of powerful social classes through a combination of what he termed **habitus** and **cultural capital**:

Habitus: An easy way to grasp this idea is to think about the idea of a *habitat* - the environment in which a group lives and flourishes. The natural habitat of fish, for example (the environment it needs) would not be suitable for humans (and vice versa). For **Bourdieu**, schools are the “natural habitat” of the middle and upper classes - they reflect their interests, values and beliefs. The working class child is like “a fish out of water” - their values and beliefs are different because of:

Cultural capital - the idea, in basic terms, that our social backgrounds give us certain advantages and disadvantages in life. Thus, working class and middle class children enter the education system with skills and abilities (such as how we speak and express ourselves) that advantage the middle class child (because their cultural background is similar to that of the school). Thus, working class children have to “learn how to learn” before they can actually learn the things on the school curriculum - which gives them a decided *disadvantage* in the educational game. **Beron and Farkas** (2001), for example, found significant linguistic and vocabulary differences between different social classes

of white and black children in America which, they argued, disadvantaged working class children in both preschool and school environments.

Meritocracy: **Bourdieu** is critical of this idea because differences in *cultural capital* influence the relative starting-points of students (middle and upper class children have a hidden advantage). However, as he notes, the objective of schooling is *cultural reproduction* by progressively eliminating lower class children from the school system in ways that make their failure appear their own fault - by examination failure and self-elimination (they give up and leave school at the earliest opportunity).

Feminism

As we've suggested, the focus of feminist research has changed somewhat in recent years in the light of increasing female educational achievement - something that's reflected in two main ways:

Work: Despite their educational achievements, women consistently lose out in the workplace. As **Treneman** (1998) notes: ‘The statistical under-achievement of boys in schools is nothing compared with the statistical over-achievement of men in life’ – an idea reflected in a couple of ways:

1. Earnings: For the past 38 years it has been illegal to pay men and women different rates of pay if they are doing the same – or roughly comparable – types of work (the **Equal Pay Act**, 1970) and yet the government's **Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings** (2007) showed that, in 2007, “...women's average hourly pay was 17.2% less than men's pay” (although the good news is the gap has narrowed, from 17.5% in 2006).

This pay-gap seems to occur right across the board – from the part-time workers (who earn around 35% less than men) through university graduates (“**Women graduates are paid less from the very beginning of their careers, with men earning £1,000 more than their college classmates within three years of leaving university**”: **Benfield**, 2007) to the boardroom (“**Female directors earn up to 26% less than men**”: **Ward**, 2007).



Does the cultural capital of middle class children give them a head start in the race for educational qualifications?

2. Gender Stereotypes:

Warrington and Younger (2000) noted male and female career aspirations still reflected traditional gender stereotypes (childcare, nursing, hairdressing and secretarial for girls, computing, accountancy and plumbing for boys) and **Gordon** (1996) found that although teachers frequently praised girls' efforts they reported finding boys more interesting to teach and gave more time and effort to motivate and retain their attention - once again suggesting the different levels of importance teachers give to male and female work. In this respect the **Equal Opportunities Commission** (2007) has argued: "Girls' educational achievements are not necessarily helping them into well-paid jobs [and] Eliminating gender stereotyping in school education, in vocational training, and in careers choices is a vital step towards tackling the gender pay gap in employment".

Roger and Duffield (2000) suggest a number of reasons why girls tend to avoid science subjects that are equally applicable to a range of gendered curriculum choices:

Jodie: Girls are crap, all the girls in this class act all stupid and girlie.

Diane: So does that include you?

Jodie: No, cos I'm not a girl, I'm a tomboy".

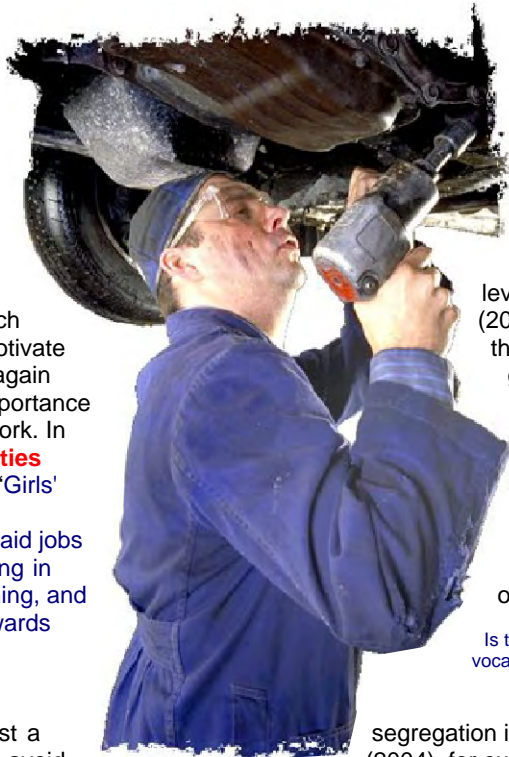
Primary socialisation entrenches concepts of gender identity in males and females, conditioning the choices they make in school. **Reay** (2001), for example, found a variety of female identities developing in the primary classroom, including, most interestingly, as the following exchange suggests, girls who wanted to be like boys:

Role Models: In primary teaching, for example, nearly 90% of classroom teachers are female, leading to an early connection between gender and work.

Careers advice tends to reinforce traditional male - female work roles and divisions.

Work experience places boys and girls into traditionally stereotyped jobs. **Mackenzie's** (1997) study of "school-based work experience" placements found, for example: "45% of girls [in the study] were allocated to caring placements but these did not always reflect their choices. Boys who did not get their preferred placement tended to be allocated to occupations which were regarded by them as either neutral or as traditionally male while girls who were unsuccessful were allocated to traditionally female occupations".

One conclusion we can draw from this type of research is the relationship between vocational forms of education and training and gender stereotypes in the



Education

sense that "vocational training" is much more likely to result in both males and females being channelled into "traditional" forms of gendered employment. This observation will, of course, have significant ramifications for the "vocational GCSE and A-level" qualifications currently (2008) being introduced - will they, in short, reinforce the gendered relationship between education and the workplace?

Be that as it may, the argument here is not that "academic education" somehow guarantees a lack of gender stereotyping and

Is there a strong correlation between vocational education and training and a gendered workplace?

segregation in the workplace - **Kampmeier** (2004), for example, found that across the European Community "Gender segregation in the labour market has not been considerably reduced during the last decades, as far as "typical" male and female occupations - like electricians and nursery nurses - are concerned" - but rather that there are greater opportunities for stereotyping and segregation in vocational training.

The implication, therefore, is that - probably unintentionally - one role of vocational forms of education is to reinforce gender (and indeed class for that matter) stereotypes and divisions in ways that are not quite so apparent with academic forms of education (because they don't necessarily channel young people into particular forms of work at a relatively early age).

Identity: The emphasis here is on understanding different levels of achievement amongst females by examining different forms of identity (how class and ethnicity, for example, impact on gender). **Warrington and Younger** (2000) for example, found very little difference between the percentage of boys and girls who leave school with no qualifications.

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term "hidden curriculum" (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** functions that education may perform for individuals and / or society. (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the ways education contributes to cultural reproduction (12 marks).
- (d) Compare Functionalist perspectives on the role of education with *either* Marxist *or* Feminist perspectives (20 marks).

Interactionist Perspectives: Observations

Interactionist perspectives focus on the role of education as a *process* rather than a *system*. In other words, they're interested in examining the idea education is a *social construction* whose role isn't fixed and unchanging but, on the contrary, fluid and open to a wide range of interpretations. A classic example of this is the question of whether the role of the education system is one of two things:

1. Education: **Dewey** (1916), an influential education theorist in the 20th century, argued education should be "*transformative*"; focusing on individuals and their social, psychological and moral development as people. Education, in this respect, involves providing the means for individuals to achieve their "full potential" (whatever that may, in reality, turn out to be).

2. Training: The role of education is to give people the knowledge and skills they need to perform specific work-related roles (doctor, mechanic, etc.).

This general debate over the role and purpose of schooling is played out in a number of areas, two of the most significant being:

Outside the school: The role of education is never clear-cut and *uncontested*; various *interest groups* (parents, teachers, governments, businesses) have an input into the system, trying to shape it to reflect their interests, prejudices and concerns. Some groups, of course, are more successful in getting their views heard (government and business organisations over the past 20 years, for example, have been powerful shaping forces in education). The dominance of these groups has resulted in the role of education being "officially" defined in terms of its *training role* - the objective (through policies such as the **National Curriculum**, and **Key Stage testing**) is to produce "a highly skilled and trained workforce".

Inside the school: While official declarations and definitions of the role of education are important influences on behaviour within schools, the relationship between the various *actors* involved in "doing education" (teachers and their students, for example) is important and worthy of study. This is because Interactionists want to consider how these social actors *interpret their roles* within the context of the education system itself.

To illustrate this with a simple example, the Sociology course you're following (for whatever reason - you like the subject, your friends took it so you did too, you ticked the wrong box when deciding your options and now you're stuck with it...) has, in terms of its *structure and content*, been decided by the exam board (or Awarding Body as it's

now known). Thus, if you want the qualification you have to study what's laid-down in the Specification (don't ask). However, teachers don't all teach Sociology in the same way - for some the objective may be to get you through the exam, while for others it may be to provide an "interesting learning experience" on a wet Friday afternoon - and in the same style (interactive, didactic, a combination of the two or whatever). The main point here, therefore, is that whatever the specific structure of education (in this particular example the one laid-down in the A-level Sociology Specification) different students and different teachers will interpret



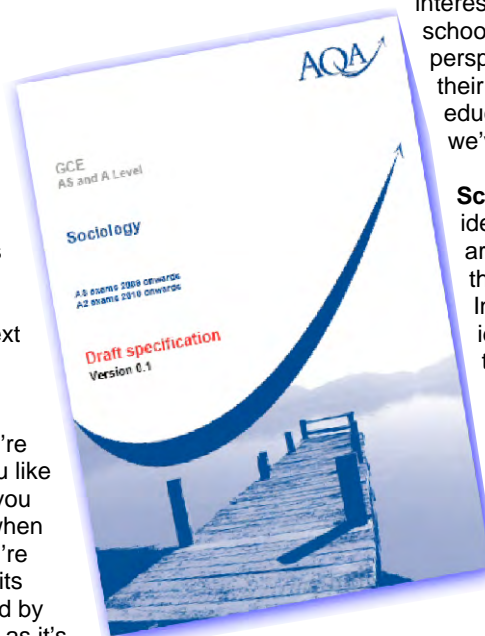
Politicians (and political parties / ideologies) have a significant input into the role of education in our society.

their role differently and produce different ways of achieving the same basic goals. What happens "inside schools", therefore, is a process that can be shaped - but not determined - by official definitions of the role of education and is, therefore, something worthy of study.

Interactionist Perspectives: Explanations

Interactionists, as we've suggested, are particularly interested in what goes on "inside schools" and it is from this general perspective that they tend to focus their explanations of the role of education and training mainly, as we've argued, in terms of:

School Processes: These involve ideas about how educational roles are interpreted and negotiated "at the chalk face". In this respect, Interactionists employ a range of ideas to understand the ways teachers and pupils *construct* "education", many of which are anchored around the idea of *labelling*.



Labelling theory has traditionally been used to describe how teachers, as powerful actors in the education game, classify (or *stereotype*) students and, by so doing, influence the way they understand their role and status within the school - **Padfield** (1997), for example, has explored the way “informal reputations” gained within the school influenced official definitions of pupils. Labelling theory has been used to show how school processes are inherently *divisive* (they encourage students to think of themselves - and each other - in terms of fixed educational abilities). This, for example, includes common school practices and processes like:

- **Streaming** (grouping by ability on a yearly basis),
- **Banding** (students taught at different levels - Intermediate and Higher Maths, for example) and
- **Setting** (grouping by ability on a subject-by-subject basis)

Module Link**Crime and Deviance**

Labelling theory has been applied to good effect in the study of crime and deviance; it has, for example, been used to show how the police and judicial system label and stereotype potential offenders by class, gender, age and ethnicity.

Lupton (2004) notes the decision made by the head teacher of one school to abandon banding: “...principally to counter problems of low self-esteem among pupils in the lower band. Within the context of the selective system and the school’s poor performance and reputation, mixed ability teaching was seen as an important way to give all pupils the message they were equally valued”. Additionally, **Hattersley and Francis** (2004) argue that we increasingly have an educational system that labels whole schools as either “good” (academically successful) or “bad” (academically failing) - and the consequences of the latter label frequently means closure. This example serves to illustrate a significant aspect of labelling theory, namely the impact of labels on:

Self-concepts: Labelling relates specifically to this idea in terms of questions like:

- How do you know if you are a good or bad student?
- How does your teacher know if they’re good or bad at their job?
- How good is the reputation of your school?

These questions relate to how we see ourselves and, for Interactionists, *self perception* is fluid and intangible, mainly because we look to others to tell us how we’re doing. You may, for example, look to your teacher to tell you how “good” or “bad” a student you are. Equally, your teacher may look to you to tell them something about their teaching abilities and the school itself may gain a certain reputation – for good or ill – based



For Interactionists, where much of the focus is on what happens in and around classrooms, teachers are seen as powerful educational players when it comes to things like determining educational achievement.

around how successful or otherwise it is in terms of GCSE / A-level examination results.

Labelling is an important aspect of this process of *self-construction* (if your teacher continually gives you poor grades or students continually misbehave in a class we soon start to get the picture), based on the idea of:

Reference groups - the people we use to check “how we’re doing” in whatever role we’re playing. Not everyone in our reference group is equally important:

Significant others are people whose opinion we value while

Insignificant others are people we don’t really care about (if your teacher *isn’t* a significant other, you won’t particularly care how they label you, although the labels that *stick* will always have consequences for students throughout – and possibly even after – their school career).

Module Link**Culture and Identity**

The significance of labelling in relation to personal and social identities is explored in more detail in this Chapter. The concept of a “**looking glass self**” (the theory that we come to see ourselves as others define us) is particularly relevant in the context of education.

This idea can, as we’ve just indicated, be applied to whole schools as well as groups and individuals within them. One outcome of all the processes just described may be a:

Self-fulfilling prophecy - a prediction we make that, by making, we bring about. On an individual level, if we’re labelled by teachers as “dim” because, despite our best efforts, we get poor grades then perhaps we start to see our self in terms of this label and stop trying to get decent grades (what’s the point - we’re dim) and, in effect, confirm the teacher’s label.

Nash (1972) demonstrated how the values held by teachers about “good” and “bad” pupils were rapidly transmitted to pupils through attitudes and behaviours. **Nash** concluded: “Certainly children of low social origin do poorly at school because they lack encouragement at home, because they use language in a different way from their teachers, because they have their own attitudes to learning and so on. But also because of the expectations their teachers have of them.”. **Nash’s** study has two significant dimensions that impact on how Interactionists theorise the role of education:

Firstly, as **Brimi** (2005) suggests, it involves a concept of **cultural capital** – that what students bring into the school from their home / family background has a significant impact on both their experience of education and, of course, how successfully or otherwise they are able to negotiate the various “barriers to success” (such as exams) placed in their path during their time in school.

Secondly, however, **Nash** suggests that “success” or “failure” (in terms of examination passes) is not simply a matter of “where you come from” or “the size of your parents’ wallet” – there are more subtle processes at play in the classroom relating to how teachers and students manage their impressions of each other. If a student is able to employ sufficient cultural capital within the classroom to be able to conform to the teacher’s perception of a “good pupil” it’s possible for them to overcome particular disadvantages in their home background – something that provides an interesting explanation for the ability of pupils from disadvantaged social backgrounds to succeed in the education system.

The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy also applies to whole classes of students who may find themselves negatively labelled. Studies abound (**Willis**, 1977, **Ball**, 1981, **Wright**, 1992, **Troyna and Hatcher**, 1992) to demonstrate how this occurs through practices such as streaming, setting and banding, ethnic stereotyping and so forth.

Finally, whole schools may be enveloped by a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. If schools do badly in League Tables of GCSE results, middle class parents stop sending their children to the “bad school”, whose results may continue to fall.



The repeated appearance of Public Schools such as Winchester at the top of school league tables does, of course, come at a price (£26,000 per year at a school such as Harrow)

Whatever cultural capital Wayne may once have possessed it was increasingly clear his account was now in debit...



Postmodern Perspectives: Observations

Post-modernist views on the “role of education” are difficult to categorise for the deceptively simple reason that, as **Collins** (1993) suggests: “The term describes cultural changes happening to people throughout the post-industrial world, willy-nilly”. The “willy-nilly” tag is important because it suggests postmodernism is concerned with describing cultural tendencies and processes, in all their (glorious) confusion, for both our amusement and, probably, bemusement. In other words, postmodernists don’t have a specific view, as such, on the role of education since this suggests there is some essential “right” or “wrong” position on the subject. What they do have is ideas about the relationship - and tension - between two competing, increasingly opposed, processes:

1. Modern institutions, such as schools, were born out of the Industrial Revolution and the development of modern society. As such, they exist to serve a number of purposes all of which, according to writers such as **Foucault** (1977), are to do with *power* (“**Everything reduces to power**”, as he helpfully puts it – a maxim that will serve you well on your a-level course...). The *power principle*, in this context, relates to how the modern State tries to exert social control through institutions such as education.

2. Postmodern people: The other side of this spectacle is the increasing *resistance* and *decentralising attitudes* of students (and indeed teachers) to the *centralising tendencies* of modernist education systems.

In other words, we have a situation where, on the one hand, the education system has, over the past few years, been subjected to increasingly *centralised control* by government. This idea of “control from the centre” has been evidenced by things like the introduction of a:

National Curriculum (introduced in 1988) that sets-out the subjects to be taught in all State schools.

AS Sociology For AQA

Key Stage testing, at ages 7, 11 and 14, that sets attainment targets in English, Science and Maths for all pupils. Key Stage testing, also introduced in 1988, was originally intended to involve all subjects studied within the **National Curriculum** (Technology, Music, Art, History, Modern Foreign Language, Geography and Physical Education).

Literacy and numeracy hours introduced into primary schools in 1998. Commenting on the introduction of the Literacy hour, the **National Literacy Trust** (2004) noted:

"The National Literacy Strategy is an unprecedented intervention in classroom teaching methods.[It] describes term by term how reading and writing should be taught....The policy requires primary teachers to teach a daily English lesson in which pupils are taught for the first half of the lesson as a whole class, reading together, extending their vocabulary...and being taught grammar, punctuation and spelling".

On the other hand, however, we have a situation that **Elkind** (1998), characterises in terms of the idea that: "Whereas *modern* childhood was defined in terms of differences *between* age groups, post-modern childhood is identified with differences *within* age groups". In other words, there is a sense of what **Willis** (2003) describes as "Decentralising education from government and reducing the number of tests and targets" in order to "...free schools up to deal with the needs of individual children".

Postmodern Perspectives: Explanations

We can develop the distinction between modern institutions and postmodern people in the following way:

Modern Institutions...

The idea of control, for postmodernists, works on two levels:

1. Intellectual control involves how people think and act in several ways:

The **Curriculum**, for example, specifies the things (subjects) considered worthy of being known and its content is controlled down to the finest detail (think about the Sociology Specification or government initiatives involving the aforementioned *literacy hours* and detailed lesson plans for primary school teachers).

Knowledge is also controlled in terms of what you learn. English literature, for example, involves learning "classic texts" (Shakespeare, Dickens and so forth - sometimes called "*high culture*" - what governments and educationalists view as the best possible examples of our culture) and largely excludes *popular culture* (the

Education

Key Stage testing in state schools has spawned a vast - and lucrative - private support industry...



books and magazines most people actually read, the computer games they play, the films they watch...) that is considered, within the National Curriculum for example, as being largely unworthy of serious, detailed, study.

Sites of control: In an overall sense, schools are sites which attempt (through their captive audiences) to distribute (and legitimise) certain forms of what **Provenzo** (2002) identifies as: language, practices, values, ways of talking and acting, moving, dressing and socializing (to name but a few). Schools, from this viewpoint, are not simply organised for "education", but also for institutionalising the culture of powerful groups.

2. Physical: This involves control over both:

Body: Think about what you can and can't do in school. You must attend (or your parents may be prosecuted) and you must be in certain lessons (and places) at certain times. Once in those lessons there may be restrictions on when you can speak, who you can speak to, how you speak to them, as well as movement restrictions (such as asking permission to go to the toilet and not being in corridors when you should be in a lesson).

Space: Schools are increasingly introducing *closed-circuit television* (both inside and outside the classroom) for the purpose of patrolling and controlling space - who's allowed to be in certain spaces (classrooms, corridors, staffrooms) and when they're allowed to be there.

Postmodern People...

For postmodernists, what we are seeing are changes in people's behaviour (under the influence of *globalisation* and cross-cultural contacts and exchanges) which include:

Active Consumption: **Taylor** (2004) argues students are changing: "They are the most academically disengaged, or even compliant college students with all time low measures for time spent studying and all time high measures for boredom and tardiness... bringing educational and social characteristics to campus that are challenging educators".

Taylor characterises these students in a range of ways (not all of them particularly flattering): Consumer oriented, wanting instant gratification, adaptable to new situations, skeptical and cynical to name but a few.

However, the crucial point here is the tension that exists between, on the one hand, an increasingly tightly-controlled, patrolled and policed education system (in both the intellectual and physical senses)

that seeks to specify exactly what should be learned, how it should be learned and when it should be learned and, on the other, increasingly independent and individualistic educational consumers (or students as they're sometimes called). In this respect, while education systems in modern society become, to all intents and purposes, *homogenised* (one size fits all, as it were) the consumers of education are increasingly:

Differentiated: **Elkind** (1998) suggests a key characteristic here is the idea of difference and, in a sense, the *fragmentation of identities*. In other words, students want to be recognised and treated as unique individuals rather than as groups (genders, classes, ethnicities and so forth). To use **Giroux's** (1994) phrase, students are increasingly "**border youths**" whose identities cut-across class, ethnicity and gender categories. This general idea is encapsulated by the idea of:

Sousveillance (the opposite of **surveillance** - to watch from above) means "*to watch from below*" and expresses the idea students (and teachers) are increasingly critical and dissatisfied with their treatment in the education system. As **Hanafin and Lynch** (2002) argue: "Mainstream education is constructed on a flawed notion of intelligence and consequently disables many learners, perhaps even the majority... Through over reliance on a narrow range of teaching methods, students are denied access to curriculum content. Narrow assessment approaches further compound disablement. At its most extreme, mainstream education supports and structures unnecessary failure and exclusion".

In addition, we could also note here the development of new:

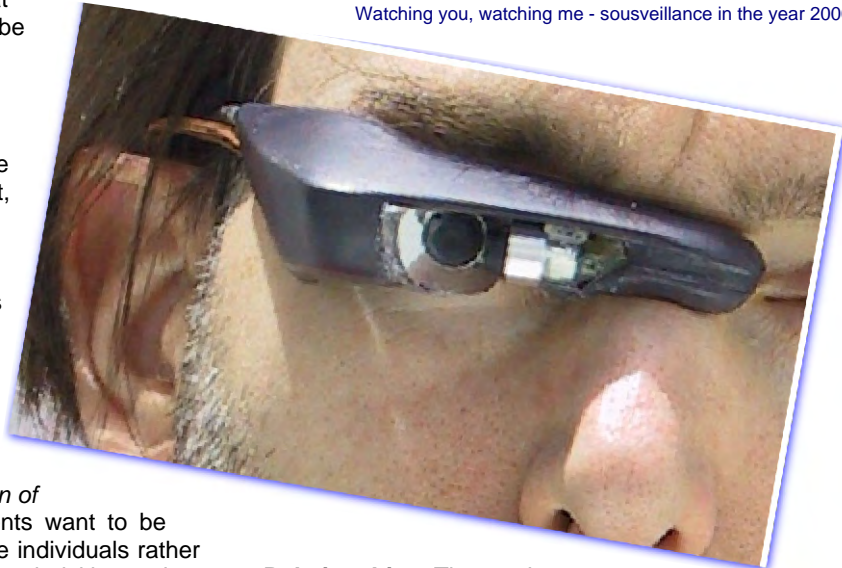
Subjects, such as media, film and cultural studies.

Ideas about learning.

Gardner's (1993) theory of *multiple intelligences*, for example, expresses the notion that "...it was generally believed intelligence was a single entity that was inherited; and that human beings - initially a blank slate - could be trained to learn anything, provided it was presented in an appropriate way. Nowadays an increasing number of researchers believe precisely the opposite; that there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other".



Watching you, watching me - sousveillance in the year 2000



Relationships: The teacher as "facilitator", for example, helping students to learn in an independent way that takes advantages for their individual strengths and aptitudes.

Finally, postmodernists note that some contributing processes to the above involve:

Globalisation – as our culture is exposed to the influence of other cultures (through immigration, mass media, technology such as the Internet and so forth) new ways of thinking and doing open up. Conversely, as **Yang** (2002) notes, globalisation also promotes a new interest in *local cultures* (your immediate and personal environment, for example).

Uncertainty (both for students and teachers) about the teaching and learning process - what, for example, is expected of people? Have they made the right choices about what to study? and so forth. One upshot of uncertainty is a contradictory outcome to that noted by **Taylor** (2004). **Howe and Strauss** (2000), for example, characterise the "post modern generation" as being well focused on grades and performance, interested in extracurricular and community activities, demanding of secure environments and more interested in maths and science than in humanities.

On the other hand, as we will see when we look at New Right perspectives, governments have responded to uncertainty by increased efforts at centralisation and control. The National Curriculum, key stage tests and so forth, are all attempts, it could be argued, to maintain an outdated perception of the role and purpose of education.

Globalisation is one of the key concepts of postmodernist sociology.

New Right perspectives are difficult to classify because they tend to straddle an uneasy divide between, on the

New Right Perspectives: Observations

one hand, Functionalist theories (involving, for example, structural concepts like role allocation and social differentiation) and, on the other, individualistic views about people as consumers who exercise choices about the education their sons and daughters receive. Problems of classification notwithstanding, we can note how New Right perspectives generally focus on two basic areas:

1. Society: Although Margaret **Thatcher's** (in)famous observation "There is no such thing as society, only individuals and families" suggests these perspectives take a rather dim view of sociological arguments about society and culture (they also take a dim view of sociologists, come to that), this is not to say they don't have strong views about the State which, in basic terms, involves the idea that the role of government is to guarantee the freedom of:

2. Individuals: From this perspective, people are seen as *consumers*, able and willing to make informed choices about their lives and families (which, *pace Thatcher*, is seen as the basic social unit in any society). However, they argue consumer choice is limited, in societies such as our own, by the way governments have allowed teachers to set the education agenda - an idea we will develop in more detail in a moment.

Rather than concern ourselves with trying to specify,



Individuals as informed consumers.

from this perspective, the exact relationship between the individual and society, it's perhaps easier to think in terms of the relationship between individuals and the State (which includes things like political government, the Civil Service and social control agencies such as the police and armed forces). In this respect, New Right perspectives argue for a:

Minimal State: In other words, the ideal role of government in any society is that of creating the conditions under which private enterprise can flourish and in which individuals can go about their daily lives with the minimum of political interference. The role of

the State, therefore, is largely reduced to one that guarantees the safety of its citizens - both internally, through agencies such as the police, and externally through agencies such as the armed forces.

Although this characterisation oversimplifies New Right arguments somewhat, it does give a general flavour for the perspective and its emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of individuals (to provide, for example, for both themselves and their families) and the general belief that Capitalism (and private enterprise) is the best possible way of ensuring the largest number of people have the highest possible standard of living.

These ideas, as I'm sure you appreciate, mean that when we consider the role of education from this perspective the general argument is that government should not be involved in its provision.

New Right Perspectives: Explanations

New Right perspectives on the role of education have been influential in both Britain and America in recent years and we can develop the ideas we've just noted in the following way:

1. Society: From this perspective:

Business organisations are seen as *wealth creators* and, as such, should be allowed to get on with the thing they do best (creating wealth if you have to ask), free from State "interference". Schools should, ideally, be privately owned for a couple of reasons:

Governments are seen as *bureaucratic organisations*, unable and unwilling to adjust quickly and easily to change (unlike private companies whose ability to respond quickly to changes in the marketplace is essential if they are to survive and prosper). Government should be involved in areas (such as industry and commerce) where businesses can, it is argued, do a far better, more cost effective job. The role of government, therefore, is not to "do things" (like manage schools or... err... railways) but rather to create the conditions under which businesses can successfully operate. One reason for this is:



Why are bureaucrats always "faceless"?

Competition: Businesses, unlike governments, are competitive organisations, forced to innovate (find new and better ways of doing things) if they are to attract and retain customers. They are, in other words, “*consumer captured*” organisations – private businesses in a competitive environment must respond to the demands of consumers or the customer will go elsewhere (to a competitor). Private businesses, therefore, have an incentive to be efficient, cost-effective and responsive to their customers in a way that governments do not – where the government is effectively a monopoly supplier of education parents have little or no choice about their off-spring’s education; not only do schools effectively choose which children they will take (as opposed to parents choosing schools) they have little or no incentive to improve the education they offer (since they were – until very recently - unlikely to be closed down...).



The decentralisation of education: Are school governors necessarily more in-tune with the needs of schools than elected local politicians?

2. Individuals: **Pateman** (1991) notes that the New Right sees *consumer choice* as being limited by *producer capture*: “Teachers (the ‘producers’) have set their own agendas for schools when it should be parents (the ‘consumers’) who set agendas for teachers. The New Right then argues for breaking up schooling monopolies and for enfranchizing the consumer”. The role of government, in this respect, is to guarantee:

Choice: This is achieved in a variety of ways: by encouraging different types of school; allowing businesses a say in the building, ownership and running of state schools; encouraging fee-paying, private, schools (thereby contributing to the diversity of educational provision and the enhancing of parental choice).

Standards, in the sense of ensuring teachers teach the same (National) curriculum, testing (at various Key Stages) to ensure schools are performing their role properly and to identify schools “failing their customers”. League Tables (based around raw exam passes or value-added calculations) which show the “best” and “worst” performing schools are also designed to give consumers choice over where they send their children (because they provide an “objective” measure of school performance).

Finally we can sum-up New Right approaches by noting what **Boyd** (1991) has characterised as the “5 Ds” and “3Cs” of their perception of the role of education and training in contemporary Western societies:

Disestablishment: The school system should be decoupled from State control; private businesses should be encouraged to own and run schools, just as

private companies run supermarkets or accountancy firms. The government doesn’t, for example, tell Tesco how to organise and run its shops so the New Right see little reason for governments playing such a role in education.

Deregulation: Within certain broad limits private owners should be free to offer the kind of educational facilities and choices they believe parents want; schools should be “freed” from Local Authority / government control.



New Right key concepts (Boyd, 1991)

Decentralisation: Control over the day-to-day decision-making within a school should fall on the shoulders of those best-placed to make decisions in the interests of their clients - something that involves giving power to those closest to individual schools (governors and headteachers) rather than decision-making being in the hands of those who are remote from the specific needs of such schools (governments, politicians and the like). Power, in this respect, is seen to be most efficiently exercised by those furthest away (school leaders) from the centre of government power (because they know and understand particular local conditions and circumstances and can respond quickly to change in a way government bureaucracies cannot).



Over the past 10 years a wide range of vocational education qualifications have been introduced (such as NVQs, GNVQs, Modern Apprenticeships and, most recently, vocational GCSEs and A-levels).

Diminution: Once each of the above ideas are operating the State has a much-reduced role to play in education and hence national education spending should fall (to be replaced by a variety of localised initiatives – including private, fee-paying, education, local forms of taxation and so forth). This idea dovetails with the idea of consumer choice (see below) and general New Right thinking about the size and role of the State; if education takes a smaller part of the national tax budget people pay less tax and are free to spend that money on the education of their choice.

education for a relatively small elite (around 20%) of children and *Secondary Modern / Technical schools* that provided a vocational type of education. Currently the vogue is to provide different types of academic / vocational qualifications (such as “ordinary” GCSEs and “vocational” GCSEs) within the same school.

De-emphasis: With each of the above in place the power of government is diminished (or de-emphasised) with the power to make educational decisions focused at the local level of individual schools.

For the majority of students the curriculum emphasis should be on some variety of training with the objective being to ensure schools produce students with the skills businesses need (“Key Skills”, for example, such as Maths, English and ICT). The New Right is keen on “traditional subjects” (English, Maths and History) and antagonistic to subjects like Media and Film Studies - and, of course, Sociology.

Module Link

Education

These ideas are examined and evaluated in more detail in Section 3: **State policies**

Choice of school: Parents should be free to choose the school they want their children to attend – whether this be State maintained or private. The basic model here is a business one – just like with

Character (moral): The **socialisation** function of education means schools have an important role in both producing new consumers and workers and also ensuring children have the “right attitudes” for these roles. Part of this process involves (in a similar sort of argument to that used by Functionalists) instilling respect for legitimate authority and the development of future business leaders.



any business, those that offer the customer good value will thrive and those that offer poor value will fold. When parents exercise choice “good” schools will expand to accommodate all those who want a place and “bad” schools will close as their numbers decline.

Core Content: The emphasis here, as we’ve suggested, is the establishment of a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the *economy* - the main objective for schools is to adequately prepare children for their working adult lives in ways that benefit the overall economy. This generally involves the idea that there should be a mix of academic and vocational courses and qualifications open to students; in the past this has meant the New Right championing *Grammar schools* that provided an academic type of



New Right key concepts (Boyd, 1991)



Marlowe Academy

Emmanuel College



“New academy schools fuel education row”

Source: **Taylor and Smithers** (2005)

“Ten new academy schools, including one backed by the former boss of Saga holidays and another by an evangelical Christian group linked to the teaching of creationism, will open this week as the government presses ahead with its most radical reform of the state school system. The expansion - the largest since the first academy opened in 2002 - means there are 27 schools open with 30 more in the pipeline. The programme is one of the government's most divisive proposals for reforming the school system. Private sponsors give a maximum of £2m in return for a large degree of control over the school's curriculum, ethos and staffing.

The Emmanuel Schools Foundation, an evangelical Christian group which has been linked to the teaching creationism at Emmanuel College in Gateshead, is sponsoring the Trinity Academy in Doncaster. Four out of the 10 new schools opening this week are backed by Christian organisations and almost half of those under development are due to be sponsored by religious groups of some sort.

Yesterday campaigners warned that academies were being used as “trojan horses” by some Christians. Keith Porteous Wood, director of the National Secular Society, said: “Given that only 7% of the population are in church on any given Sunday this is a disproportionately high number of academies. Religious organisations are seeing the captive audience that academies provide as being their best, and sometimes only, chance of survival.”.

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term “self-fulfilling prophecy” (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** factors that occur inside schools that affect the role of education (6 marks).
- (c) Outline the contribution of labelling theory to our understanding of the role of education (12 marks).
- (d) Compare New Right perspectives on the role of education with either Interactionist or Postmodernist perspectives.(20 marks).

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Using material from this Chapter and elsewhere, assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for our understanding of the role of education in society:

- (i) Postal questionnaires.
- (ii) Participant observation (20 marks).

This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.

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2. Differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society.

Differential Achievement: Introduction

In the opening section we looked at a range of different perspectives on the role of education and training in our society and one aspect of that general role, common to all perspectives, is the significance of educational qualifications. The focus of this section is not, however, about educational achievement *per se* (although this is discussed at various points throughout the section); rather, what we're mainly interested in here is looking at how various sociological factors (class, gender and ethnicity) impact on the achievement levels of different broad groupings in contemporary Britain. In this respect, therefore, we can examine each of these groupings in turn in relation to, firstly, observations about achievement levels and secondly sociological explanations for differing levels of educational achievement.



Class, Age, Gender and Ethnicity are all significant social factors in the explanation of differential educational achievement.

Social Class: Observations

We can begin this section by identifying some of the ways social class impacts on educational performance at various levels of our education system, from achievement at Key Stage 1 (7 year olds) to participation at degree level. Once we've outlined the basic relationship between class and educational performance we can then move-on to examine some explanations for this relationship.

Key Stage 1 - 3

The following table illustrates achievement differences between social classes using eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) as a measure of attainment. This does, of course, assume (arguably quite reasonably) that pupils with FSM status come from the lower social classes.

The most notable feature of these figures is the comparatively lower performance of **Key Stage 4** FSM pupils at

	% Achievement: Key Stage 4 (GCSE)		
	Source: Self and Zealey (2007)		
	5 or more A*-C	5 grades A* to C including English and mathematics	No Passes
Non FSM	61	48	2
FSM	33	20	6

all stages of compulsory schooling, from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 (GCSE).

If we look in a bit more detail at Key Stage 4, by breaking the figures down into specific social classes, we can see more-clearly the general relationship

	% Achievement: Key Stages 1 - 3 (ages 7, 11 and 14)								
	Source: Department for Education and Skills , 2004								
	KS1 Reading	KS2 English	KS3 Writing	KS1 Writing	KS2 Science	KS3 Science	KS1 Maths	KS2 Maths	KS3 Maths
Non FSM	88	79	74	85	79	74	96	76	75
FSM	69	54	44	64	52	42	80	53	46



between class membership and achievement. Firstly, middle class (professional) children perform comparatively better than working class (skilled and unskilled manual) children - but there are also clear achievement divisions within the working class. Secondly, educational performance for all social classes has improved in recent years, although, as we've just noted, the performance gap between the higher and lower social classes is still apparent.

% of selected social classes gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C

Source: **Department for Education and Skills**, 2004

	1989	2000	2002
Professional	52	74	77
Skilled Manual	21	45	52
Unskilled Manual	12	26	32

If we look at participation (or "staying-on") figures

Further Education

for those in full-time Further Education (roughly 16 - 18 year olds) by social class, an interesting picture begins to emerge. Working class participation, although still generally lower than middle class participation, has increased significantly in recent times (unskilled manual participation, for example, has more than doubled since 1989). This suggests a couple of things:

Vocational qualifications: Many working class children stay-on in education, post-16, to study for vocational qualifications - qualifications that are directly related to specific occupations (bricklaying, for example) or types of occupation (such as Tourism) not offered during their period of compulsory schooling.

Educational value: Many working class children (and presumably their parents who may have to support them financially during their period of study) place a value on educational qualifications. The interesting thing to note here, perhaps, is the possibility such children have problems with their school (in terms of achievement, what they are required to study and so forth), not with the idea of education itself. In other words, although working class children are likely to leave school at the earliest opportunity (currently 16 although with a proposal (2008) to increase this to 18) they don't necessarily all leave education (although, of course, a substantial number do just that); rather, they take-up a different form of educational experience (Further Education) that presumably offers courses and qualifications more-suited to their particular academic / vocational needs.

% in full-time education at age 16 by selected social classes

Source: **Department for Education and Skills**, 2004

	1989	2000	2002
Professional	68	82	87
Skilled Manual	39	66	69
Unskilled Manual	27	59	60

Higher Education

If we look at participation in Higher (degree-level) Education, a similar trend - in terms of middle class (non-manual) children having a higher level of participation than working class (manual) children - is again evident. However, we need to keep in mind that if relatively large numbers of working class children are participating, post-16, in vocational education courses it makes it less-likely they will be subsequently involved in Higher Education than their middle class peers - principally because the type of vocational courses the majority follow lead almost directly from education into work. For this reason, therefore, it's important to consider the idea that different social classes may develop different routes through the education system

% Participation in HE by social classes

Source: **Summerfield and Babb** (2004)

	1981	1988	2002
Non- Manual	36	48	51
Manual	11	18	19

Social Class: Explanations

In terms of the figures we've just examined, the general patterns of achievement we've noted suggest the higher your social class, the greater your level of educational attainment. Sociologists have, of course, developed several possible explanations for this situation which, for convenience, we can examine in terms of two general categories:

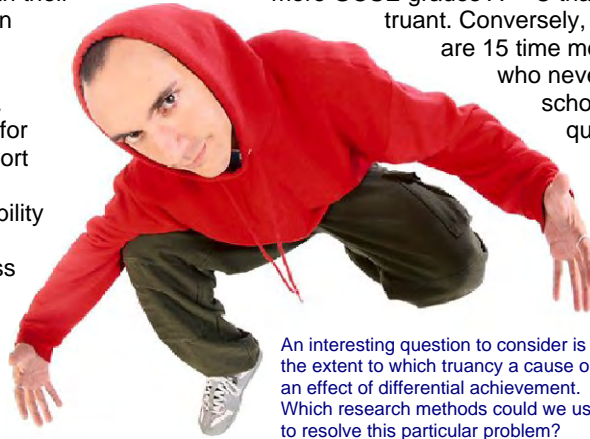
1. Outside School Factors

This category involves explanations focusing on the home background (both material and cultural) of pupils. These include, for example:

Material deprivation, which refers to things like poor diet / nutrition, lack of private study facilities and resources, the need to work to supplement family

income and so forth. These combine to give affluent (“well-off”) pupils a relative advantage in school (the ability to use computers and the Internet for homework / coursework, for example).

Attitudes to education focuses on the idea middle class parents take an active interest in their children’s education. **Reay** (2000) suggests middle and upper class parents are better-positioned than their working class counterparts to draw on emotional capital – the ability to decisively influence the focus and direction of their children’s education. **Reay** suggests middle class mothers, for example, invest a lot of time and effort (emotional labour) in their children’s education. This includes not just the ability to help with things like homework but, more importantly perhaps, a willingness to ensure that the school their child attends is providing what the parents believe are appropriate levels of support, teaching, testing and so forth – and to act swiftly and decisively if they are not.



An interesting question to consider is the extent to which truancy a cause or an effect of differential achievement. Which research methods could we use to resolve this particular problem?

Self and Zealey (2007) point to a strong positive correlation between the number of evenings each week a child completes homework and their test scores at Key Stage 3 – the more evenings spent completing homework the higher the individual test score. **Babb et al** (2006) also demonstrate a strong positive correlation between levels of truancy and academic achievement – persistent truants are 6 times less likely to achieve 5 or more GCSE grades A* - C than those who never truant. Conversely, persistent truants are 15 times more likely than those who never truant to leave school at 16 with no qualifications.

For the majority of working class parents it’s perhaps not so much a case of not recognising the importance of education for their children as an inability to invest the

resources – cultural and emotional – in their children’s education in an equivalent way to their more-affluent peers. Culturally, things like the type of school a child attends, the expectations teachers hold about ability levels and general perceptions about the type of work a child might realistically do in adult life contribute to lower academic achievement; in terms of emotional labour working class parents have fewer resources (they are, for example, unlikely to have achieved higher educational qualifications through their own schooling) and levels of influence with, for example, teachers. The cultural aspect of attitudes to schooling (held by both parents and their children) links into:

Cultural deprivation theory and the idea working class culture is somehow “lacking” in the attributes (such as positive parental attitudes about the value of education) and practices (reading to children, helping with homework and so forth) that make the middle classes educationally successful. Solutions to cultural deprivation focus around “compensating” working class children for their cultural deprivation by providing extra educational resources to give them an equal opportunity to compete with their culturally advantaged middle class peers.



To what extent do adult and child attitudes to education explain differential achievement?

The other side of this particular coin is that working class parents have lower levels of emotional capital to invest in their children; at one extreme here might be the idea that some working class parents don’t particularly care about their children’s education (the classic argument being they prefer their children to leave school and start work at the earliest possible opportunity); for others an inability to control, for whatever reason, their children’s behaviour results in things like truancy, exclusion and its by-product, underachievement. For example:

Module Link

Education

“Compensatory education” is outlined and examined in more detail in Section 3: “**The significance of educational policies**”.

By and large, this type of theory has in recent times been submerged into:

Underclass theory that argues a combination of material and cultural factors are the cause of educational failure among people who are increasingly disconnected from mainstream society. According to **New Right** theorists like **Murray and Phillips** (2001), the **Underclass** involves “people at the margins of

Straight hair that's bleached on top and dyed dark below.

Bottle of vodka

Top of thong visible

Wide belt

Skirt that's barely wider than belt.

Average age 17 but can range up to 55.



Loud mouth

Mobile Phone

Bra straps showing

Cleavage

Tiny top

Bare tummy, whatever the weather

Belly ring

Handbag

Naked legs

Calf high boots (also available in beige.)

classes, educational qualifications are an important way of reproducing individual class positions, whereas for the working classes the work-based route to money and status has always been more important. Class differences are demonstrated in a variety of ways: **deferred / immediate gratification**, parental experiences of Higher Education (or not as the case may be) etc.

Class subculture theory takes this a little further by arguing State schools are institutions dominated by "middle class norms, values, beliefs and ideologies" and some working class subcultural groups succeed by adapting successfully to this school environment - whereas others, of course, do not. A contemporary version of this theory relates to:

Identities, which pinpoints changing gender identities as causes of differential achievement; the idea, for example, some working class boys develop a "laddish, anti-school, anti-learning" culture. **Francis'** (2000) secondary school study argues teenage boys used "laddish" behaviour in the classroom as a way of offsetting the generally low levels of esteem they received from both teachers and (female) pupils (findings that link back to earlier subcultural studies - such as **Cohen's** (1955) study of delinquent boys that focused on **status deprivation** as a cause of educational disaffection).

society, unsocialised and often violent...parents who mean well but who cannot provide for themselves, who give nothing back to the neighbourhood, and whose children are the despair of the teachers who have to deal with them".

Although the idea of an "underclass" is increasingly used in everyday language, it's sociological significance and meaning is by no-means clear, for two main reasons: Firstly, does "an underclass" actually exist (outside of the imagination of those who use the concept) and, secondly, who exactly is part of "the underclass" (people as diverse as single parents, criminals, "chavs", "Travellers" and the long-term unemployed - amongst others - are included by different writers)?

Underachievement is explained by arguing material factors (economic deprivation) and cultural factors (a moral relativism that fails to condemn unacceptable behaviour, for example) combine to produce, in **Phillips'** (2001) words, "...the socially excluded who are no longer just the victims of anti-education, anti-marriage policies which have undermined personal responsibility".



poor but

This theory identifies the Underclass as a group mainly responsible for underachievement - through things like truancy, misbehaviour and general beliefs (state handouts and petty crime as preferable to qualifications and hard work, for example). The blame, in other words, is placed on governments (for creating a class dependent on State handouts) and parents (for failing to take moral responsibility for child care and socialisation). A different, take on this involves:

Class culture theory, which argues different classes develop different values and norms based around their different cultural experiences and needs. For the middle



Cultural capital is an idea we've outlined in the previous section and its application to educational achievement lies in areas such as those identified by **Reay** (2000) when, as we've noted, she identified the importance of "mothers' emotional engagement with their children's education" - in areas such as help and encouragement with school work and pressurising teachers to improve their children's performance. Middle class women, according to **Reay's** research, were particularly successful in investing **emotional capital** in their child's education.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of outside school factors and differential achievement.

- (i) Structured interviews.
- (ii) Official statistics (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

2. Inside School Factors

This category (sometimes called the **hidden curriculum**) involve explanations for differential achievement that focus on things like:

Type of School: Different types of school (private, grammar, comprehensive...) involve different levels of teacher, parent and pupil expectations - in other words, top performing schools, whether in the Private or State sector, create a climate of expectation that pushes pupils into higher levels of achievement. In addition, status differences between schools also tell pupils something about their relative educational (and social) identity and worth. **Gewirtz** (1998), for example, demonstrated that within the Maintained schools sector there is a huge difference between a top State school and an inner city school labelled as "failing". In the latter, for example, she found, "...difficulties in staff recruitment and parental involvement, and strained relationships between management and staff as improvement agendas became hijacked by day-to-day fire-fighting".

Private school



State school



Spot The Difference?

Class sizes: Private (fee-paying) schools dominate government school League Tables and one explanation for this is teachers give more time to individual students because of smaller class sizes. According to the **Department for Education and Skills** in 1999 average class size in State secondary schools was 20 pupils, whereas in Private schools it was 10.

Teacher Attitudes involves the ideas of **labelling** and **self-fulfilling prophecies** (which we've previously encountered). The basic idea here is teachers communicate, (consciously and subconsciously), positive or negative beliefs about the value of their pupils. Pupils pick up on these ideas and, in the process, see themselves in terms of the labels given to them by their teachers (as intelligent or unintelligent, for example).

Some of his colleagues thought Robert had the wrong approach to teaching the bottom set Maths...



Social inclusion / exclusion takes one obvious form - physical exclusion or suspension from school. **Self and Zealey** (2007) note that figures for English schools show that around 12,000 pupils were permanently excluded in 1997, as opposed to around 9,400 in 2005. A less obvious form of exclusion is self-exclusion (or truancy as it's more commonly known) – around 55,000 pupils each day take unauthorised absence from school. **Malcolm et al** (2003) found broad agreement amongst Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and teachers that unauthorised absence correlated with lower attainment (which is not too surprising, all things considered).

Another, less obvious form of inclusion / exclusion is ability grouping (a general label for practices such as streaming, setting and banding). **Harlen and Malcolm's** (1999) wide-ranging analysis of setting and streaming practices, for example, concluded educational performance was affected by many school processes - "class size, pupil ability range, teaching

methods and materials...and teachers' attitudes towards mixed-ability teaching".

In addition, **Hallam et al** (2001) noted how setting, for example, had both benefits for pupils (minimising disruptive behaviour) and disadvantages (stigmatising lower set pupils, the association between lower sets and unemployment, higher sets and good exam

grades). They also noted a familiar trend in this type of research (from **Keddie**, 1971 onwards) - teachers gave "more creative work and privileges to higher set students while restricting lower sets to tedious, routine tasks".

Hallam et al's research highlighting how high and low set pupils attracted different stigmatising labels ('thick', 'dumb', 'boffin', 'clever clogs'...) relates to ideas about:

Pupil subcultures: As an explanation for differential achievement, this idea has a long and respectable history - see, for example, **Hargreaves** (1967) and **Woods** (1979) - the latter noting the existence of pro and anti school subcultures (from ingratiating, compliant pupils, through ritualists "going through the motions" to outright rebels). More recently, **Johnson** (1999) has described schools in Northern Ireland where some pupil subcultures were marked by "hostility and indifference" to learning, which correlated with high levels of absence and lower levels of educational achievement. Finally, **Lacey** (1970) noted streaming and setting created the belief, even among relatively successful grammar school students, that they were failures when compared to their peers. Thirty years later, **Power et al** (2003) found much the same sort of subcultural labelling process at work when they noted how successful middle class students labelled themselves as failures for their inability to match the achievements of some of their high-flying peers.

Although we've identified a range of possible explanations for class-based differential achievement, we need to remember two things:

Firstly, as **Mac an Ghail** (1996) argues, social class origins remain the single best predictor of educational success or failure. **Demack et al** (1998) also note "Whilst school effectiveness research has focused on school differences, social class differences are still the largest differences of all and the children of professional parents have the largest advantage of all".

Secondly, we should avoid the assumption that "the majority" of working class children are necessarily academic underachievers. Significant numbers do succeed educationally and they've been increasingly successful

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of inside school factors and differential achievement.

- (i) Unstructured interviews.
- (ii) Overt Participant Observation (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

(albeit from a low starting point) over the past 15 years at GCSE. Working class children are also increasingly present in post-16 education. The fact they remain, despite increases in recent years, underrepresented in Higher Education also tells us something about the activities and preoccupations of this group.

Keeping these ideas in mind we can offer some evaluative comments about the respective merits of both "outside" and "inside" school factors:

Outside School

Material deprivation: Although studies over the past 40 years have shown there's no clear and simple relationship between poverty / deprivation and educational performance, there is, nevertheless, a link: **Douglas** (1967) concluded material deprivation was too broad an explanation for relative working class failure because some materially-deprived children managed to succeed. Working class attainment also tended to fall throughout a child's education, suggesting other processes, within the school itself, contributed to differential achievement levels.



Material deprivation is a factor in differential educational achievement - but is it the most important factor?

Mortimore (1998), however, argues "In any country in the world...there is a strong relationship between deprivation in the early years and later educational outcomes" and **Robinson** (1998) concludes: "A serious policy to alleviate child poverty might do far more for boosting attainment in literacy and numeracy than any modest interventions in schooling".

Parental Attitudes: We need to be careful when suggesting attitudes and a lack of involvement by working class parents in their children's education are a cause of differential achievement. As **Hanafin and Lynch** (2002) argue, many working class parents take an interest in their children's education and progress, but they "felt excluded from participation in decision-making", which suggests the "problem" lies not so much with parents but with schools - something addressed by New Labour educational policies that have attempted to

involve parents in the running of their child's school. **Desforges'** (2003) literature review on the other hand also suggests "at-home good parenting" has a positive effect on achievement.



Is there a positive correlation between "good parenting" and educational achievement?

Cultural deprivation / Underclass explanations have a superficial attractiveness, but **MacDonald and Marsh** (2005) found "no evidence of a distinct, deviant, underclass

"culture" in their research on Teesside, Middlesbrough. What they found was a complicated picture of "marginalised youth" struggling to come to terms with their low status and social exclusion. As **Mac an Ghail** (1996) argues, the problem of

working class educational underachievement is not the culture of working class boys; rather, changes in the labour market (and in particular the decline in manufacturing jobs) have effectively excluded such boys from their traditional forms of industrial employment and left them as a relatively marginalised group within the education system.

In many ways changes to the labour market have created a reversal of the situation within which **Willis** (1977) observed that many working class boys were unconcerned with educational achievement because their objective was to leave school and start earning money at the earliest opportunity – mainly because a job (however mundane and menial at the start) offered financial and psychological independence, social status and a relatively level playing field from which to try to work your way up the career ladder. Where once there were jobs (and apprenticeships) that working class boys could move into once their period of education was completed this is no-longer necessarily the case. For writers like **Mac an Ghail**, therefore, the situation is the same (underachievement) but the exact causality is reversed; while working class boys, in particular, see little point in trying to gain educational qualifications the reason is no-longer that work is plentiful but rather the reverse – it is scarce, qualitatively different to the kinds of jobs their families have traditionally performed and subject to intense levels of competition from (higher achieving) girls.

Inside School

Keddie (1973), has argued that the concept of cultural deprivation is not only a myth but that if sociologists focus their attention on the supposed deficiencies of children (as embodied in the idea of cultural deprivation), we may not notice the shortcomings of schools - something particularly evident over the past 30 years in terms of strategies designed to improve the performance of underachieving students:

School Effects: Taking a range of general factors into account, **Lupton** (2003) concluded "neighbourhood poverty" and "poor schooling" go hand-in-hand - the main question being, of course, which comes first; are schools "poor" because of their ability intake or do schools - through processes such as labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies - fail to inspire and educate their pupils?

Value-added: **Thomas and Mortimore** (1996) argue that, controlling for social class and applying value-added analyses to educational attainment (measuring the relative improvement - or lack of same - of children within a school between, for example, one Key Stage and the next), schools can substantially raise pupil achievement.

League Tables: **Robinson** (1998) has additionally noted the impact of school league tables on achievement; while overall levels of achievement have risen in recent years, he argues this is at the expense of the lowest achieving children because teachers have concentrated their efforts on "marginal pupils" (those just below the magic "C" grade at GCSE). Slight improvements in their attainment results, Robinson argues, in hugely-improved pass rates at GCSE.

Study Support: A number of writers have noted how changing ways of supporting students can affect achievement. **MacBeth et al** (2001) for example, noted that things like attendance, attitudes to school and attainment increased for students who participated in out-of-school-hours learning - something incorporated into New Labour educational policy in the shape of Extended Schools.

Module Link

Education

New Labour educational policy (including the concept of "Extended Schools") is outlined and examined in more detail in Section 3: "**The significance of educational policies**".

To put the above into an overall context, **Ward** (2004) reports that, according to **DfES** research, of differences in performance between schools:

- 73% is due to a child's level of achievement on starting secondary school.
- 19% on the proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals.
- 8% on the effectiveness of teaching.

As we've seen, the relationship between social class and differential educational achievement is complex and, according to **Gazley and Dunne** (2005), "largely invisible as a determinant of educational achievement" (at least in terms of the popular imagination where more effort is currently given over to explaining differences within gender and ethnic groups). This general "invisibility" partly stems from engrained beliefs about class-based educational abilities, aptitudes and attitudes and partly from a decline in the significance of

class analysis and identity in the contemporary UK. In terms of the former, however, **Gazley and Dunne** offer an interesting insight into the relationship between class and (under)achievement in that, following writers such as **Nash** (1972), they suggest teachers are “influenced by perceptions and expectations of pupils which may be linked (unconsciously) to their social class” – whereby “teachers and trainee teachers often hold stereotypical ideas about pupils and parents according to their social class”.

The “class expectations” teachers hold (which work both ways, of course – just as *working class* children tend to attract stereotypes of *underachievement middle class* children are generally labelled in terms of their potential for *achievement*) translate into classroom practices that “often located the source of a pupil’s underachievement within the pupil or the home”. In their sample of teachers, for example, they found general attitudes related to:

Class blindness: “Teachers were uncomfortable talking about social class even though inequalities relating to social class and education are widely recognised”.

Deficit views: The causes of underachievement were located in the “individual pupil or the home rather than in the classroom or the school” – which means, in effect, that some teachers held fatalistic views about the ability of working class children to succeed in the education system (they were, in effect, “destined to fail” because of their class and individual family backgrounds, regardless of what the teacher did or didn’t do).

Pupils: “Middle class pupils and parents were viewed more positively” and “Teachers had higher expectations and aspirations for the future for middle class pupils than for working class pupils” – ideas that are particularly interesting in the context of the observation that “Pupils identified positive relationships with teachers as crucial to their learning”.

Gazley and Dunne’s research suggests that the relationship between class and achievement is a complex interplay of factors – from home background and material disadvantage, through children’s perceptions of their futures and teacher’s perceptions of their pupils.

While material class differences clearly create an unequal educational playing field between, for example, working class children and their upper / middle class peers (children bring to the school wide varieties of **cultural capital**), this *alone* doesn’t adequately explain general working class underachievement – for the deceptively simple reason, we’ve previously noted, that not all working class children underachieve. This suggests, therefore, that what happens in the school and classroom has an important effect within the context of class background for some working class children in that their levels of achievement can be raised (schools and teachers, in other words,

can make a difference to achievement). However, the converse is also true – the behaviour and expectations of teachers can serve to confirm and compound the levels of material and cultural disadvantage many working class bring to the school.

As one of **Gazley and Dunne’s** teacher respondents put it: “I believe there is a danger in setting low expectations of a child. If a child already does not expect to do well the last thing a teacher should be doing is reinforcing that view”.

Tried and Tested

- Explain what is meant by the terms “deferred gratification” and “immediate gratification” (4 marks).
- Suggest **three** factors that impact on educational achievement by social class (6 marks).
- Outline some of the reasons for the educational underachievement of working class boys (12 marks).
- Assess the view that working-class underachievement in education is the result of home circumstances and family background (20 marks).

Gender: Observations

As with the concept of class there are several initial observations we can make about the relationship between gender and achievement:

Key Stage 1 - 3

According to **Self and Zealey** (2007), girls outperformed boys at every Key Stage in 2006 (with the exception of Key Stage 2 Maths where levels of achievement were the same) – a situation that has remained largely unchanged for the past 10 years (although in 1996 girls outperformed boys at every Key Stage). This general situation does, however, hide some complications that we need to keep in mind in – especially when we factor social class into the analysis.

Free School Meals (FSM) children: Both boys and girls in this category achieved less than their non-FSM peers. *Within* this group, however, in 2004 girls outperformed boys at every Key Stage with the exception of Key Stage 3 Science and Key Stage 2 Maths (where small percentage differences in achievement in favour of boys were apparent).

Teachers can make some difference for good or ill - so be nice to them just to be on the safe side...



Non Free School Meals children: The general pattern of achievement for this group was similar to the FSM group - girls outperformed boys with the exception of Key Stage 2 Maths.

We can add two further observations to the above:

Marginal differences: Although achievements in English show substantial differences between girls and boys through the Key Stages (averaging around 10%) the same is not true for Maths and Science (an average 2% difference).

Social class: FSM girls achieved less than their non-FSM boys. This suggests, at the very least, social class is a significant factor in explaining male and female educational achievement.

Key Stage 4

The pattern of gender achievement at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) is similar to that at Key Stage 1 - 3; girls have consistently outperformed boys.

% gaining 5 or more GCSEs A*-C by gender

Source: **Office for National Statistics:** 2004 - 2007

	1989	2000	2002	2005
Males	28	44	46	52
Females	31	54	56	62

Are boys underachieving at school?

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk> [2008]

"English is generally seen as having the largest gap...girls achieve up to 17% higher scores in this subject. The gap is smaller in other subjects. Girls get on average 10% higher scores in history, geography, design and technology and modern languages.

In the 2004 GCSEs in English, 58.4% of girls gained grades A* - C, compared with 48.4% of boys. Even in traditional 'male' subjects, girls outperformed the boys. For example, 50.1% of girls gained the top marks in maths, compared to 49.7% of boys. In double science the figures are 52.4% of girls to 51.1% of boys.

Interestingly, researchers at the University of Cardiff found that at the lowest levels, achievement of boys and girls is the same; it is at the highest levels that there are the biggest gaps".

Further Education

At A-level or equivalent the pattern of relative achievement between the sexes is maintained, with 45% of women and 35% of men achieving 2 or more passes (DfES, 2006). In terms of vocational training -

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) – more awards were made to women than to men in 2005. At Level 3 (equivalent to A-level) around 60% of awards were made to women.

In terms of participation in post-16 education, enrolment figures for males and females on full-time courses in 2005 are roughly similar (532,000 as opposed to 551,000 respectively).

Gender: Explanations

The general patterns of achievement we've identified suggest a strong correlation between gender and educational achievement that runs right through our education system and we can examine a number of possible explanations for this situation in terms of "outside" and "inside" school factors:

Outside School

We can outline a range of different reasons for differential gender achievement, starting with:

Social Changes: **Wilkinson** (1994) has identified a range of changes that, she argues, represented a "historic shift in the relationship between men and women". These included:

- **Cultural** changes, such as female contraception, the availability of abortion and the outlawing of sexual discrimination.

- **Labour market** changes that increasingly drew women into the workforce. The gradual change from manufacturing to service industries has seen the development of a "knowledge-based" economy that "values brains more than it does brawn" and demands flexibility and dexterity. **Wilkinson** identifies skills women have traditionally demonstrated in the home (or private sphere) - conflict resolution and interpersonal communication skills, for example - as increasingly valued in the (post) modern workplace (or *public sphere*). These changes mean an increased importance being placed by women on:

- **Educational qualifications** - the route into areas of the labour market traditionally dominated by men. In other words, by acquiring measurable credentials (qualifications), women are increasingly able to enter the workforce and compete for jobs with men. This change is reflected in:

- **Workforce participation:** **Summerfield and Babb** (2004) note that in 1997 women in paid employment outnumbered men for the first time (11.248 million to 11.236 million) – a situation that has stayed relatively constant to the present. However, these figures hide a couple of important differences. Firstly, men are almost twice as likely as women to be in full-time employment and secondly while around 50% of female employment is part-time, only around 15% of male employment has this status.

• **Globalisation:** **Coward** (1999) identifies economic globalisation, which encourages greater workplace flexibility and opportunities for home-working using computer technology, as further evidence of a seismic shift (or “**Genderquake**” as **Wilkinson** (1994) terms it) in male - female relationships.



The relevance to educational achievement of the type of social changes we've just described relates to the idea that women in the contemporary UK are much more likely than their parents or grandparents to see their adult roles in terms of a job or career – and if this is the case then it's but a short step to understand the importance of educational qualifications to this particular scenario – that they are increasingly a career requirement.

For this type of explanation to be valid we would expect to see a substantial increase in female educational achievement – and this is indeed the case. **Department of Education and Skills** (2006) - renamed (2007) as the **Department for Children, Families and Schools** for reasons best known to the government - figures, for example, show that the proportion of women achieving 2 or more A-level passes has risen from 20% in 1991 to its current level (2007) of 45%.

Socialisation: Although such things are difficult to track precisely there's evidence to suggest substantial changes have occurred in female primary socialisation in recent times - **Carter and Wojtkiewicz** (2000), for example, found greater parental involvement, help and attention in the education of their daughters. In terms of how socialisation impacts on gender identities (especially conceptions of masculinity and femininity) **Crespi** (2003) argues adolescent girls now have a range of



possible gender identities available to them, rather than the restricted range (part-time employee / domestic worker) of even the recent past. In this respect, two things may be happening to help explain changes in female educational achievement:

1. Opportunities: Females have more opportunities to express a range of different “femininities” - including ones that involve a career, rather than just part-time work.

2. Workplace: As changes occur in the workplace these reflect back onto family socialisation processes. Parents, for example, change their perception of their children's future adult roles and, consequently, the relative importance they place on male and female educational achievement.

Identities: The idea of changing male identities - what **Jones and Myhill** (2004) term “hyper-masculinity” (an exaggerated form of masculinity that emphasises things like physical strength, sexual virility and aggressiveness – what might be termed laddishness in young men) may also contribute to differential educational achievement as boys redefine their future adult roles. Both **Epstein et al** (1998) and **Lydon** (1996) pinpoint the idea of males losing control of both their unique identities and their lives as a result of changes in both female behaviour and the workplace. In this respect, the argument is that, as a result of changing identities, some boys see education as irrelevant to their future and this, coupled with rising female achievement, has contributed to differences in gender attainment. **Platten** (1999) takes issues of identity further by arguing boys are increasingly victims of *negative gender stereotyping* when compared to girls (boys “command” but girls “request”, for example). In other words, traditional male behaviour is reinterpreted (largely negatively) by teachers – an idea that leads us neatly (almost as if it were planned...) to consider an alternative range of factors.



Hyper-Masculinity as a role model?

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term “Hyper-masculinity” (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** “outside school” factors that impact on educational achievement by gender (6 marks).
- (c) Outline changes in male and female identities and show how these changes might impact on educational achievement (12 marks).

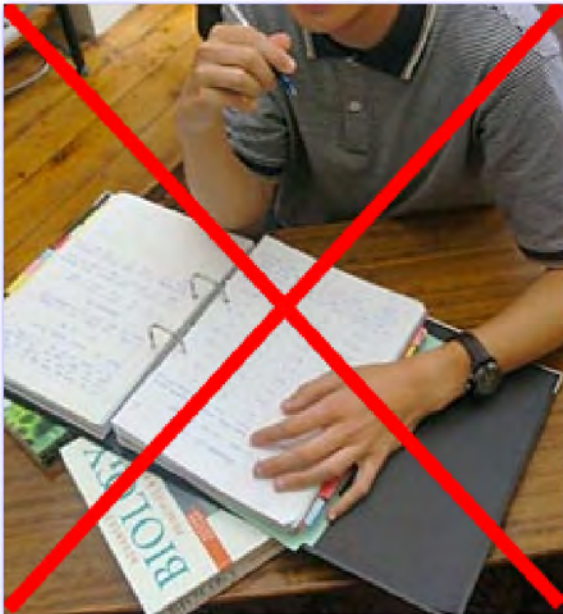
Inside School

As we've suggested with social class, there are a range of factors "inside schools" that potentially contribute to differential educational achievement between males and females:

Labelling and stereotyping explanations suggest a reversal of traditional forms of gender labelling, with girls increasingly being *positively labelled* (as high achievers who work hard and have least behavioural problems). Boys, on the other hand, are increasingly *negatively labelled* in terms of underachievement, laziness and behavioural problems (although class perceptions are also significant here, with working class boys, in particular, attracting negative labels).

National curriculum: Passed into law in 1988 and introduced into schools in 1990, this made subjects such as maths and science compulsory up to GCSE level and encouraged the breakdown of gendered subject choices. This resulted in increased female achievement in these subjects.

Coursework: The expansion of this option, mainly through the introduction of GCSE, benefits girls because it demands steady, consistent, work over time (something which is, supposedly, more suited to the way girls work). From September 2008 the amount of coursework that students can choose to do – initially at A-level and eventually at GCSE level – will be substantially curtailed, partly as a government response to "concerns" about male underachievement.



Will the removal of Coursework from 2008 as an option in the majority of A-level Specifications result in a decline in female achievement relative to males?

Curriculum initiatives such as "**Girls into Science and Technology**" (GIST) encouraged the breakdown of barriers around traditionally male subjects, whereas work experience initiatives introduced girls to the possibility of full-time work at an early age (although, as **Mackenzie** (1997) has demonstrated, there are arguments about whether girls and boys are still

encouraged to follow "traditional" employment options). Evidence from vocational qualifications (**DfES**, 2006) suggests they are. In 2005, for example: "Nearly all vocational qualifications awarded for construction, planning and the built environment were to men and a negligible amount to women. This compared with around 90 per cent vocational qualifications for health, public services and care being awarded to women".

Identities: **Francis** (2000) argues changes within the school and wider society have altered the way girls construct femininity (they no longer see it mainly in terms of the home) whereas concepts of masculinity have remained largely unchanged. This fits neatly with the fact higher levels of female achievement over the past 25 years have *not* been at the expense of male achievement - the "underachievement of boys" is relative to improvements in girls' achievement; it hasn't necessarily declined. **Walker** (1996) similarly identifies changing conceptions of masculinity, in terms of "...finding a role in a fast-changing world" as a challenge many young men are unable to resolve in the education system, an idea that leads into:

School Subcultures: These have traditionally been cited in explanations for male underachievement. **Barber** (1994), for example, identified three main types of underachieving male subculture:

- **Disappointed** boys were not inclined to do much at school outside the maintenance of their peer group relationships.
- **Disaffected** boys disliked school but used it as an arena for their general disaffection (bad behaviour, in other words).
- **Disappeared** boys attended school as little as possible.

Similarly, the **Northern Ireland Department of Education** (1997) linked male underachievement to "anti-school subcultures and peer-group pressures".

Framing the Problem

We've previously suggested that contemporary concerns over differential achievement have been framed in terms of *boys' underachievement* rather than increases in female achievement and this observation is important for what it tells us about how the concept of differential achievement is interpreted: As **Spendlove** (2001), for example, notes: "With the examination period now upon us again, we await the inevitable results showing that girls have out-performed boys in all subjects and at all levels. There then follows the usual media frenzy with headlines about boys' underachievement...".

Patriarchy: By framing "the problem" in terms of *male* underachievement (rather than, for example, in terms of significant historical changes in female achievement) the implication drawn is that differential achievement is a problem of *gender*; the idea, in short, that explanations of – and resolutions to – the problem

require us to focus on the social and / or psychological qualities of young males and females. If this were simply the case, however, it would be reasonable to assume that male underachievement is a problem “across the board” – that *all* boys, in comparison to *all* girls, underachieve. This, as we’ve suggested is *not* the case.

Social Class: One reason for this is the fact that when we include social class variables in our analysis we find a much closer correlation between academic performance and class than with gender *per se*. Middle and upper class boys, for example, perform far better in educational terms than working class girls. This suggests, at the very least, that we need to reframe and refocus questions of underachievement in terms of:

Working class boys: Substantial numbers of (mainly working class) boys have always “underachieved” in our education system - a “problem” that has only merited (media) attention in the context of a general rise in female achievement. In this respect, it’s tempting, perhaps, to note **Cohen’s** (1988) observation: “The question to ask is not ‘why are boys underachieving?’ but ‘why are we concerned about it now?’”.

Module Link

Crime and Deviance

This argument leads into the idea that concerns about “male underachievement” reflect a **moral panic** in our society. In addition, *surface* concerns about relative educational achievement mask *deeper* concerns about the changing nature of male and female identities in our society - if women are educationally more successful will their relative status in society change, to the detriment of men?

This is perhaps a little more puzzling in the context of *rising educational achievement* across both gender and class in the UK over the past 50 or so years – arguably the product of, firstly, a universal system of free education introduced with the **1944 Education Act** and secondly (although perhaps more contentiously) the introduction of **Comprehensive schooling** (particularly from the mid-1970s) that gave more children the opportunity to take academic examinations. As **DfES** (2006) figures demonstrate, for example: “Over recent years there has been an increase in the proportion of both young men and young women in the UK gaining two or more GCE A levels (or equivalent)”.

However we personally decide to view the question of “male underachievement” (from media-fuelled moral panic to much ado about very little – and all points in between) it’s useful to note two different ways the question has been framed. The first reflects a postmodern influenced concern with **identities** and:

Three types of “underachieving male school subculture” (**Barber**, 1994)



Gender Discourses: Following the lead suggested by the **Queensland Department of Education** (2002) we can note how debates about gendered differential achievement have focused around four main ideas (or **discourses** if you’re feeling a little bit postmodern):

- **Boys as Victims** suggests underachievement results from the “feminisation of school and work”, whereby male role models, ways of teaching and learning that have traditionally favoured boys and so forth have been replaced by ideas and practices favouring girls.

- **Failing Schools** locates the problem within the school, in terms of narrow measures of intelligence and achievement and teaching / testing regimes that favour female ways of thinking and working. In addition, schools fail to address or resolve problems associated with material deprivation.



Girls on top.

The “feminisation of society”?

AS Sociology For AQA

• **Boys will be boys** focuses on the idea certain aspects of masculinity (aggression, later maturity and so forth) are biologically determined and, therefore, fixed at birth. Solutions to underachievement here focus on schools developing ways to “engage boys effectively and actively”.

Jeremy spent many happy hours perfecting his Mick Jagger impression (ask your granddad...).



• **Gender relationships** focuses on how different notions of masculinity and femininity affect student beliefs and practices - for example, how students choose different subjects to study (the **gendered curriculum**) and why male classroom behaviour is more disruptive than female behaviour. The concern here, therefore, is the various ways gender identities are constructed and how they might be changed.

In a UK, as opposed to Australian, context (although the above illustrates the idea that concerns about “male underachievement” (or, more accurately perhaps, *relative* underachievement) have an international dimension), **Francis and Skelton** (2005) note that explanations have largely focused around three main ideas:

1. **Natural differences** between boys and girls (such as differences in brain functions) explains discrepancies in achievement.
2. **The feminisation of schooling** that gives girls distinct advantages over boys. Culprits here range from the lack of male role models to “female friendly” teaching practices, curricula and assessment criteria.
3. **Gender constructions** and interpretations that “produce different behaviours which impact on achievement”. This would include, for example, boys “laddish” behaviour, anti-school subcultures and the like.

Finally, we can note two further strands of thought in relation to gender and achievement. The first focuses on the concept of:

Underachievement: **Jones and Myhill** (2003), for example, suggest that “underachievement” is constructed in a number of ways by teachers who are, they argue, increasingly-likely to identify boys as “potential underachievers”. Ideas about what counts as “underachievement” also vary in terms of gender. Female underachievement (amongst working class and minority ethnic group girls, for example), frequently becomes invisible in the rush to identify and explain male underachievement. In addition, teachers

Education

rationalise achievement differences in terms of their perceptions of the nature of male and female abilities; female achievements, for example, are characterised in terms of “performance” - understanding what an examiner wants and delivering it - whereas males are characterised in terms of “ability”. Teachers, in other words - according to **Jones and Myhill** - define and re-evaluate their role in terms of how to stimulate boys’ natural abilities.

The second (modernist) strand reflects a concern with:

Social class, rather than gender. In this respect, the question is framed in terms of the extent to which gendered educational achievement is primarily an issue of class. **Murphy and Elwood** (1998), for example, note how recent improvements in female educational achievement is “...not shared by girls from low socio-economic backgrounds”.

Epstein et al (1998) have also questioned the idea of “male underachievement” as a general category when they ask which boys underachieve, at what stages in the education system is underachievement apparent and, perhaps most importantly, what are the criteria used to measure underachievement? In addition, as we’ve suggested at the start of this section, **DfES** (2004) figures relating to class, gender and achievement at Key Stages 1 - 4 suggest social class is a very significant factor here.

Gorard et al (2001) also note there is little difference in male / female attainment in maths and science and no significant gender difference at the lowest attainment levels for all other curriculum subjects. The “problem”, they argue, is one that exists among “mid-to-high-achievers”, where girls achieve higher grades than boys. Supporting this argument, a study by Birmingham’s education authority (**Times Educational Supplement**, September 2000), demonstrated “...the most disadvantaged pupils are boys from a poor, ethnic minority, background who were born in the summer, never went to nursery and spent their primary school years moving from school to school” – which is as good a way as we could think of to link into a discussion of ethnicity and educational achievement.

Tried and Tested

- (a) Identify and explain one example of the “feminisation of schooling” (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** “inside school” factors that impact on educational achievement by gender (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the reasons for the educational underachievement of boys. (12 marks).
- (d) Assess the view that male underachievement in education is attributable to a “female-friendly” education system (20 marks).

Ethnicity: Observations

As with the previous sections we can begin by identifying some of the ways ethnicity relates to educational performance at various levels of our education system. Once we've examined these data we can identify some possible explanations for this relationship.

Please Note: In the following, the identification of different ethnic groups (Indian, White and so forth) uses the UK government's classification system for ethnicity.



Module Link

Culture and Identity

Along with class, age and gender, **ethnicity** is one of the most significant sources of individual and group identity in our society. The concept is defined and explored in more depth and detail in this Chapter.

Key Stage 1 and 2

Department for Education and Skills figures (2005), show children from different ethnic backgrounds had different levels of achievement at these Key Stages and, in *descending* order of attainment, these were:

- Chinese Indian
- White British
- Mixed
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Pakistani

We can add to the above a number of observations:

1. **Chinese:** The number of such pupils is relatively small in comparison with other ethnic groups (around 2,000 pupils) and achievement levels are likely to be biased by class factors.

2. **Mixed Ethnicity:** Noting how children from mixed ethnic backgrounds (for example, pupils with White and Black Caribbean parentage) performed may tell us something about the influence of cultural factors on achievement levels. Thus, the top achieving ethnic group at this level in 2003 was White and Asian; interestingly, White and Black Caribbean children showed some significantly higher levels of achievement than Black Caribbean children.

3. **Gender:** Girls generally perform marginally better than boys for all ethnic groups at this level.

4. **Black minorities:** This group “fall consistently below the national average across all Key Stages” (as well as at GCSE and post-16 to boot)..

5. **Value-added:** When measures of the levels of improvement made between Key Stages are applied to ethnicity “Bangladeshi and Black African pupils consistently had higher Value Added scores (and thus made more progress) than the average for all pupils” – an observation that reminds us, perhaps, that “measuring achievement” is not necessarily a simple, objective, matter.

Key Stage 4

At GCSE the pattern identified in the previous Key Stages is largely reproduced - the main exception being the relative underachievement of Black Caribbean ethnic groups. Although their performance has improved markedly over the past 15 years, they still, as a group, achieve least at this educational level.

% with 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C by ethnicity

Source: **Babb et al** (2006)

	1989	1992	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
Indian	N/a	38	48	54	60	60	72
White	30	37	45	47	50	52	54
Bangladeshi	N/a	25	25	33	29	41	46
Pakistani	N/a	23	23	29	29	40	37
Black	18	23	23	29	39	36	35

When we include gender in the equation, we once more find girls outperforming boys in all ethnic groups (including mixed groups) at this level. Similarly, for all ethnic groups boys are more-likely to leave school with no A*-C passes at GCSE.

Further Education

One interesting thing to note about participation in post-16 education, as the following table demonstrates, is the relatively-low level of White - and the relatively high level of Black - participation.

%whose main activity is full-time education at age 16 by ethnicity

Source: **Department for Education and Skills, 2004**

	1989	2000	2002
Indian	N/a	392	91
Black	68	84	82
Bangladeshi	N/a	81	79
Pakistani	N/a	81	77
White	47	70	69

Mirza (1992) has noted one reason for higher Black participation is the number of black *women* staying in education post-16. More-recently, **Nehaul** (1999) has noted how black parents "...valued education for the enhanced life chances it offered...The importance attached to education was reflected in the myriad of ways in which all parents supported children's schooling...the encouragement given to reading, the priority placed on talking regularly with children about the school day, the provision of materials and books for school, and the commitment to supporting homework".

These ideas are interesting - in terms of participation and achievement levels of black children - because, as with social class, they point us towards the idea that, for some ethnic minorities (as with some social classes), problems related to differential achievement and participation appear to be more-marked *pre* rather than *post-16*.

Ethnicity: Observations

When we consider patterns of ethnic educational achievement the picture is complicated not only by class and gender but also, as we've suggested, by mixed ethnicities (or, if you want to be technical about it, "**hybrid ethnicities**"). Keeping these ideas in mind, there are a range of explanations for differential achievement to consider, split for convenience between outside and inside school factors.

Outside School Factors

Social Class, as we have seen (**Demack et al** (1998) for example) is a good general predictor of educational attainment and there's little reason to suppose this doesn't apply to ethnic *minorities* in the same way it applies to the (white)

Education

ethnic *majority*. Given Black and South Asian (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) minorities are relatively *over-represented* in the lower social classes it should not, according to this analysis, be too surprising to find lower educational attainment amongst these groups. However, one exception to this is the educational performance of Indian children who, in the main, are one of the most educationally successful groups in our society. We can explore this idea further, therefore, by looking at:

Poverty: The **Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit** (2002) noted a couple of interesting points. Firstly, that employment rates are lower - and unemployment rates higher - for ethnic minorities. Within South Asian minorities, Pakistani and Bangladeshi families are 4 times more likely to be poor than a White family. Indian families, on the other hand, generally had incomes comparable to White families. The **2001 Census** (2003) confirms these trends. In addition, even *working* Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are likely to experience poverty. Secondly:

Family structures correlate with differential educational achievement in the sense children from single-parent families, for example, do relatively badly across all ethnic groups. Black Caribbean families have the highest rates of single-parenthood and the lowest rates of educational achievement. **Self and Zealey** (2007) note 6% of White families were headed by a single parent in 2001, compared with 18% for Black Caribbean families.

Asian family life, on the other hand, is often (stereotypically) characterised as tight-knit and supportive (highly-pressurising even) which leads to greater achievement. While **Goodwin** (1997) found "a strong sense of inter-family cohesion and regular contact with immediate family is actively encouraged and maintained" amongst Hindu-Gujarati (Indian) families, **Berridge et al** (2000), found "...close-knit communities could generate social isolation, and families undergoing acute stress could feel a sense of shame about their difficulties".



How important are different family structures in determining educational achievement?



All ethnic groups contain a range of different identities - but are some Black identities more-likely to be viewed negatively by teachers?

Parental involvement / attitudes: One significant idea here, noted by **Mirza** (2001) is the development of "Saturday Schools" amongst Black Caribbean communities. Their existence and increasing popularity is, according to **Mac an Ghail** (1995), indicative of a general dissatisfaction, amongst black parents and children, with "white institutions" that seem to regularly fail them - an idea we'll explore in more detail in a moment. When considering this idea as a possible explanation for differential achievement (in basic terms, White and Indian parents, for example, have different attitudes to - and involvement with - their children's education, **Nehaul's** (1999) work suggests this argument lacks validity).

Identity: The underachievement of Black Caribbean boys is a striking feature of our education system. In addition, as they move through school, achievement seems to *fall* (until, at GCSE, they have the worst academic performance of all children). Black Caribbean girls perform significantly better at GCSE (although achievement levels are lower than for any other group of girls). White and Black Caribbean boys also achieve more, which suggests identity (and possibly concepts of *masculinity* that lead to rebellion against "white" schooling) may be significant factors in the explanation for the decline in performance of Black Caribbean boys.

Inside School Factors

We can note a number of specific ideas here:

School cultures, for example, covers a general range of possible explanations:

The Curriculum may involve, according to **Blair et al** (2003) teaching practices and expectations based on cultural norms, histories and general cultural references unfamiliar to many ethnic minority pupils.

Role models: **Blair et al** (2003) also point to a lack of role models within the school for ethnic minority pupils. Although, as **Basit et al** (2007) note, "No national statistics are currently available on the ethnicity of teachers in British schools, as schools have only recently been advised to undertake ethnic monitoring of their staff" it is possible to estimate the number of ethnic minority teachers in schools using Local Education Authority records. **Ross** (2001), for example, estimates around 5% of teachers are currently drawn from ethnic minorities (which contrasts with around 15% of English school pupils having an ethnic minority background). **Blair et al** (2003) noted around 7% of trainee teachers were from ethnic minorities (but this doesn't, however, mean they will all decide to go on to be full-time teachers).

In Further Education colleges 7% of staff were drawn from ethnic minority groups (which is roughly in line with their representation in the general population). In Scotland (not, admittedly, the most ethnically diverse or representative part of the UK), 1% of secondary and 0.4% of primary teachers were from ethnic minorities (**Scottish Executive National Statistics**, 2004)

Racism: **Aymer and Okitikpi** (2001) argue Black Caribbean boys are more likely to report negative



Are schools a bastion of institutional racism?

experiences of schooling, some of which include racial abuse and harassment from their peers. It's perhaps instructive to note, therefore, that **Kerr et al** (2002) found British students had less positive attitudes towards "immigrants" than in many other countries. This, they argued, was likely to shape peer group interaction.

Although school cultural factors can be significant, they may be too generalised to adequately explain the intricacies of ethnic group attainment differences (why, for example, should high-achieving Indian pupils experience less racism than lower-achieving Black Caribbean pupils?). We can, therefore, look at a range of more targeted explanations:

Teacher - Pupil interactions focus on the specific relationships found within different schools. **The Runnymede Trust** (1997) argued a range of *hidden processes* occur within schools that "deny equal opportunities". Ethnic minority students, for example, reported:

- High levels of control and criticism from teachers.
- Stereotypes of cultural differences, communities and speech that betrayed negative and patronising attitudes.

Diane Abbott (a black Labour MP) has argued (see: **Hinsliff**, 2002): "White women teachers fail to relate to black boys because they're frightened and intimidated by them."



A failure to challenge disruptive behaviour, she argues, leads to an escalating situation which results in black boys being excluded from school (Black Caribbean boys are more frequently excluded than any other ethnic group)". **Foster et al** (1996), on the other hand, suggest the overrepresentation of Black Caribbean boys in low status sets and bands within the school is simply a result of "unacceptable behaviour" on their part. **MacBeth et al** (2001) also noted schools are increasingly concerned about low ethnic minority achievement and take steps to address the problem - the use of out-of-school-hours learning support for

example, served to raise achievement levels amongst Asian students in particular.

Labelling: Although we may - or indeed may not - reject the idea schools are "institutionally racist" (the idea racist attitudes and practices go unchallenged - or are secretly encouraged - within schools), various forms of subtle *labelling* and *stereotyping* (intentional or otherwise) do seem to impact on ethnic achievement. Generally positive teacher attitudes to Indian pupils (based on the knowledge of their high levels of attainment) may be offset by negative beliefs about Black Caribbean pupils. **Gillborn** (2002) thinks schools are institutionally racist, especially in the light of curriculum developments that, he argues, are "based on approaches known to disadvantage black pupils". These include: selection in schools by setting, schemes for "gifted and talented" pupils and vocational schemes for "non-academic" pupils. Teachers, **Gillborn** argues, "generally underrate the abilities of black youngsters" which results in their assignment to low-ability groups, a restricted curriculum and entry for lower-level exams.

The **Pupil Level Annual School Census** (2002), for example, shows black pupils are more likely to be classified in terms of Special Educational Needs (SEN) - 28% of Black Caribbean secondary pupils as against 18% of White pupils. **Sammons et al** (2002) also suggest pre-school minority group children are more likely to be "at risk" of SEN than White children. Again, whether this reflects beliefs about ethnic groups or is the result of socio-economic factors is a point for debate.

Stereotyping: **Figueroa** (1991) suggested teachers frequently limit ethnic minority opportunities through the use of culturally-biased forms of assessment (the way students are expected to speak and write, for example) and by consigning pupils to lower bands and sets on the basis of teacher-assessment. Teachers generally have lower opinions of the abilities of some ethnic minority groups, which results in a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement - something the **Runnymede Trust** (1997) report into ethnic minority educational disadvantage also suggests.

Ethnic Majority...

When examining explanations for the educational underachievement of some ethnic groups relative to other ethnic groups, it's easy to overlook the fact

one of the largest groups of underachieving pupils is White working class boys. Thus, while explanations focusing on factors such as racism, school processes and teacher-pupil relationships are significant in explaining some forms of ethnic underachievement, they don't necessarily apply to this group. When studying all forms of differential achievement, therefore, we need to keep in mind how class, gender and ethnic factors *intersect* and, in this respect, we can note a range of ideas:

AS Sociology For AQA

Achievement is a relative concept. In other words, it depends on:

- **What** we measure - is it, for example, measured in terms of simple *exam passes* (and, if so, at what level and grade?) or can it be measured in terms of *participation rates* in, for example, post-16 education and training?
- **When** we measure it - again, the point at which we measure achievement (however it's defined) will be significant. In addition, ethnicity is a changing status, in the sense that changes occur over time. Bangladeshi children, for example, are one of the most recent immigrant groups to the UK. Their achievement levels (initially amongst the lowest for all ethnic groups) have increased significantly over the past few years as second-generation Bangladeshi children start to develop English as a first language.
- **How** we measure it - are we, for example, interested in exam passes or in progress made from different starting points (a value-added assessment)?

This idea suggests the concept of *achievement* involves at least two related ideas:

1. **Meanings:** The concept can mean different things, depending on how you specify it's possible:
2. **Measurement:** For example, is it measured in terms of a *product* (such as an exam grade) or in terms of a *process* (such as a *value-added assessment* that measures the progress made by a pupil between a measurable start and an end point - such as, for example, the distance traveled, in terms of achievement, between GCSE grades and A-level grades)?

If we measure achievement in terms of product, no account is taken of the social and cultural backgrounds of different pupils - their levels of **cultural capital** (**Bourdieu**, 1986) that give some students a range of advantages (and disadvantages) in the education race. If, on the other hand, we measure achievement in terms of process, recognition and understanding of different levels of cultural capital can be built into the measurement process.

Underachievement is, similarly, a relative concept. If we look, for example, at Black Caribbean achievement in terms of GCSE passes, then evidence of underachievement (both within and between ethnic groups) is not difficult to find. Alternatively, if we look at post-16 participation in full-time education, White children, as we've seen, seem to participate least.

Participation: In addition, evidence of underachievement in compulsory education should not automatically be considered evidence of wider underachievement. As noted earlier, Black Caribbean Saturday Schools don't appear to have significantly impacted on performance at GCSE level. However,



How do we define and measure "educational achievement"?

Education

since post-16 participation rates for black children (especially in FE colleges), ranks second only to Indian children, this suggests black parents - and children - value education but have problems with the kind of education offered in schools. Further Education seems to meet the needs of this ethnic group in ways that schools do not, an explanation supported by **Aymer and Okitikpi** (2001), among others - such as **Blair et al** (2003),

who suggest colleges "Can provide a space where young Black men are supported by a community of Black students, an opportunity to study a curriculum that celebrates Black cultures and histories and to develop positive relationships with tutors".

Social class: Just as we shouldn't underestimate the importance of ethnicity and gender, social class is also significant. As **Blair et al** (2003) note, children who receive Free School Meals are less likely to achieve than children of the *same ethnic group* who do not qualify for FSM.

A final word, in this respect, might be to note **Gillborn and Gipps's** observation (1996) that, whatever a student's gender or ethnic background, those from the higher social classes, on average, achieve more in terms of exam passes and grades.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of differential achievement and ethnicity.

- (i) Unstructured interviews.
- (ii) Official Statistics (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the terms "hybrid ethnicities" (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** factors that impact on ethnic *minority* educational achievement (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the reasons for the educational underachievement of black (Afro-Caribbean) boys (12 marks).
- (d) Assess the view that ethnic minority achievement in education is the result of school-based factors.(20 marks).

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3. The significance of educational policies, including selection, comprehensivisation and marketisation, for an understanding of the structure, role, impact and experience of education.

Educational Policies: Introduction

Although *mass education* (whereby most of the population – regardless of class, gender or ethnic background – attended some form of schooling) has, as we will see, a relatively short history in our society, the provision of education itself (particularly if you were upper class, male and of the appropriate religion) has a somewhat longer history. The oldest university in Britain (Oxford), for example, was founded sometime in the late 12th century and until the late 19th century a variety of different establishments – mainly, but not always exclusively, created and run by *religious organisations* – provided a range of educational opportunities for, initially the upper and middle classes and, eventually the working classes.

The late 19th century is a significant time in any chronology of education in Britain because, for our purposes at least, it marks the first real period of sustained government involvement in educational provision. The **Forster Education Act** (1870), for example, arguably represents the first attempt by the State to both provide – and regulate – educational provision aimed at the majority of the population (which, at this particular stage, didn't necessarily include women – an observation that provides a significant insight into the perceived role, impact and experience of education at this time).

These early attempts to formulate and apply educational policy were not particularly successful, although the fact the Elementary schools established in 1870 were neither free nor compulsory probably explains the general lack of participation in them by the majority of the working classes. Various attempts were made, over the following 60 years, to “educate the working class” with varying degrees of success.

If the impact of these attempts to provide schooling was not particularly great (in terms of the numbers of children experiencing State education), the role of education, if not explicitly defined, was laid-out in terms of meeting two needs:

Economic - the increasing need, as modern, industrial society developed, for a *literate and numerate* population to work machines in factories and administer the increasingly complex organisation of work.

Political - the need for a population socialised into the demands of an increasingly *complex division of labour* (in particular, one that was well-schooled in the disciplines required by factory forms of production).

While it's wrong to argue that little of educational importance happened for the next 70 or so years – governments attempted, with varying degrees of success and failure to introduce a mass system of education through a variety of different Education Acts – the most significant initial development in terms of educational policy, at least for our purpose, is the **1944 Education Act**.

Educational Policies - like London buses you don't see one for 70 years then hundreds of the damn things suddenly appear...



Butler Education Act (1944): Observations

This educational reform (part of a much-wider set of social reforms introduced in the immediate post-2nd World War period) introduced two main elements into the role and experience of education:

1. Universal Education: Free, compulsory education for all between the ages of 5 and 15 (until this point secondary schooling wasn't free, although *Elementary Schools* had a *nominal* leaving age of 14 for most children who bothered to attend).

2. Structural Reform: The Act aimed to reform the structure of education in a couple of ways:

Firstly, a **three-tiered structure** of **primary**, **secondary** and **tertiary** education was established.

Secondly, the structure of secondary education (from 11 – 15) was reformed to produce a school system in three distinctive parts; what is usually – if not always correctly - called the:

Tripartite (“3-part”) system: Although, as **Bell** (2004) notes, the 1944 Act didn't actually specify a *tripartite system*, compulsory secondary education was effectively structured around the idea of three different types of secondary school (for, in effect, three types of pupil):

- **Grammar schools** were intended to provide a predominantly academic education.
- **Secondary Modern** schools would provide a mix of vocational and academic education (with the emphasis on the former).
- **Secondary Technical** schools would provide a largely work-related technical / vocational education.

Module Link Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

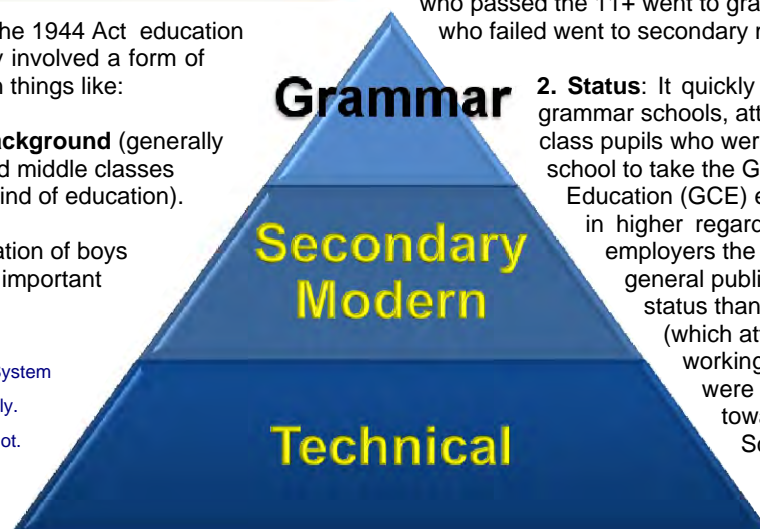
The restructuring of the education system was one element in the post-2nd World War creation of the **Welfare State**.

Selection: Before the 1944 Act education in Britain effectively involved a form of **selection** based on things like:

Income / family background (generally it was the upper and middle classes who received any kind of education).

Gender: The education of boys was seen to more important than that of girls.

The Tripartite System
Separate? Certainly.
Equal? Certainly not.



Culture: Religious affiliation (both to a religion in general and particular religious) was a significant criterion in educational selection in two ways: firstly, attending Church Schools required a general religious commitment and, secondly, particular religious groups (such as Anglicans, Catholics or Jews) frequently established “schools” (usually offering elementary levels of instruction) for members of their faith.

The 1944 Act took the idea of educational selection in a different direction in that children were assigned to each type of school on the basis of on an **intelligence (IQ) test** that claimed to identify different types of learner - in basic terms, those suited to an academic-type (theory-based) education and those suited to a vocational (practice-based) education. Students were tested at 10 (the so-called “11+” exam) and assigned a school based on their test performance (with roughly the top 15- 20% of pupils awarded grammar school places). The selection process reflected a number of beliefs that, in recent times, have come to be questioned. These included the ideas of:

- Natural levels of academic ability that remained largely fixed after a certain age.
- Objective testing.
- A basic educational division between “academic” and “vocational” capabilities (most children were assumed to have a “natural capability” for one or the other).

Although the tripartite system envisaged separate schools for different types of pupil the system as a whole was supposed to involve:

Parity of Esteem or the idea each type of school was “*separate but equal*”. Children were literally separated by attending different schools, but the idea of “equality” was rather more questionable, for a couple of reasons.

1. Bipartite education: Few technical schools were built / established (partly because it proved difficult to quantify “technical ability” in an IQ test and partly because of the expense) which effectively meant a **two-type** (*bipartite*) State system developed - those who passed the 11+ went to grammar schools, those who failed went to secondary modern schools.

2. Status: It quickly became clear that grammar schools, attracting mainly middle-class pupils who were more likely to stay in school to take the General Certificate of Education (GCE) exams at 16, were held in higher regard (by Universities, employers the media and, indeed the general public). They had greater status than secondary moderns (which attracted predominantly working class pupils who were supposed to work towards a (non-examined) School Leaving Certificate at 15).

A couple of exceptions to this general situation were:

Private schools: Fee-charging schools were not covered by the Act and could operate outside its general scope. These, by-and-large, remained the preserve of upper class pupils although many developed and extended their scholarship systems that recruited some (mainly middle class) children.

Comprehensive schools: Local Education Authorities (LEA's) were given responsibility for introducing the educational reforms in their area and some chose to interpret the injunction to provide "free and equal" education differently. In London, for example, 8 Comprehensive schools were built between 1946 and 1949.



Public (fee-charging) schools such as Harrow (pictured here before the invention of colour), Winchester and Eton have always been outside the State schooling system. Such schools do not, for example, have to teach the National Curriculum (something that would be illegal for State schools).

Butler Education Act (1944): Explanations

Role

The tripartite system, whatever its actual weaknesses in terms of scope and implementation, represented a clear statement of the role of education in modern society, in terms of the relationship between schools and the economy. It adopted a broadly *Functionalist perspective* by defining the education system in terms of *differentiation* and *role allocation*. The relationship between academic schooling and professional careers, vocational schooling and non-professional / manual work is evident here (as indeed it was in the practice of each type of school - secondary moderns, for example, emphasized the learning of manual skills (woodwork, bricklaying and so forth) for boys and domestic skills - needlework, cookery and the like - for girls). In this respect, the system was underpinned by two main ideas:

1. Ability: Children were defined and labelled, as we've suggested, in terms of differing abilities and aptitudes which, coincidentally or not, reflected both the economic structure of the time (a plentiful supply of manufacturing jobs, for example) and ideas about the respective adult roles of males and females. The latter's experience of secondary modern schooling, for example, focused primarily on the knowledge and skills women would need for their "traditional" roles of wife and mother.



Sir Cyril Burt (.1883 - 1971)

The concept of "separate abilities" was, however, underpinned, as **McCulloch** (1988) has noted, by *psychological* ideas about the nature of intelligence. In particular, the academic / vocational division for different types of schooling reflected the idea, popularised by psychologists such as Cyril **Burt**, on whose research the tripartite system was largely based (although, in recent years, an unresolved controversy has raged over whether **Burt** falsified his original research data), that intelligence was both *innate* and relatively *fixed* at around the age of 10 or 11.

2. Academic / Vocational aptitudes were reflected in the basic premise of the tripartite system, with secondary modern schools being organised - at least initially - around a vocational type of education designed to prepare boys for various forms of skilled manual work (agricultural and well as industrial) and girls for lower level non-manual occupations (secretarial, office and nursing, for example) that reflected both their general economic position and family role - working class women were generally expected to work until they married and then replace full-time work with domestic responsibilities.

Impact

The impact of the general policies (economic, political and educational) embodied in the tripartite system should not be underestimated or discounted, even in the light of the numerous weaknesses and problems - both philosophical and practical - that bedeviled the system:

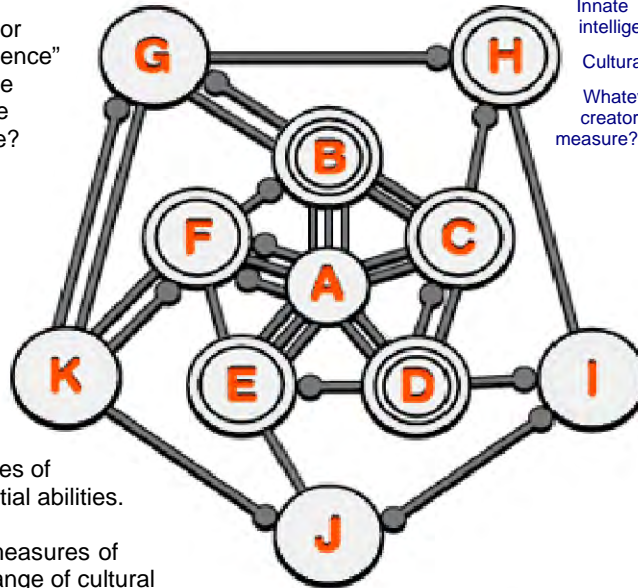
Philosophical arguments, for example, raged around such ideas as:

Intelligence: Major questions here, for example, relate to the status of “intelligence” Do young children, for example, have innate levels of intelligence that, once developed, is relatively fixed and stable?

Measurement: Can “intelligence” be easily defined and measured? IQ tests designed to do *measure* IQ (and, by extension, *define* what we mean by intelligence) have been around for just over a century but over that period we’ve moved no-closer to providing an answer to the question “what is intelligence?” that is fully accepted by social scientists. IQ tests, for example, generally measure three “types of intelligence”: language, maths and spatial abilities.

Objectivity: Are “IQ tests” objective measures of “intelligence” or are they subject to a range of cultural biases and weaknesses?

Classification: Can children be simply classified in terms of “academic” and “vocational” abilities and categories on the basis of their performance in IQ tests at the age of 10?



What do IQ tests actually measure?

- Innate levels of intelligence?
- Cultural learning?
- Whatever the test creators say they measure?



modern school to a grammar school after the age of 11 few children, in practice, ever made the transition.

Module Link

Research Methods

The main problem with IQ tests relates to their **validity** (do they measure what they claim to measure?). An IQ test clearly measures (and **quantifies**) something; the question here, however, is what is that “something”? For sociologists (amongst others) IQ tests generally lack validity, for the reasons we’ve just noted.

Experience

The impact of the tripartite system on the experience of schooling for many pupils differed in terms of:

On a practical level the tripartite system had a number of significant effects, not all of them beneficial to either the individuals involved or society as a whole:

Labelling: Grammar schools were seen as “superior” in terms of both the education offered and the status of the children who attended. Grammar school teachers were also more highly qualified - and paid more - than their Secondary Modern counterparts.

Compulsory education became fully established for the mass of the population and, for perhaps the first time, the education of working class boys and girls was included as a significant aspect of government policy.

Stereotyping: Secondary Modern children faced two related forms here. Firstly, the fact of failing the 11+ and, secondly, in terms of the idea they had lower natural levels of intelligence.

Social inequality was not only embedded in the system, it was also **routinised** (made to seem to normal and inevitable) and **ideologically justified** (on the basis of the “objective testing” of innate genetic characteristics).

Gender: Apart from the differences in what girls and boys were taught, there were more grammar school places available for boys than girls (a legacy of the pre-1944 situation of single-sex secondary schools). This meant girls with higher measured levels of IQ were often denied places at grammar schools in favour of boys with lower measured IQ’s.

Social segregation was also established as a routine educational practice with the classes “unofficially” separated, to all intents and purposes, in different schools. Although it was possible to move from, say a secondary



Grammar schools: A better class of school for a better class of pupil?

Tried and Tested

- (a) Identify one component of the Welfare State, other than education (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** ways that the experience of schooling was affected by the 1944 Education Act (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Tripartite system (12 marks).

Comprehensivisation: Observations

In the 1970s, under a Labour government, a general movement took root for the introduction of comprehensive schooling – something that reflected three basic ideas:

Selection (by IQ test) was questioned on the basis that it was both educationally and socially divisive – the former because it effectively created a rigid two-tier system (academic grammar schools and vocational secondary moderns) and the latter because of the general class composition of each type of school. Under comprehensivisation all children, regardless of prior academic achievement, would receive the same secondary education in the same school. A new exam (GCSE) was phased-in to replace the Ordinary Level (“O-level” – mainly taken by grammar school pupils) and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE – aimed at a lower level than “O-Level” and mainly taken by secondary modern pupils) divide.

An additional factor in the introduction of Comprehensive schools was that of *merit* – the idea that all pupils should have the same basic opportunities for achievement, regardless of class, gender and ethnic factors. *Mixed ability teaching* (where children of differing levels of attainment are taught in the same class, by the same teacher, the same curriculum to the same level) was seen as the way forward. 30-odd years later the jury’s still out on this one – **Hallam et al** (2001) suggest some subjects (English and Humanities) were considered by teachers as more appropriate for mixed ability classes than others like maths and modern languages.

Social integration: One of the guiding principles of Comprehensive schooling was the desire to remove the *socially divisive* tripartite system. Education, therefore, was used to promote social mixing. Initially, this meant ensuring each school had a mix of different social classes, although this ideal has effectively been replaced by a form of “self-selection” by catchment area (you become eligible to attend the school if you live within a certain radius of it). In recent times this practice has become reviled in some quarters as “selection by postcode”- the idea that middle class parents are able to ensure their children

attend a school with a good academic record by buying a house in the school’s catchment area.

Economic Changes, in tandem with a desire for a more *meritocratic* education system, were also an important motor of change, for three closely related reasons.

- **Work changes:** The decline in manufacturing industry meant fewer manual jobs available as a “vocation” and, in consequence, a form of vocational education geared specifically to lower-level manual work was no-longer seen as either appropriate or desirable. This, in turn, can be related to:

- **Technological changes** that produced an increasing demand for a better-educated general workforce. The newer *service industries* (financial, banking, Information Technology and the like) produced an expansion in non-manual employment that has led to:

- **Social changes:** Increasing numbers of women were drawn into in the new “service industry” workforce as full-time employees creating both a demand for the kind of academic qualifications required by higher level services and, in consequence perhaps, a general resistance to the type of “traditional” education they received in secondary modern schools.

The above notwithstanding, the gradual domination of secondary education by Comprehensive schools didn’t happen overnight. On the contrary, their introduction was:

Protracted: A lengthy process, mainly started in 1950’s, encouraged by **Wilson’s** Labour Government in the 1960’s (*Circular 10/65* tends to be seen as the start of a 10-year effort to reform the tripartite system) and finally (almost) completed by Shirley **Williams** (the then Labour Education Minister) in 1976 when an Education Act instructed all councils to “prepare plans for Comprehensive schooling” in their area.

Challenged, not least by influential advocates of grammar schooling but also by some LEA’s who fought to retain grammar schooling through the Courts. Hence:

Has “selection by IQ test” been replaced by “selection by mortgage”?



Partial, given that some LEAs (having “produced plans” for Comprehensive schooling never implemented them) still operate grammar schools - around 160 such schools still exist within the education system in various parts of the country (mainly those with a history of Conservative Council control). Some grammar schools also avoided comprehensivisation by changing their status to that of Public, fee-charging, schools.

Comprehensivisation: Explanations

The introduction of comprehensive schooling – however gradual, protracted and partial – changed the educational landscape in a range of ways in terms of role, impact and the experience of secondary schooling.

Role

Comprehensive education was designed to change the general role of the education system in a couple of ways:

Ideologically: Comprehensive schools represented the idea social class divisions could be, at best abolished and at worst mitigated through a system of education that encouraged “social class mixing”, *equality of opportunity* and achievement through talent and hard work. In other words, it represented ideas about *social integration*, *meritocracy* and *egalitarianism* (equality). In this respect, we can see these ideas reflect a general *Functionalist* view of society, with its stress on *consensus*, *shared values* and the *allocation of adult roles* through proven *merit*.

Economically: A central theme of Comprehensive education was that the population contained a larger *pool of talent* than was generally recognized by any previous system. The changing nature of economic production - and the increasing importance of *service industries* - led to a reappraisal of both the purpose of education and the general skills / qualification base. The role of education, in this respect, was to respond to the changing economic needs of society by producing a highly-educated, skilled and trained workforce.

Impact

The impact of Comprehensive education was felt in several ways:

Provision: New purpose-built co-educational schools, for example, developed in many areas to replace closed / amalgamated schools. A Comprehensive school, for example, might typically replace a couple of grammar schools (boys’ and girls’) and a secondary modern school - creating a large institution with better facilities and more curriculum choice.

Exams: The school-leaving age had been raised to 16 in 1972 and this was accompanied by the gradual introduction of a new GCSE exam taken at 16 by all students. Differentiation *between* exam systems (pupils of different abilities taking different exam at different

levels) was replaced by differentiation *within* a single exam system. The GCSE exam system was designed, in the light of sociological research about the problems created by labelling was designed to be a “no fail” exam; students were graded (originally A – G) on the basis of the standard they achieved. Although this grading system largely remains in place (with the recent addition of an A* grade to counteract media claims that the exam was becoming “too easy”) the *de facto* (“in fact”) pass grade is the one accepted by most employers – grades A* - C.

Diversity: The continued existence of Grammar, Secondary Modern and Public schools within a nominally “Comprehensive” system created problems in that parents who had the money and / or desire could continue to buy a different (higher status) type of education, perpetuating the class divisions Comprehensive education was (theoretically) designed to remove. Currently (2008) the majority of grammar schools are in rural, as opposed to urban, areas and public schools educate around 7% of the school-age population (although this rises to around 16% in school 6th forms and some parts of the South-East).

Experience

In some respects, Comprehensive schools did provide a different set of experiences for both teachers and pupils in terms of things like:



Size: Comprehensives, as we’ve noted, are generally larger and more impersonal than the schools they replaced.

Labelling: Children were no longer stigmatised by either the label of failure at 11 or “secondary modern” status.

Gender: New opportunities for girls (especially working class girls) developed as they followed a similar curriculum to boys (although some differences remained in terms of a gendered curriculum choice - girls were still expected to take subjects such as Home Economics, for example).



On the other hand, some school practices simply transferred from the tripartite system to the Comprehensive school (as part of a *hidden curriculum* discussed in more detail in the final section). These included, for example:

Streaming, setting and banding: These developed to differentiate pupils *within* the school (rather than between different schools as was previously the case). The general outcome was to find *middle class* children in the *higher streams, sets or bands* and *working class* children in the lower, which, of course, raised the question of:

Labelling: These practices effectively created a system of positive and negative labelling within the school - with some pupils being almost entirely separated from

others. Another form of selection and separation involved:

Catchment areas: Originally, schools were supposed to have a social mix of pupils (which invariably meant some children faced long journeys to school) but fairly rapidly this devolved into “selection by area” - inner city schools attracted high levels of working class kids and suburban schools attracted middle class kids.

Regional Differences: As **Croxford** (2000) notes, different parts of the UK operated different systems - in Scotland and Wales all State-funded secondary schooling was comprehensive, in Northern Ireland it was selective, and England had, as we've seen, a number of regional variations. **Croxford's** research also suggested:

Social segregation was lower in Scotland and Wales.

Attainment was, on average, the same in Wales, England and Northern Ireland, although girls outperformed boys in all four systems.

Social class was a major determinant of attainment, although it made less difference in Scotland than in England.

Tried and Tested

- Explain what is meant by the terms “Comprehensivisation” (2 marks).
- Suggest **three** reasons for the introduction of the Comprehensive system (6 marks).
- Outline some of the ways the introduction of Comprehensive schooling has impacted on the *experience* of education (12 marks).

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of educational policy.

- Content Analysis.
- Focused Interviews (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Module Link

Education

The following material (covering educational policy in England and Wales over the past 30 years) provides a range of examples of the New Right approach to educational policy we outlined in Section 1.

Marketisation

The Conservative Years: Observations

1979 - 1997

In 1976, the then Labour Prime Minister James (later Lord) **Callaghan** gave a speech at Ruskin College in Oxford to start a so-called *Great Debate* about education (which, true to form, was neither “Great” nor actually a “debate”). Although no major educational reforms came from this speech, it paved the way for substantial reforms under the subsequent **Thatcher** (Conservative) government elected in 1979 – and a period of what is sometimes characterised as the “marketisation of education”. **Callaghan's** speech identified the necessity for two major educational reforms:

1. **Basic Skills:** It suggested schools were failing to instill “basic skills” in their pupils. As **Callaghan** stated: “I am concerned...to find complaints from industry that new recruits from schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job” (to put this in perspective, however, it should be noted that nearly 30 years later, following a period of arguably the greatest sustained level of educational development and change in our society's history “industry” is still making the same complaints...).

In 1978, the **Youth Opportunities Programme** (YOP) was introduced, aimed at 16-18 year old school leavers, paying a small allowance as part of its training programme. Interestingly, it was described at the time, by Albert **Booth** the Employment Secretary, as a “New Deal” for the young unemployed - an evocative echo of the American “New Deal” programmes of the 1930's credited with dragging America out of the deep economic recession of the period.

2. **Core curriculum:** It floated the idea of a “core curriculum of basic knowledge” (something that was subsequently introduced into the education system as the **National Curriculum** in 1988).

These ideas, it could be argued, set the agenda for the marketisation of the education system – a concept that relates to the application of New Right economic ideas to the cultural sphere of education.

The “marketisation of education” is not something that happened overnight; on the contrary it represents a gradual, and by no means complete, process over the past 25 or so years (both the **Blair** and **Brown** Labour governments have not only shown continuity with the reforms started by the **Thatcher** and **Major** Conservative governments, they have in many ways taken them a number of steps further). The main educational reforms and changes in the “Conservative Years” fall into two main areas:

1. Institutional freedom

involved the idea of “freeing” schools from the “bureaucracy” of Local Government control in a number of ways: **Boyd’s** (1991) characterisation of New Right thinking that we outlined in the opening section is instructive here because of the way it can be applied in this context. For example:

Disestablishment: City Technology Colleges - new schools specialising in the application of Information Technology to all aspects of the curriculum - were

introduced, partly-funded by private companies (at least in theory - some funding was forthcoming from a few wealthy individuals who supported the government’s New Right agenda, but the bulk of the expenditure came from government); around 20 such colleges were actually completed, although many more were originally intended.

Deregulation: The **Local Management of Schools** (LMS) initiative gave Head teachers and governing bodies direct control over how they spent the school budget. This, in turn, related to the idea of:

De-emphasis in the sense that LMS went some way towards giving the power to make at least some educational decisions to individual schools.

Decentralisation: Apart from **LMS** a further example of the decentralising tendency might be something like **Grant-Maintained** schools, directly funded by government, rather than through LEA’s (and local taxation). To encourage schools to “opt-out” of LEA control, very generous funding packages were offered, although very few schools actually took-on this new status.

Alongside these institutional developments two further notable policies were introduced in an attempt to provide parents with more information and choice about their children’s schooling:

Open enrolment policies were developed whereby popular and “successful” schools were allowed to expand at the expense of “unsuccessful” schools. Parents were, in theory, given more choice about where to send their children and LEA’s couldn’t set limits on school size to reduce parental choice.

A **Parents’ Charter** conferred the right to information from a school about its academic and social performance.

2. Curriculum development, on the other hand, focused on changes to what was taught (and in some respects how it should be taught) within the school – a good example here might be the:



From US President **Roosevelt** in the thirties through UK Prime Ministers **Thatcher** in the eighties, **Major** in the nineties to **Blair** in the noughties - politicians everywhere just love to sing to the ring of that New Deal thing...

Education Reform Act (1998) - a major curriculum development relating to the reforms it introduced. These included things like:

National curriculum: Strange as it may seem, the subjects taught in school were never specified by governments until 1988 (until this point, Religious Education was the only compulsory subject). The following table explains how the National Curriculum was originally constructed.

<p>1. “Core Subjects” 30 - 40% of the timetable</p>	<p>English Maths Science</p>
<p>2. “Non Core” subjects 50% of the timetable</p>	<p>Technology Music Art History Modern Foreign Language Geography Physical Education</p>
<p>3. Optional Subjects: 10% - 20% of timetable if required.</p>	<p>Religious Education etc.</p>
<p>Other Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A daily act of worship” of a “broadly Christian nature” (parents have the right to withdraw children from this). • Sex education • Citizenship Lessons added in 2003 	

Ball (1995) argues Conservative reforms tried to “...deconstruct the comprehensive, modernist curriculum and replace it with an...authoritative curriculum of tradition” - in other words, an attempt to specify a school curriculum that focused on learning “facts” and which gave central importance (by enshrining them in law) to traditional curriculum subjects such as Maths and Science. It was, almost

literally a “curriculum of the dead” because this is where its focus, according to **Bell**, lay - the distant past.

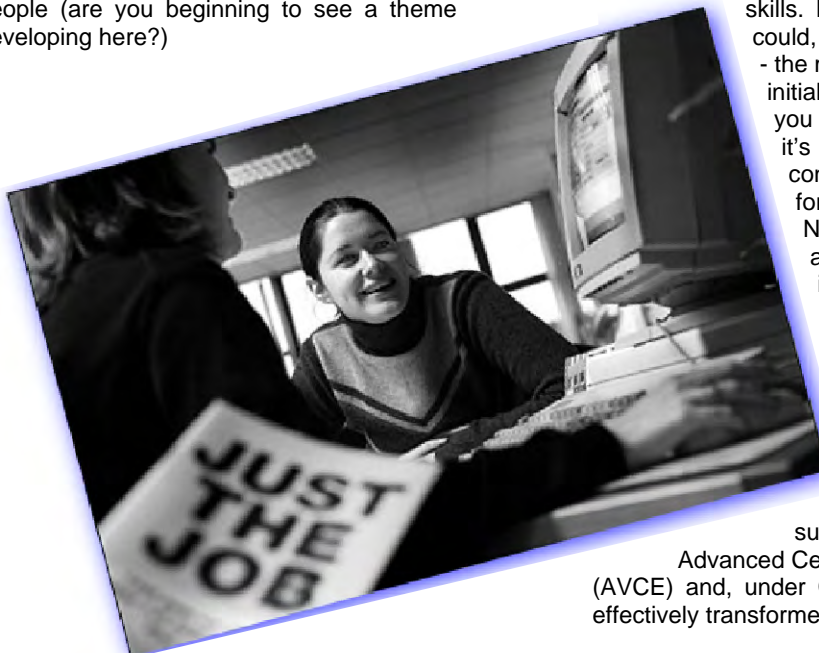
Key Stage testing was introduced at 7, 11 and 14 (Stages 1, 2 and 3 respectively). Key Stage 4 was GCSE. At the end of each Stage children were assessed - using *Standard Attainment Tests* (SATs) - against national “Assessment Targets” with the aim being to eventually ensure all children achieved a certain level of competence relative to their age. The original testing regime has been severely curtailed over the years - testing and teacher assessments of the *core* subjects (rather than *all* subjects) at Stages’ 1 - 3 are now the norm.

The New Vocationalism

Alongside these general reforms to the academic school curriculum a simultaneous development was that of the:

New Vocationalism: High levels of youth (especially school-leaver) unemployment in the early 1980’s led to the development of the *New Vocationalism* (presumably to differentiate it from the “Old Vocationalism” of the tripartite system). A new emphasis was placed on the idea of *training*, as opposed to *education* (remember the distinction we made earlier?); initially, the focus was on post-16 training, with some forms of vocationalism gradually introduced into the pre-16 curriculum. During the 1980s, a range of New Vocational schemes were started, developed...and discarded. These included:

Youth Training Schemes: Introduced in 1980 (as a development of YOPs) and aimed at unemployed school leavers, these offered job training with trainees receiving a small payment over-and-above any State benefits. This expansion of the Youth Opportunity Programme was described by James **Prior**, the then Employment Secretary, as a “New Deal” for young people (are you beginning to see a theme developing here?)



A New Dealer in Sheffield, 1998: Source: www.guardian.co.uk

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI): This initiative - piloted in 1982 and fully introduced in 1987 - marked an important development because it aimed to introduce technical / vocational education to 14 - 18 year olds *within* schools. As **Bell et al** (1988) noted at the time “TVEI remains unambiguously education-led”. TVEI was a collection of *initiatives* rather than a vocational curriculum, some of which came from government (the unlamented and short-lived “Records of Achievement” and “work experience”, for example) and some from schools (such as developing the use of Information Technology and equal opportunity schemes for expanding the number of women going into traditionally male forms of employment).

The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was originally introduced in 1983 as a one year, post-16, course and the intention was for it to be a logical vocational extension of the kind of TVEI courses developed within schools. In 1988, the “Youth Training Guarantee” required all unemployed 16 and 17 year olds to register with YTS - which was renamed “Youth Training” (YT) - for education or training.

Vocational Qualifications: Two forms of qualification were introduced in 1986; firstly, the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) - a one-year, post-16, course designed as a preparation for work or further vocational study – and, perhaps more significantly:

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) introduced the idea of *workplace competencies* - every job had a set of identifiable,

measurable, skills. Every job could, in theory, be vocationally certified - the main drawback, however, was you initially had to be doing a job before you could achieve the qualification (so it’s debateable how much NVQ contributed to “training”). However, for various reasons aspects of NVQ’s were introduced into schools and led, directly, to the introduction, in 1993, of:



General National Vocational Qualifications: GNVQs were offered at three levels - Foundation, Intermediate (equivalent to GCSE) and Advanced (equivalent to A-level). The latter was subsequently renamed the

Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE) and, under Curriculum 2000, they were effectively transformed into:

AS Sociology For AQA

Vocational A-levels: These are currently designed to mirror the conventional (GCE) A-level (in the sense they are available at AS / A2 and as a "Double Award") but are designed as the **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority** (2004) puts it "...to equip students with up-to-date knowledge, skills and understanding of the underpinning principles and processes of the sectors they represent". We can also note that, indirectly, the development of GNVQs led to the introduction of **Key Skills** with Curriculum 2000.

Modern Apprenticeships were introduced in 1995 for 18 - 19 year olds and linked to NVQ's. Although designed to be a "quality training scheme", an ironic note here is the reintroduction of apprenticeship training after it was effectively abolished by the Conservative government because it led to "restrictive labour market practices" (New Right-speak for Trade Union involvement).

Yeomans (2002) neatly summarises the focus of the New Vocationalism when he notes it reflected a general New Right belief that:

"Better vocational education and training
=
Greater individual productivity
=
Economic growth".

In respect of these two areas we can see two strands of New Right thinking coming together in the arena of education. On the one hand economic freedom, deregulation and a move away from government, bureaucratic, control and, on the other, a clear statement of moral intent – one that specified exactly what was to be taught to children...

The Conservative Years: Explanations

With the development of vocational education and the 1988 Reform Act we can see the influence of New Right thinking on education during this period, especially in terms of:

Role

The education system became more closely aligned with the needs of industry over this period, in terms of both the development of explicitly vocational elements and the range of subjects that schools could teach. The "core curriculum" of English, Maths and Science, in particular, was designed to satisfy employer-led demands for workers with "basic skills" of literacy and numeracy. At the time, some writers (such as **Lacey**, 1985) argued such *prescription* (that is, setting out the subjects that had to be taught in all State schools) would not improve the quality of education but, rather, result in greater bureaucracy. Opinions about the New Vocationalism are generally divided.

Education



Negative: For some, such as **Finn** (1988), youth training schemes involved:

- **Cheap labour** for employers to use for as short time and then discard without penalty.
- **Bonded labour** - "trainees" who left a job risked losing State benefits so they were effectively tied to a particular employer, whatever the conditions of the job.
- **Pretend jobs** - many trainees were either on "work creation schemes" devised and funded by government or in work offering no prospect of further employment once the "training period" was over (and the government subsidy ended).
- **Little training** - and certainly not in the skills required for work in a high technology, service-based, economy.
- **Hidden subsidies** that shifted the burden of training costs from employers to the taxpayer.

In addition, for Marxist writers such as **Bates et al** (1984) and **Bates and Riseborough** (1993), the New Vocationalism had a number of features:

- **Class division:** Most (white) middle class pupils followed the academic education route to higher pay, skill and status employment whereas (white and black) working class pupils were encouraged along the vocational route to lower paid / lower status work.
- **Social control:** Taking potentially troublesome unemployed youth "off-the-streets" and subjecting them to workplace discipline.
- **Lowering wages** for all young people by subsidising some employers.
- **Lowering unemployment** figures.

Feminist writers also criticised vocationalism for channelling girls into "traditional" female areas of the workforce - hairdressing, secretarial and "caring professional" work such as nursing.



Positive: Despite this general level of criticism – from a variety of sources and perspectives – not everyone saw the New Vocationalism in such a negative light. **Yeomans** (2002), for example, noted that the general political belief "...education in general, and vocational education in particular, will have an economic pay off remains strong and continues to have a powerful influence on the education policy of the major political parties".

Heath (1997) also suggested that something like TVEI helped involve women in areas of schooling (and eventually work) that were traditionally male preserves by insisting on equal opportunities.

Impact

Murray (2002) argues most of the 1988 Education Act's reforms, such as the development of City Technology Colleges and the ability of individual schools to "opt-out" of local government control (to be directly funded by central government), actually had very little impact on the education scene; the school curriculum didn't really change that much from the kinds of subjects that has always been taught in schools and Key Stage testing has generally been watered down over the years. However, one way Conservative government changes have impacted is by *setting the agenda* for subsequent educational reform under New Labour in the 1990s (as we will see in a moment).

Experience

One interesting thing to note in this context is how the changes just outlined reflect some of the contradictions in New Right thinking (contradictions which, it could be argued, have been carried through to New Labour's education policy in the 21st century). In this respect we can note two tendencies:

Economic liberalism, relating to control of school budgets and decision-making about teaching resources etc. One objective here seems to have been to remove schools from local government control and influence.

Centralized control of the 16 - 18 curriculum. Post-16 vocational training had, for example, a strong compulsory element (school-leavers who refused training could have State benefits removed) whereas, as we've noted, the secondary school curriculum (and eventually that of primary schools too) became increasingly *prescriptive*; what could be taught - and even how it was to be taught - was effectively decided by the government.

In this respect, **New Right** perspectives (like their **postmodern** counterparts) recognise the significance of economic change but, unlike the latter, want to retain highly centralised control over some areas of society (schools and family life for example). In some respects this tension between economic freedom and cultural control symbolises a central unresolved problem with the education system which, to paraphrase **Lea** (2001), involves the unanswered question "What are schools for?"

New Labour: Observations

1997 - Present

During the 1997 election campaign, when asked to name his "top three priorities", should a New Labour government be elected, Tony **Blair** replied "Education, Education, Education", something we mention not because it's particularly profound but rather because it symbolises an increasing State (government) *interest* in education over the past 25 years - but one that still reflects an ambivalence about the role of the State in the education system inherited from previous governments.

In this respect "the **Blair** (and now **Brown**) years" have been characterised, on one level, by a series of wide-ranging educational changes and adjustments and, on another, by the application of a set of broadly New Right principles to the general education system. We can begin this section, therefore, by documenting some of the educational changes made over the past decade in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Literacy and numeracy hours were introduced as part of the curriculum.

All primary pupils had to have one hour each day devoted to Reading and Writing. The prescriptive nature of the strategy (telling teachers *how* to teach as well as *what* to teach) was unique, at the time, for primary education.

Nursery education encouraged through tax credits for parents.

Class sizes of more than 30 children at Key Stage 1 were made illegal in 1997 (although it's debatable how strictly the law is enforced).

Curriculum 2000: A-levels split into two qualifications (AS and A2) and Key Skills introduced (**Main**

skills: Communication, Application of Number and IT. **Wider skills:** Improving Own Learning, Working with Others and Problem Solving) as part of a "basic skills" strategy.

Types of school: Within the Comprehensive system, school *diversity* has developed along the following lines:

- **Specialist schools** - specialising in a particular curriculum area (such as modern languages) can select up to 10% of their intake by "aptitude".
- **Beacon schools**, FE and 6th Form Colleges were, from late 1998, given increased funds to form partnerships with other schools and colleges in order to spread "**high quality teaching practice**". The basic idea here was that the "good teaching practices" that had made the Beacon school successful could be introduced and applied in "less successful schools".



Beacon Schools - rays of light in the educational darkness or just another expensive educational policy doomed to failure?

Module Link

Education

The Beacon School initiative / policy can be linked into ideas about **differential achievement**. The assumption underpinning this policy is that achievement flows from the way teaching and learning is organised and delivered (hence the idea of spreading “good practice”). In other words, failure to achieve is seen as the fault of teachers rather than the result of factors (such as social class or family attitudes) that are beyond the control of teachers.

• **Foundation schools** (as part of the “5 Year Strategy” - see below) will be allowed to set their own curriculum.

• **Academies** (the latest addition in a growing – and somewhat confusing - trend) were established in 2002 as “publicly funded independent schools” located in “areas of social and educational disadvantage”. The basic idea was that an Academy school would either replace one or more “failing schools” or be newly-established in areas where more school places were required. As with conventional Maintained schools (such as Comprehensive or Grammar schools) the *capital* costs (for example, the cost of building a new school) and *running* costs (teacher’s salaries, for example) are met by the government (through, currently, the **Department for Children, Schools and Families**).

However, a major (and controversial) difference between Academies and conventional schools was the fact that a private investor could sponsor an Academy and, in so doing, be given effect control over the school. For an investment of around 10% of the cost of creating an Academy (around £2 million - £3 million – the remained, as we’ve noted, is supplied by the government) a private individual or company is given control over areas like the curriculum (Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum) and governance of a school. Academies may also select up to 10% of their intake by aptitude. There are currently (2008) 83 academies with others planned to take the number to 200 by 2010.

Tomlinson Report (2004): This review of the 14 - 19 curriculum recommended, among other things, the reform of examinations such as GCSE and A-level into a *School Diploma* modeled on the International Baccalaureate. A more-detailed examination of the Report can be found at the end of this section.

Home-school agreements (where, since their introduction in 1998, parents promise to ensure their children attend school etc.) were made legally binding, although never enforced. These agreements have been largely superseded by things like the **Anti-Social Behaviour Act** (2003) under which

parents can (and have been) jailed for failing to ensure their child attends school. In Wolverhampton (2007) , for example, Dawn **Joyce** was jailed for two weeks for this offence.

Targets: Literacy strategy and learning targets were introduced (**Moser** Report, 1999).

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) introduced in 2004 for 16 year olds in full-time education. Payment depends on attendance (and progress)targets being met by individual students.

Performance Indicators (commonly known as *League Tables*) were expanded to include all primary and secondary schools in England (Scotland and Wales abolished such tables). Based initially on GCSE / A-level results and, increasingly, Key Stage assessment test results, these tables have been extensively criticised for their bias in favour of schools with selective intakes (Public and Grammar schools) and against schools with high levels of SEN (“Special Educational Needs”) and Free School Meals (FSM) children. To counter-act this in-built disadvantage, the government now publishes “Value-Added” League Tables measuring progress (rather than actual level of achievement) made by a pupil between, for example Key Stage 3 and 4.

An important aspect of the current government’s educational strategy revolves around the concept of:

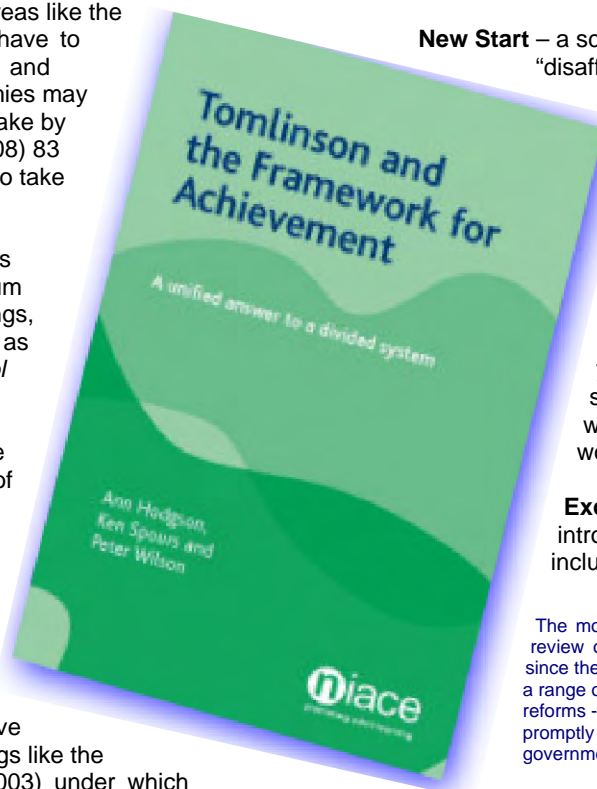
Social inclusion – an idea evidenced in a range of social contexts (from crime to poverty) but one particularly focused on the education system. Inclusion, in this respect, relates to such things as attempting to improve attainment levels amongst the lowest achievers to increasing retention rates, preventing and limiting truancy and so forth. Under this general heading, therefore, we can outline a range of initiatives:

New Start – a scheme aimed to target “disaffected or underachieving” 14 -17 year olds by encouraging schools to develop new ways of motivating such pupils.

Vocational Training: “Disaffected” 14 - 16 year olds allowed to spend part of the school week at FE College or work experience.

Excellence in Cities (2000) introduced a range of ideas, including: Learning Mentors

The most wide-ranging and radical review of the secondary curriculum since the 1944 Education Act proposed a range of curriculum developments and reforms - the vast majority of which were promptly ignored by the Labour government...



and Support Units, City Learning Centres, more Beacon and Specialist schools, support for Gifted and Talented pupils and small **Education Action Zones** (that involve clusters of Primary and Secondary schools joining forces with parents, LEA's and local business to improve educational services).

Sure Start (2000) programmes were designed to improve services to poorest pre-school children and families to prevent truancy and increase achievement. Additional schemes were subsequently aimed at pregnant teenagers to help them back to education / employment.

Extended Schools: Following an American model, schools offer a range of services / facilities (crèches, support for parents, curriculum and leisure opportunities for pupils outside the traditional school timetable) to engage pupils and parents in their child's education. **Wilkin et al** (2002) found a positive impact on "attainment, attendance and behaviour" by offering activities that increased "engagement and motivation".

Tried and Tested

- Explain what is meant by the term "New Vocationalism" (2 marks).
- Identify and briefly explain **three** criticisms of the "New Vocationalism" (6 marks).
- Outline some of the educational policies introduced over the past 25 years aimed at improving the educational achievement of *either* working class boys *or* ethnic minorities (12 marks).
- Assess the view that educational policies over the past 25 years have had little or no effect on levels of educational achievement (20 marks).

Vocational Education

As part of the general **social inclusion** agenda, vocational education has once again come to the fore over the past few years – culminating, perhaps, in the wide-ranging **Tomlinson Report** (2004) – whose content and impact we outline below. Whether we consider vocational changes in terms of the **New "New Vocationalism"** (a radical departure from previous attempts to reform vocational education) or simply an extension of existing vocational initiatives, a number of developments are worthy of mention:

Integrating provision has involved attempts to link post-16 training more-closely with school and work. National Traineeships, for example, were an early introduction, designed to provide a link between school-leaving and Modern Apprenticeships.

New Deal: With a name showing either a distinct lack of imagination or a touching triumph of hope over expectation, this required all unemployed under 25's to take either a subsidised job, voluntary work or full time education / training.



Nice logo. Shame about the policy?

The New Deal has increasingly focused on so-labelled "NEET's" – those 16 – 18 year olds "Neither in Education, Employment nor Training". According to the government's **Social Exclusion Unit** (1999) "At any one time, 9% of 16 to 18-year-olds are not taking part in learning or work. This rate has remained fairly constant since 1994".



Caton's (2002) research suggests this group are drawn *predominantly* (but not exclusively) from "lower socio-economic groups" – an observation reinforced by **Linklater** (2007) who notes: "...more boys at Eton [one of the top Private schools in the UK] get five good GCSEs than the entire borough of Hackney" (one of the most economically-deprived areas of London).

Careers: All schools must provide careers education for 13 - 18 year old pupils. "**ConneXions**" (the funkily-renamed "Investors in Young People" careers' service) was introduced - with a 'cool' name, presumably to appeal to "The Kids" (a further example, if you're interested, of the power of labelling...).

Education to Employment (or "e2e" as the government insists on calling it - probably in yet another misguided attempt to "get down with da Kidz") was established in 2003 as a "development programme" aimed primarily at NEETs. The basic idea was, in effect, to combine various aspects of past (largely failed) schemes to provide a kind of "rounded package" encompassing both study for educational qualifications and work placements. Although one aim of the scheme is to get young people into work it also means that those who leave school with few, if any, qualifications can progress to schemes like Apprenticeships or Further Education.

Although this type of scheme probably avoids some of the worst aspects of the earlier “youth training schemes” identified by **Finn** (1988) it’s by no-means clear how successful this integrated policy (combining education with work training) has been – or will – be.

Providers: Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) were replaced by the **Learning and Skills Council** (LSC) whose role was, amongst other things, that of coordinating educational provision locally and nationally - encouraging, for example, schools and FE colleges to develop links, exchange services (and in some cases students) and the like.

Work experience was expanded to a 2-week placement for all State maintained school pupils. As part of increased vocational awareness, pupils were also to be taught “job skills” such as interview techniques.

Vocational GCSEs were introduced to replace Intermediate GNVQs and, as we’ve seen earlier, vocational A-levels were subsequently introduced to replace Higher GNVQs.

Further Education

The **Dearing Report** (1997) was a major review of Conservative education policy that led to changes in Key Stage testing by the subsequent (**Blair**) Labour government. It also indirectly laid the ground for the proposed reform of the 14 - 19 curriculum set-out in the eagerly-awaited and lukewarm-received **Tomlinson Report** (2004). **Dearing** also recommended university students should be charged for their tuition fees (so you know who to blame).

Teaching and Higher Education Act (1998): This created a new system of student loans and fees. Student grants were largely abolished but “poorer families” were exempted from fees after political

criticism that working class students would be unfairly penalised.

Participation: A target of 50% of those under-30 to “experience Higher Education” (whatever that actually means) by 2010 was set. At the time of writing (2008) whether or not this will be achieved probably depends on how the phrase is interpreted (it probably doesn’t mean all of these students will necessarily be studying for a degree).

Just prior to their subsequent re-election (2004), the Labour Party issued two strategy documents detailing their policy plans to 2015 (something that assumes a further term of office in government),.

1. Five Year Strategy

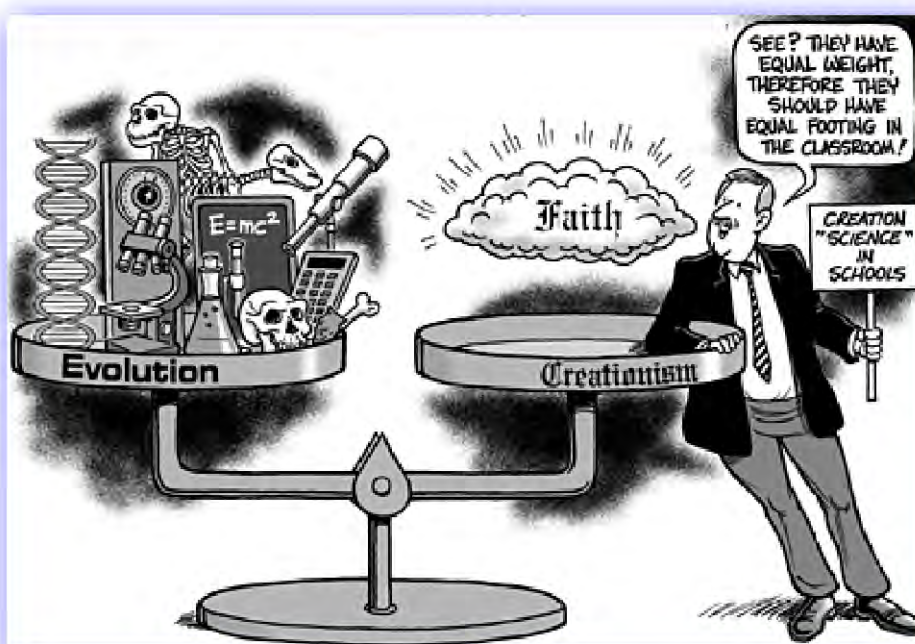
The first part of the long-term educational strategy involved commitments to develop:

Providers: Greater private industry involvement in the funding, owning and running of schools (the aforementioned Academies). Whereas previously there were certain limitations on who could set up a new school (Muslim groups, for example, could not apply for government funding for faith schools in the way that the Church of England could) new providers can potentially be drawn from parent groups, private businesses and religious organisations – something that has sparked both political and educational controversy; the former because, for a relatively small outlay religious organisations can effectively control the ethos of a school and the latter because of curriculum changes to some Academy schools.

Taylor and Smithies (2005), for example, reported that “Four out of the 10 new schools opening this week are backed by Christian organisations and almost half of those under development are due to be sponsored by religious groups of some sort”. One such Academy was

sponsored by “The Emmanuel Schools Foundation, an evangelical Christian group which has been linked to the teaching of creationism”.

Personalised learning will expand, with the objective being to “tailor the curriculum” to the needs of each individual pupil. Although the government has suggested that each child should have an “individualised learning plan” for each lesson it’s by



no means clear how this might work. In addition, any attempt to implement such provision would raise serious **labelling** issues or the kind seen in the Grammar / Secondary Modern debate (would those perceived as being of “lower ability”, for example, have their education tailored to these lower teacher expectations?).

Schools: The aim is to expand “good schools” and close “failing schools” (replacing them with Academies). Greater control over attendance and behaviour has been introduced, part of which involves the expectation every school will have a uniform and code of conduct. The “extended schools” experiment will itself be extended and Specialist schools will be allowed to develop a second “specialism”.

1. Ten Year Strategy

Looking further into the future, the:

Tomlinson Report (2004) was initially intended to form the basis for wide-ranging reform of the 14 - 19 curriculum and, as such, it's worth outlining the Report's main recommendations (even though these have not been implemented by the government – or, at least, not implemented as part of the overall educational strategy developed by **Tomlinson**). The basic recommendations were a:

Diploma framework - “...to replace existing 14-19 qualifications including A levels, AS levels, AVCEs, BTECs and GCSEs”. There will be 4 levels of attainment:

- **Entry.** Achievement at each level is recorded as a *pass*, *merit* or *distinction* and “Detailed performance records would be available to teachers, employers, universities and colleges, recording the grades achieved in particular components of the diploma”.
- **Foundation.**
- **Intermediate.**
- **Advanced.**

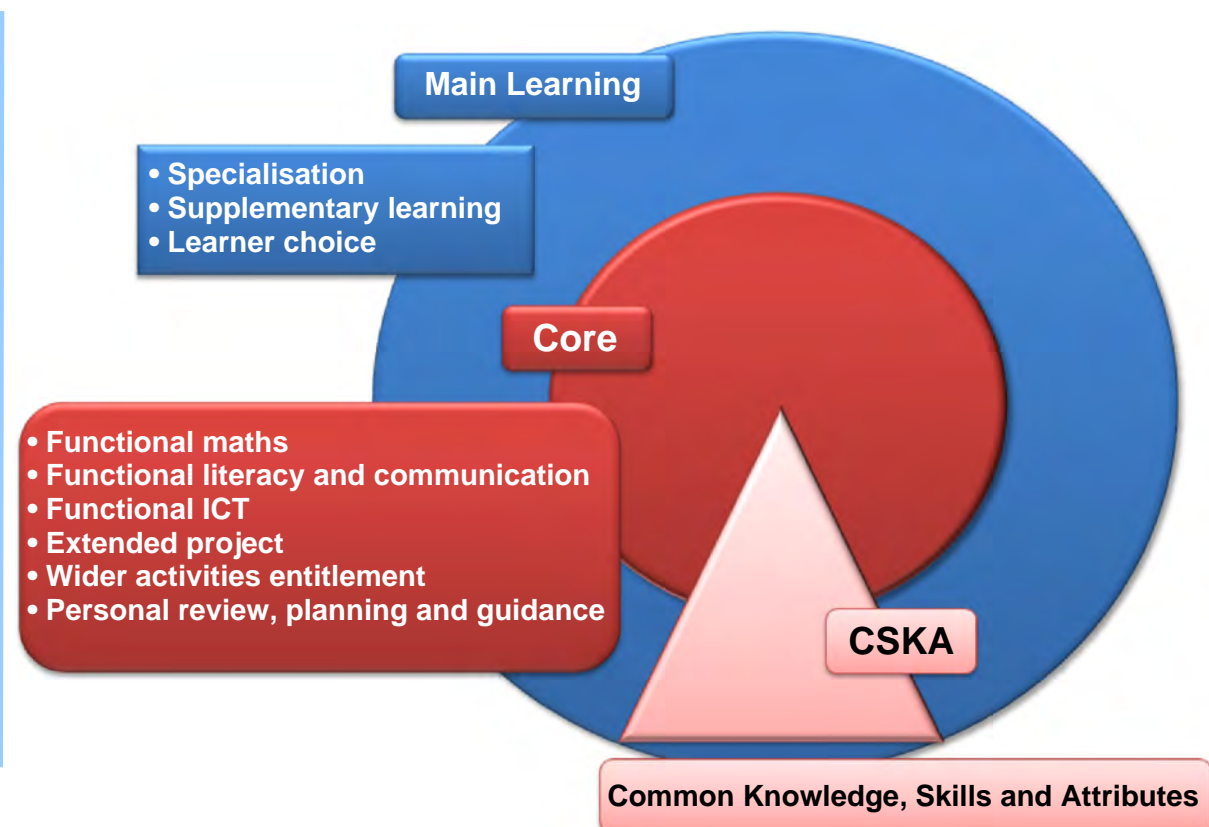
As the following chart demonstrates, the diploma is built around three areas:

1. Main Learning: Most time would be spent on these subjects (whatever they would eventually turn out to be).

2. Core Learning: The focus here is on students gaining “a minimum standard in functional *communication*, *mathematics* and *ICT* for each diploma”. An extended project (to replace “most externally assessed coursework”) would be part of all core learning, as would participation in “*sports*, *arts*, *work experience* and *community service*...participation would be recorded on the diploma, but would not be compulsory”. Personal reviews and evaluations of learning would also feature here.

3. CKSA: The focus here is the development of skills (problem solving, teamwork and study skills, for example), rights and responsibilities, active citizenship, ethics and diversity.

Diploma Framework suggested by the **Tomlinson Report** (2004)



National Curriculum (14 -16) subjects would be retained as options within the diploma. However, the Report proposed "...up to 20 subject mixes. Young people could choose an 'open' diploma with a subject mix similar to GCSEs and A level combinations. Alternatively they could choose a diploma specialising in an employment sector or academic discipline".

Vocational education and training can be either integrated into "open diplomas" (mixed with academic subjects, for example) or followed as distinct "vocational pathways" (routes through the various options and qualifications). In theory, "schools and colleges, working with training providers, could tailor programmes to each young person's needs and abilities" which, in turn, is seen by **Tomlinson** as a way of tackling social exclusion (in the form of "disengagement and poor behaviour").

Assessment: An interesting notion here is that "students sit too many external exams". The proposal, therefore, is for fewer external tests and more teacher assessment, although formal exams would be retained and "External exams would also remain in the advanced diploma as well as for communication, mathematics and ICT in each diploma". Potential problems of *teacher labelling* and *stereotyping* impacting on their assessments of pupils would be resolved using a system of external moderators who would sample teacher assessments.

Although the **Tomlinson Report** provoked a great deal of political discussion (and criticism - for some the Diploma Framework was simply a restatement of the already existing International Baccalaureate) its recommendations were never, as such, implemented. However, it's probably fair to say that aspects of the Report have started to resurface on the educational agenda in a couple of ways:

1. 14 – 19 curriculum: The reorganisation of the school curriculum has been mooted for a number of years and the government has begun to take steps to make this a reality in a couple of ways:

2. School leaving age: The current (2008) suggestion is that *compulsory schooling* should be extended to 18, partly to try to resolve the problem of "NEETs" we noted earlier and partly to accommodate:

3. Diplomas: Perhaps the most radical recent development is that of Diploma qualifications designed as a 14 – 19 pathway to a particular qualification (that is, students taking the Diploma route effectively by-pass GCSE and A-level because the Diploma qualification, at different levels, is equivalent to these qualifications).

The more astute will notice the uncanny resemblance of the new Diplomas to the proposals laid-out in the

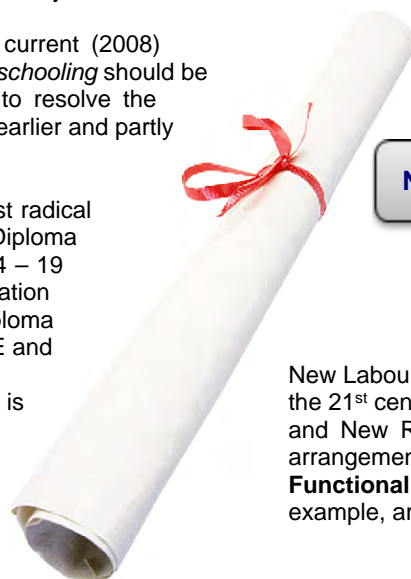
What Is A Diploma?

Source: **Department for Children, Schools and Families** (2007)

Components	Characteristics
Principal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the industry title of the Diploma • Learning that is related to the sector of the economy • Learning that is designed and endorsed by industry
Core content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the assessment of Functional Skills in English, mathematics and ICT • Develops a student's employability skills of teamwork and self management • Gives the student the opportunity to produce an extended project • Requires at least 10 days' compulsory work experience
Additional and / or specialist learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for the student to specialise • Allows for the student to choose more qualifications • Allows for flexibility and choice of learning

Tomlinson Report. A major – and crucial – difference however is that Diplomas are intended to sit *alongside*, rather than *replace* (as **Tomlinson** suggested), all other post-14 qualifications. They are effectively in *competition* with GCSE and A-level qualifications (both academic and vocational). and arguably help to maintain, rather than reduce, the academic – vocational divide.

Opinion relating to the likely effectiveness of the new Diplomas is, as you might expect, divided. On the one hand they're seen as just another reshuffling of the vocational pack (they are, in effect, just GNVQs by another name); on the other they're seen as representing a Trojan Horse that can be gradually introduced into the education system as a way of loosening the grip GCSE and GCE have on exam market and, in effect, undermining the "academic" / "vocational" divide in schools and colleges. In this scenario Diplomas will gradually replace GCSE / GCE and they represent the "implementation of Tomlinson by the back door", so to speak.



New Labour: Explanations

Role

New Labour policies shaping the role of education in the 21st century reflect a range and mix of Functionalist and New Right perspectives and ideas (an arrangement sometimes characterised as a **Neo-Functionalist** perspective). **Functionalist** ideas, for example, are reflected in areas like:

Social solidarity: One of New Labour's major concerns has been with *social exclusion* (a form of *Underclass* theory linking educational underachievement, crime, delinquency and poverty). Education policy, therefore, has focused on things like: measures to combat truancy, the introduction of Extended schools as a way of involving all sections of the community in the educational process and the development of different types of schools (Specialist, Foundation, Academies and so forth) as a way to raise achievement among the worst performing (academically) sections of society. Vocational forms of education have also been developed as a means of raising achievement through social inclusion.



Are social policies that promote competition within and between schools compatible with policies designed to promote social inclusion?

Social Integration: Measures such as school uniforms, codes of conduct and home - school agreements are classic *integrating mechanisms*, designed to promote social solidarity. The development of Extended schools also reflects the idea that involving parents in the education of their children helps to control behaviour and increase achievement.

New Right perspectives, on the other hand, are increasingly reflected in ideas like:

Marketisation strategies - the way to improve educational performance is to "open schools up" to commercial influences. This involves a range of initiatives, from commercial funding of school building (the **Building Schools for the Future** programme (2005) for example, involves capital spending by both the government and private industry, whereas the **Seed Challenge** initiative involves capital spending by government on a school if the school can attract "matching funds" from non-government sources) to commercial firms actually owning and running schools. Critics of such involvement - such as **Davies and Adnett** (1999) - point to a couple of potential problems:

Curriculum innovation decreases because of uncertainty about its success or failure (and, in particular, the consequences of getting it wrong). In a commercial (and commercialised) world education companies opt for the "safe option" when it comes to curriculum development; in other words, they generally follow the National Curriculum.

Burden of change: This falls disproportionately on those schools with the *least* resources to innovate successfully. In situations where schools are effectively in competition with each other for pupils it's much harder for poorer resourced schools to compete with their newer and better resourced competitors.

In addition, we can also note:

Long-term planning is inhibited by the need to produce "instant improvements".

Competition between schools for pupils may actually decrease innovation and improvement because schools simply develop ways of attracting a limited pool of "high ability, high motivation" pupils.

Informed Consumers: One problem with the idea of *consumers*

(parents to you and me) being able to pick-and-choose

schools is that equality of opportunity is more apparent than real. For example, if a school is over-subscribed with applications (more parents want their children to go to that school than it has places available) and it cannot expand, the provider (a school), rather than the consumer, may end up choosing which pupils it accepts.

The experience of school performance (League) tables is a good example of how consumer choice may be limited. The rationale for the *hierarchical ranking* of schools (one on top of the other) is to allow consumers to judge the effectiveness of their local schools. However, such tables may lack **validity** for several reasons:

- **Special Educational Needs:** Schools with high numbers of SEN pupils have a lower average academic performance.
- **Resources** are not distributed equally across all schools (inner city Comprehensives, for example, fare worse in this respect than rural / suburban Public or grammar schools).

Competition between schools: Is the playing field level?



- **Social class** factors, rather than what happens within a school, may have more influence on exam results. Schools with large numbers of working class children, for example, achieve less on average than schools with a largely middle class intake.

- **Exam values:** Schools develop ways of “improving performance” by manipulating exam entry. They may, for example, be reluctant to accept lower class pupils (who, historically, perform least well educationally); greater time, effort and teaching resources may be given to “marginal students” (those who, with extra help can achieve 5 A-C GCSE grades) at the expense of pupils considered unlikely to reach this target.

- **Self-fulfilling Prophecies:** High ranking schools attract more middle-class pupils who, historically, achieve most educationally and, therefore, attract the next cohort of middle-class pupils...

The general trend towards the marketisation of education has, **Rutherford** (2003) argues, altered the historic role of the education system on the basis that “Education and training is changed from the social provision of a public good, into a services market involving private transactions between customers and providers”.

Impact

Changes to educational provision have impacted on both providers and consumers in a number of ways:

Commercial input into school building and ownership.

Centralised direction of the school curriculum, teaching methods, what pupils should wear to school and so forth.

Failing schools and the consequences of not meeting (centralised) government performance targets.

Competition between schools for pupils (especially those pupils with the “right” attitudes and motivations).

Experience

While it’s difficult to evaluate the experience of schooling, we can note a number of developments:

Social inclusion has involved attempts to both increase levels of achievement and to ensure pupils from social groups who have, historically, been largely excluded from schooling are reintegrated into the system.

Training: Greater emphasis, in recent years, has been placed on the relationship between education and work. While this has positive aspects (allowing students to follow vocational courses closely integrated to their



Institute for Research in Integrated Strategies (2005):

League tables encourage parents to “shop around” for primary and secondary schools.

Church primary schools in England admit fewer children from poorer homes.

needs and preferences) it also has rather less positive consequences in terms of:

Selecting students for “vocational training” in ways that perpetuate class, gender and ethnic inequalities (boys and girls funneled into traditionally male / female forms of vocational employment).

Specialisation at a too early age: With vocational education and training it’s difficult for pupils to decide to change part-way through a course since they are effectively committed to a particular type of occupation.

Training that doesn’t particularly match the changed economic situation (for example, vocational training that doesn’t include high levels of ICT).

Academic / vocational class divides in our educational system are perpetuated (in crude terms, middle class pupils receive a high status academic education and the rest don’t).

Curriculum changes: Some changes can, once again, be viewed in a generally positive light. **Fielding** (2001), for example, has noted opportunities for student involvement in the teaching and learning process through a variety of curriculum initiatives (including, perhaps, the requirement on schools to teach Citizenship). Attempts to simplify the school curriculum by offering different routes through the school (in terms of academic / vocational subjects, Foundation, Intermediate and Higher levels and so forth) may help to clarify pupil choices and the introduction of the school Diploma may also broaden pupil experience by widening their choice of subjects. Conversely, however, **Fielding** also notes a conflicting tendency within schools; the over-emphasis on exam performance and education as a series of “measurable outcomes”, serves to limit both choice and channel pupils into an increasingly narrow set of educational experiences.

Tried and Tested

(a) Explain what is meant by the term the “marketisation of education” (2 marks).

(b) Suggest **three** ways that schools have become marketised over the past 10 years (6 marks).

(c) Outline some of the reasons for the marketisation of education over the past 25 years (12 marks).

(d) Assess the extent to which the role, impact and experience of schooling has been changed by marketisation policies (20 marks).

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4. Relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/pupil relationships, pupil subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning.

Relationships and Processes: Observations

Although we've touched, in previous sections, on some of these ideas we need to develop them in more detail to arrive at a rounded picture of education in our society – hence the need to look more specifically at the relationships and processes involved within the school. A further point to note, in this respect, is that until this point we've largely focused on the institutional aspects of education (the general role of education and training, government policies designed to shape education systems and the like); this section redresses the balance in this respect by looking more closely at what goes on "inside school walls"...

The Organisation of Teaching and Learning

We can categorise these processes in terms of two main ideas:

1. Social organisation refers to how education is organised in terms of things like the educational policies we examined in the previous section. For example, one aspect of the UK education system is that it is based around a series of public examinations (both academic and vocational) that students are expected to have achieved by a certain age. The social organisation of education, therefore, sets the basic context for the:

2. Sociological organisation of teaching and learning, which involves examining areas like:

School and classroom

organisation: how is teaching and learning physically organised?

Exams...Practice exams...practicing Practice Exams...

Curriculum

organisation: for example, what must be taught in schools (something we've previously touched on).

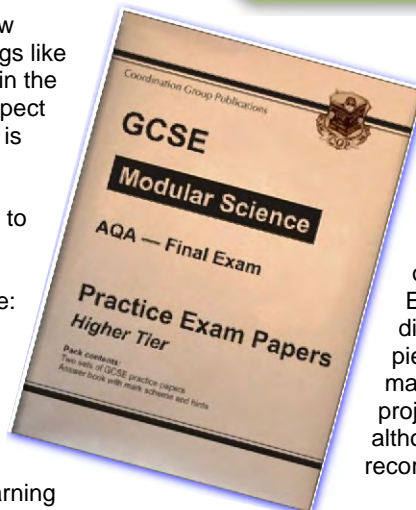
Socialisation and social control: How is it established and exercised?

Teaching styles: Are there different theories and styles of teaching?

Learning styles: Are there different theories and styles of learning?

When we start to look at the various ways teaching and learning is organised within schools in the contemporary UK one thing that initially strikes us as interesting is that, for all the undoubted changes in our society over the past 100 or so years, there are a range of similarities and continuities between the organisation of teaching and learning at the start of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century. For example, a few we could not might be:

- Education takes place in designated buildings (schools and classrooms) at designated times.
- Children are taught by teachers (adults).
- Teaching takes place in age-defined groups.
- Pupils are periodically tested on the things they are supposed to have learned.
- Pupils generally wear some kind of uniform.



There are, of course, some obvious differences between Then and Now: relationships with teachers may be friendlier and their style of teaching different; discipline is very different - corporal punishment (physical beating) is no longer allowed - and, of course, the technology of the Edwardian classroom was very different - writing with chalk on a piece of slate probably doesn't quite match today's computers, data projectors and electronic whiteboards - although most students probably still record their work in ink, on paper.

These continuities and differences tell us something about the nature of teaching and learning in our society (in particular, perhaps, the relationship between social structures and social actions) something we can start to develop by thinking about how the teaching and learning process is generally organised – starting with the idea of:

Social Structures: By and large, schools are *hierarchical structures*, not only in terms of the power / authority relationship between adults (teachers, administrative and support staff) and pupils (who, by-and-large, have very little power within schools and are consequently unable to officially influence the teaching

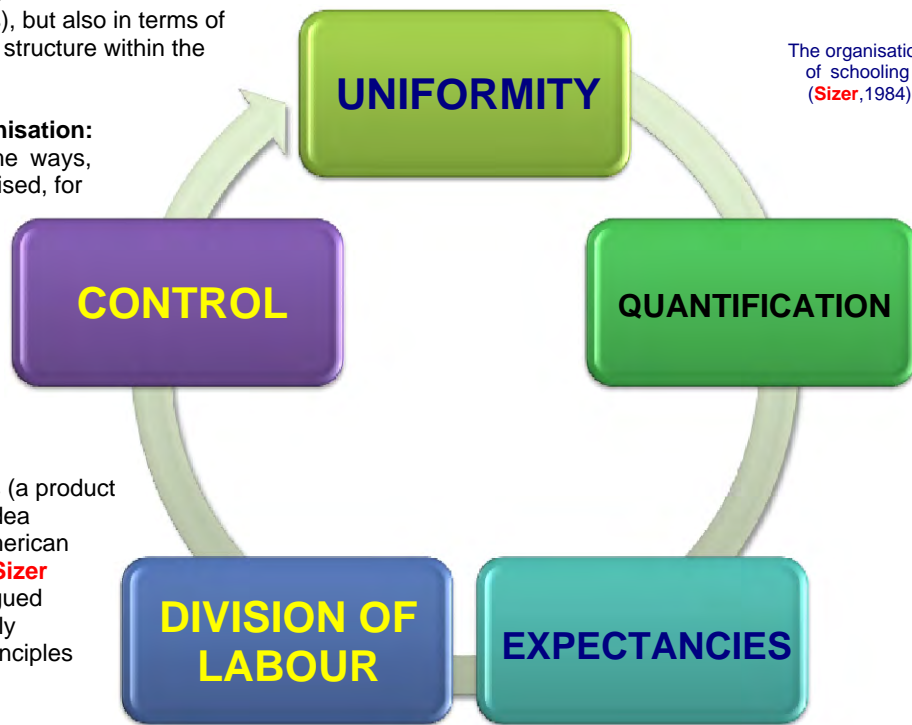
and learning process), but also in terms of the general authority structure within the school.

The organisation of schooling (Sizer, 1984)

Bureaucratic Organisation:

Schools are, in some ways, bureaucracies organised, for teaching and learning purposes, around basic principles designed to maximise their efficiency as *people processors*. In other words, schools are:

Modern institutions (a product of **modernity**) an idea expressed by the American educationalist Ted **Sizer** (1984) when he argued schools are generally organised around principles of:



a. Uniformity: They operate, in other words, with little concern for the needs of individuals (teachers or learners) and emphasise a narrow definition of achievement (how many tests are successfully passed) rather than the quality of student understanding.

d. Division of Labour: This is highly *fragmented* (split into small parts) and tightly *controlled*. The school day, for example, is divided into rigid lessons and what is taught is not open to negotiation.

b. Quantification is the main way the *value* of a school, its teachers and its students is expressed. "Success" is measured in exam passes and League Table position.

e. Control: Individual responsibility is limited, learning is controlled (by the needs of the curriculum (see below) and testing regimes, for example) and there's little scope for individual development or expression. Students are generally expected to learn similar things, at similar times, in similar ways.

c. Expectancies: Schools (and by extension teachers and students) are set targets, determined at a national, government, level, for student learning (all 16 year olds, for example, should have achieved 5 A*- C grades at GCSE).

Whether or not your experience of schooling fits exactly (or even inexactly) with the ideas we've just noted, have a look at the following examples of two different educational philosophies about how teaching and learning should be organised:

Summerhill School
(founded by A.S. Neill in 1921)

Schooling Norms	Schooling Values
Children can follow their own interests	Provide an environment so children can define who they are and what they want to be.
No compulsory assessments or lessons	No pressure to conform to artificial standards of success based on predominant theories of child learning and achievement.
Free to play when and how they like	Spontaneous, natural play not undermined or redirected by adults into a learning experience for children.
All school rules and decisions made democratically by children and adults	Create values based on the community. Problems are discussed and resolved openly and democratically.

Day-attendance fees range from £3,000 – £7,000
Boarding fees range from £6,700 to £11,700 depending on the age of the student.
<http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk>

Rudolf Steiner School: Kings Langley:
<http://www.rudolfsteiner.herts.sch.uk/>

“The school curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the child at each stage of their development. Children enter classes according to their age rather than academic ability and the teacher is free to present subject material in an individual way that aims to awaken and enthuse the children, encouraging them to discover and learn for themselves. In this way the child is not educated solely in the '3 Rs' but also in the '3 Hs' - Hand, Heart, Head - the practical, feeling and thinking capacities”.

Secondly, the *relevance* of the curriculum - in terms of the usefulness or otherwise of what is taught - is rarely questioned, although, having said that, **White** (2003) has argued: “Many subjects are bogged down in values held over 100 years ago. They need to be freed from the dead weight of custom and from the shackle of the assessment system before they can focus on what is really important”. He argues, for example:

- **History** contains little of relevance to the 21st century.
- **Science** is laboratory-based, employing techniques no scientist currently uses (the Bunsen burner!)
- **Music** - one of the most important aspects of pupil culture - is reduced to the study of dead, white, European classical composers.

Curriculum: The teaching and learning process in schools is constrained by the nature of the school curriculum, in terms of what can or can't be taught. Two things are useful to note here. Firstly, how little the school curriculum has actually changed over the past 100 or so years. Compare, for example, the National Curriculum subjects noted in the previous section with:

Continuing in this questioning vein, the **Royal Society for the Arts** (1998) has argued a curriculum for the 21st century should be based around five “competencies”:

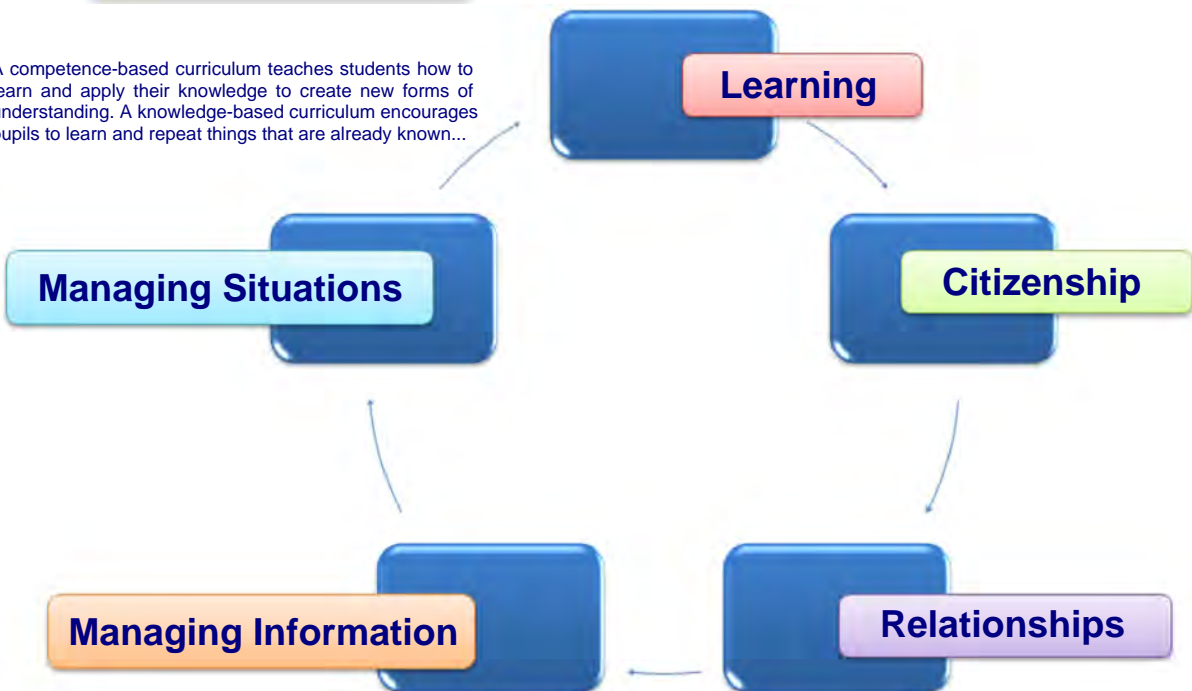
The Board of Education Curriculum 1904

English
 Maths
 Science
 History
 Drawing

Manual Work (boys)
 Domestic subjects (girls)
 Physical Exercise
 Foreign Language
 Geography
 Music added shortly afterwards

- 1. Learning**
Being taught how to learn, think and critically reflect.
- 2. Citizenship**
Focusing on behaviour, rights and responsibilities.
- 3. Relationships**
Understanding how to relate to others.
- 4. Managing Situations**
Dealing with change and so forth.
- 5. Managing Information**
How to access and judge the value of different sources.

A competence-based curriculum teaches students how to learn and apply their knowledge to create new forms of understanding. A knowledge-based curriculum encourages pupils to learn and repeat things that are already known...



The main implication we can draw from the above is the argument that the contemporary school curriculum is bound up in practices and values that belong to another era; that is, the type of subject-based curriculum developed at the beginning of the 20th century is no longer relevant or useful to the changing needs and requirements of the 21st century.

Contemporary British society has changed beyond all recognition from the British society of a century ago – there is no area of social life (family, work, politics, religion, media and so forth) where the two are remotely comparable - except perhaps one: the education system that insists on organising the teaching and learning process in a way, so the argument goes, more appropriate to the needs of the Britain of the nineteenth century than to the globalised, technologically sophisticated, world in which we increasingly live, work and play.

There are, of course, many reasons for this state of affairs – but a primary reason relates to the organisation of the curriculum into subjects that have their own particular body of knowledge that must be learned before it can be applied. This subject-based organisation leads, in turn, to a general *resistance to change* amongst those who have the most to lose from such change – the teachers and academics whose power-base resides in their control of particular forms of knowledge. This observation, therefore, leads us towards thinking about different possible styles of teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Although we've just suggested schools are bureaucratic institutions that don't seem to have changed much over the past century in terms of how they organise knowledge and information, in recent years a great deal of work has gone into thinking about how teachers teach and students learn.

Technology: The impact of new technologies (the Internet, interactive white boards, video conferencing, CD and DVD-Rom's and so forth) on teaching styles should not be underestimated since, although it may be much the same old curriculum, technology opens up new ways to teach and learn (although we are, of course, only at the beginning of any exploration of how such technology impacts on the organisation of

teaching and learning).

Neuroscience: A range of initiatives have appeared in schools in recent years, mainly focused around ideas about how the brain functions (**Asthana** (2007), for example, reports on research purporting to claim that "Girls at single-sex schools out-perform those at mixed ones because teachers tailor their lessons to suit the female brain"). These include developments in **learning styles** (differences in the way students process information - visually, verbally and the like) and how this might be applied to improve attainment. Similarly, questions about the nature of intelligence are being asked through something like **Gardner's** (2003) concept of **multiple intelligences** that argues students possess a range of "intelligences" (Interpersonal, emotional, musical and so forth) as well as the ones (language, mathematical and spatial) traditionally recognised and tested in schools. Thought has also been given to how students understand and process information – with use at various levels of schooling being made of concepts like **De Bono's** (1985) "Six Thinking Hats" – different "hats" represent different ways of looking at a problem.

Although, as **Howard-Jones et al** (2007) note, "Current teacher training programmes generally omit the science of how we learn, an overwhelming number of the teachers surveyed felt neuroscience could make an important contribution in key educational areas" their research found that much of what passed for an understanding of "brain-based learning programmes" in schools (teaching and learning styles, "brain gyms" and the like) was actually based on supporting evidence "whose science is now seriously contested". In other words, these innovative ways of teaching and learning are generally supported only by impressionistic evidence (the teachers who use them believe they work), not by solid scientific research. This raises at least two important questions:

The Red Hat
"Feelings, hunches and intuitions".



The White Hat
Information known or needed ("the facts").



The Black Hat
Judgments, weaknesses, limitations - why something may not work.

"Six Thinking Hats"
Edward **De Bono** (1985).



The Yellow Hat
Exploring the positives, the advantages and uses.



The Blue Hat
Control of the thinking process.



The Green Hat
Creativity. Exploring possibilities, alternatives and new ideas.

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Firstly, to what extent do innovative styles of teaching and learning actually *improve* student attainment (outside of what is known, methodologically, as the “**expectancy effect**” - the idea that because we believe something works we see it working when it’s applied – the results reported by **Asthana** (2007), for example, strongly suggest just such an effect at work here)?

Secondly, if the research on which some innovations are based is, at best, untested and, at worst, highly questionable (**Coffield et al** (2004), for example, examined 13 learning styles tests and found that “...only two of them could be recommended in higher education and none that were immediately relevant for post-16.”) it follows there is the possibility such innovation could do more harm than good. For example, on the basis of learning styles tests children are frequently categorised as a “particular type of learner” (visual or aural, for example), a practice that clearly runs the danger of **negative labelling** and **stereotyping**.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of how teaching and learning is organised within a school.

- (i) Overt Participant Observation.
- (ii) Focused Interviews (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term the “teaching and learning styles” (2 marks).
- (b) Identify and explain two ways that new technology has impacted on teaching and learning in British schools (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the curriculum changes and continuities in British education over the past century (12 marks).
- (d) “The organisation of schooling in Britain reflects the needs and wishes of the powerful, rather than the needs of children”. Assess the extent to which this is an accurate representation of the British educational system (20 marks).

The Hidden Curriculum

Jackson (1968) argued the hidden curriculum involves the things we learn from the experience of attending school. It is, therefore, a form of socialisation process, involving a mix of formal and informal techniques. **Meighan** (1981) suggests: “The hidden curriculum is

Education

Learning styles - just another attempt to categorise children and file them away in neat little boxes or a genuinely-innovative attempt to understand how children learn?



taught by the school, not by any teacher...[it involves] an approach to living and an attitude to learning”, while **Skelton** (1997) suggests it involves: “That set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behaviour and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes. These messages may be contradictory...and each learner mediates the message in her/his own way”. In other words, the hidden curriculum involves schools as institutions transmitting certain value-laden messages to their pupils and, in this respect, **Paechter** (1999) suggests the hidden curriculum has two basic dimensions:

1. **Intended** aspects are the things teachers “actively and consciously pursue as learning goals”. These include, fostering certain values (politeness, the importance of order, deference to authority and so forth) and discouraging others (bullying and sexism, for example). It is “hidden” in the sense these things are not part of the formal curriculum, but teachers and students are probably aware of many of the processes going on in the school (some of which may actually be explicit, in terms of things like anti-racism or anti-sexism policies).

2. **Unintended** aspects might include the messages teachers give to students in the course of their teaching - things like status messages (whether boys appear to be more valued than girls - or vice versa), messages relating to beliefs about ability (whether teachers believe it is “natural” or the product of “hard work”) and so forth.

Having established what we mean by this concept (and how the interpretation of its meaning reflects **Skelton's** argument), we can identify some aspects of its *content* in the following terms:

Status messages covers a number of areas related to ideas we develop about our "worth" in the eyes of others. This includes, for example:

Type of school: State or private, grammar or secondary modern, "good school" or "bad school" (considered in terms of its general reputation, exam results and so forth).

Streaming / banding / setting and how membership of "high" or "low" academic groups impacts on pupil perceptions of themselves and others.

Academic and Vocational courses and subjects have different statuses in our educational system. The introduction of "Vocational GCSE's" for example, reflects the implicit assumption academic GCSE's are not suited to the abilities of some students (and it probably doesn't take too much imagination to guess the social class of students who will be encouraged to take these new qualifications).

School class position - how ranking in terms of academic success or failure affects children's self-perception and value.

Classroom organisation - in terms, for example, of authority within the classroom (teacher at the front, directing operations or a situation in which there is no clear authority ranking).

Socialisation / Social Control messages relate to ideas about what is required from pupils if they are to succeed educationally. Some of these ideas refer explicitly to the way pupils are encouraged to behave within schools (for example, the various classroom processes that involve order and regularity - attendance, punctuality and so forth) whereas others are less explicit and relate to the things pupils must *demonstrate* in order to "learn how to learn". That is, learning to conform not just to the formal rules of the school but also to the informal rules, beliefs and attitudes perpetuated through the socialisation process. These include things like pupils recognising:

- **Authority**, in terms of the powerful role played by the teacher within

the classroom - not simply in terms of organisational rules (when to speak, where to sit and so forth) - but also in relation to:

Learning to live with Authority...

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"The teacher will assess you now".

Actually, get used to assessment because it's a fact of school life...

- **Learning**, which may involve ideas like *individualism* (learning is a process that should not, ultimately, be shared) and *competition* (the objective is to demonstrate you are better than your peers). Learning also involves ideas about what is to be learned in terms of:

Knowledge: Teachers, for example, select and present certain ideas as valid. To pass exams (and thereby succeed in educational terms), the pupil has to learn to conform to what the teacher presents as *valid knowledge*. One argument here is that educational "success" and "achievement" is not so much a matter of what a student knows but rather the ability to, firstly, provide teachers (and examiners) with answers that fit their already existing body of valid knowledge and, secondly, to do so in ways that fit existing ideas about how valid knowledge is to be realised and tested (through written examinations, in the main, although some forms of vocational training require valid knowledge to be realised through practical demonstrations).

As **Pringle** (2004) suggests "The issue here is the extent to which individual interpretations need to correspond to a generally accepted view in order to be considered valid knowledge" and **Whitehead** (2007) takes this idea a step further when he suggests that "what counts as valid and legitimate educational knowledge" is always subject to

hidden power relationships (within the classroom (between teachers and their pupils), the examination room (between examiners and candidates) the school (in terms of what is to be taught) and society itself (in terms of wider issues about “what is worthy of being known)).

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A contemporary example here can be related to the work we did in the previous section on educational policies. Some Academy schools (most notably Emmanuel City Technology College in Gateshead) teach “creationism” (the idea that biblical accounts of creation are as *valid a theory* as the more conventional explanations of human development found in theories of evolution). The question here, of course, is the extent to which each theory counts as “valid knowledge” in different social contexts?

Assessment is an integral part of the hidden curriculum because it involves the idea learning can be *quantified* (through tests and exams) and that, consequently, only quantifiable knowledge is valid knowledge. Assessment is, of course, crucial to various forms of *teacher labelling and stereotyping* that go on within schools and classrooms and contributes to pupil (and indeed teacher):

Identities: These are a significant aspect of the hidden curriculum, not just in terms of the things we’ve already noted (different senses of identity related to types of school, how pupils are perceived, categorised and treated and the like), but also in terms of ideas like **class, age, gender and ethnicity**. **Hill and Cole** (2001), for example, argue the hidden curriculum functions to *exclude* particular groups (especially working class children, but also such groups as the mentally and physically disabled).

Burn (2001) argues current government preoccupations with initiatives relating to boys’ achievement (male role models, after-school learning clubs, boy-friendly curricula, single-sex classroom groups...) sends messages about achievement to both males and females - that boys have “a problem”, for example and the achievement of girls is both devalued and (perhaps) part of the problem. Similarly, **Smith** (2003) questions the idea of framing debates about underachievement in terms of “failing boys”. Questions of identity are also related to:

Subject choice in terms of what students choose to study and why they make these choices. Although this mainly relates to post-16 choices under the conditions originally set by the National Curriculum, some forms of choice at Key Stage 3 -

decisions about vocational or academic GCSE’s for example - are gradually being introduced.

A wide range of evidence suggests males and females make different subject choices when given the opportunity. These choices are not just influenced by the people around us (**Cooper and McDonald** (2001), for example, found both parents and teachers influential in a student’s choice of degree courses) but also by perceptions relating to masculine and feminine identities. **Bamford** (1989) noted the research evidence suggested more boys take subjects like science, geography, technical drawing and computing, whereas more girls take Secretarial studies, Biology, French, Home Economics and History. **Abbot and Wallace** (1996) also point out feminist research has shown how concepts of masculinity and femininity are influenced by factors such as:

Academic hierarchies - how the school is *vertically stratified* in occupation terms (men at the top being the norm).

Textbooks and gender stereotyping: Males appear more frequently and are more likely to be shown in active (“doing and demonstrating”), rather than passive, roles. **Best** (1992), for example, used **Content Analysis** to demonstrate how pre-school texts designed to develop reading skills remain populated by sexist assumptions and stereotypes. **Gillborn** (1992) also notes how the hidden curriculum impacts on ethnic (as well as gender and class) identities through Citizenship teaching, where the content of the subject teaching (democracy, racial equality, etc.) frequently clashes with the “learned experiences” of black pupils.

Formal Curriculum: Decisions about what subjects should be studied, how they should be studied and the particular content of each subject are also significant aspects of the hidden curriculum. **Paechter** (1999), for example, argues:

Subject learning - as opposed to *process learning* - is generally considered more important in our education

Concepts like **Class, Age, Gender and Ethnicity** can always be applied to an understanding of educational differences (just as they can be applied to an understanding of social inequalities generally). An easy way to remember them is to use the **mnemonic “CAGE”** - a memorable word made-up from their first letters.

Class

Age

Gender

Ethnicity

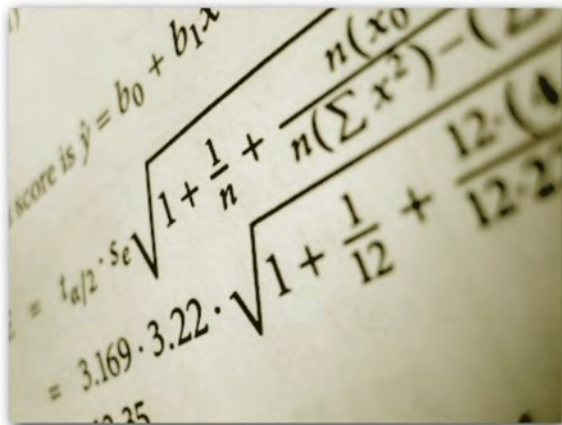


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system. For example *critical thinking* is a *process* where we learn how to assess and evaluate knowledge. However, somewhat ironically, its value is only realised in our education system when it's turned into a *subject* to be studied.

Specialisms: Each subject has its own special skills and knowledge and the curriculum becomes increasingly specialised as students progress through the system.

Subject hierarchy: Both teachers and pupils quickly come to appreciate that some subjects are more important than others – both *within* the school curriculum (subjects like English, Maths, Science and, most recently, ICT have a *special status* in terms of the amount of time and testing given over to them) and *outside* the curriculum, in the sense of subjects that are *not* considered worthy of inclusion and hence *knowing*; subjects like sociology, psychology, politics and media studies, for example, barely get a look-in until Further Education, where they prove to be popular subject areas.



I don't know about you but I've used the algebra I learnt at school all of ..erm...well...exactly zero times in the past 30 years.

Subject hierarchies are, in this respect, important for a couple of reasons: firstly they specify the relative merits of subject areas in terms of "what pupils are allowed to study / know" and, secondly, in order to justify their special position they involve a depth and detail that is out of proportion to their actual usefulness to the majority of the population.

White and Bramall (2000), for example, implicitly question this hierarchy when they argue against forcing children to learn high levels of maths: "The maths we need for everyday life and work is mostly learnt by the end of primary school".

Reiss (2001) similarly questions the value of science as a National Curriculum subject when its teaching is "...putting pupils off further study of science by limiting the subject to tedious experiments that have little connection to everyday life".



Who decides which subjects are "worthy of being known" and hence included on the school curriculum?

Education

This type of criticism objects to the kind of "taken for granted" acceptance of the domination of the school curriculum by subjects that, while arguably necessary (a useful function of schools is that of ensuring that children are literate and numerate) are effectively "over taught"; in other words, because subjects like Maths and English are effectively taught to levels that go way beyond what the vast majority of pupils will ever need two problems occur:

Firstly, the time allocated to other subjects and activities is reduced because "core curriculum subjects" take up more time than is really needed and, secondly, large numbers of pupils "switch off" (**Barrett**, 1999) from these subjects (see below) because of their (unnecessary) depth and detail.

The argument here is that by pursuing an agenda that gives certain subjects an undeserved (and perhaps unjustified) status in the curriculum, educational policy effectively contributes to the problem (a lack of numeracy and literacy) it is nominally trying to prevent because pupils fail to understand the relevance of such in-depth teaching and learning.

Teaching within schools assumes teachers, as the "organisers of learning for others", are a *necessary* aspect of schooling. This raises a range of interesting questions (for example, are teachers actually needed?) about the nature of knowledge and learning. Even the development of electronic learning (delivered via the Internet, for example), assumes the presence of teachers to organise and direct learning.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of the hidden curriculum.

- (i) Covert Participant Observation.
- (ii) Postal questionnaires (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Tried and Tested

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term the "hidden curriculum" (2 marks).
- (b) Suggest **three** ways that the hidden curriculum manifests itself within schools (6 marks).
- (c) Outline some of the ways the hidden curriculum might impact on educational achievement (12 marks).

Teacher / Pupil Relationships

We've considered aspects of this relationship at various points (in terms of *labelling*, *stereotyping*, *self-fulfilling prophecies* and *differential achievement*, for example) and so, you'll be relieved to know, we don't propose to go over this ground again. However, there are further aspects of this relationship that can be usefully explored here:

Switching-On: **Cano-Garcia and Hughes** (2000) argue the teacher / pupil relationship is significant in terms of how successful (or unsuccessful) pupils are in switching-on / conforming to teaching styles. They argue, for example, the most academically successful students are those who can work independently of the teacher within a fairly rigid set of teacher-controlled guidelines and procedures. In other words, successful pupils understand what the teacher wants and develop "teacher-pleasing behaviours" designed to provide it.

Switching-Off: The other side of this idea, of course, is what **Barrett** (1999) has termed "switching-off" - the idea that where pupils fail to see what they're supposed to be learning as "*useful now, as well as in the future*" it turns a large number off the idea of learning. Switching-off also seems to occur when pupils feel they lack the power to influence the scope, extent and purpose of their studies.

Hidden curriculum: A further aspect of the hidden curriculum – something that links directly into teacher / pupil relationships – is one identified by **Seaton** (2002) when he suggests that these two basic pupil orientations represent:

1. Learned dependence – pupils who are successful within the education system are those who quickly learn to work in accordance with whatever the teacher demands. In other words, "successful pupils" are generally those who quickly learn to acquiesce to the authority and expertise of teachers.

2. Experienced alienation – pupils who come to see, for whatever reason, the school, teachers and even the concept of "education" itself as something alien and strange – something that is simultaneously both irrelevant and threatening.

Although for **Seaton** (2004) the hidden curriculum has its origins *outside* the school and education system (in the sense that it involves the idea of pupils being orientated towards a particular set of ideas and behaviours that, taken together, constitute "learning"), it is operationalised and expressed *inside* the school

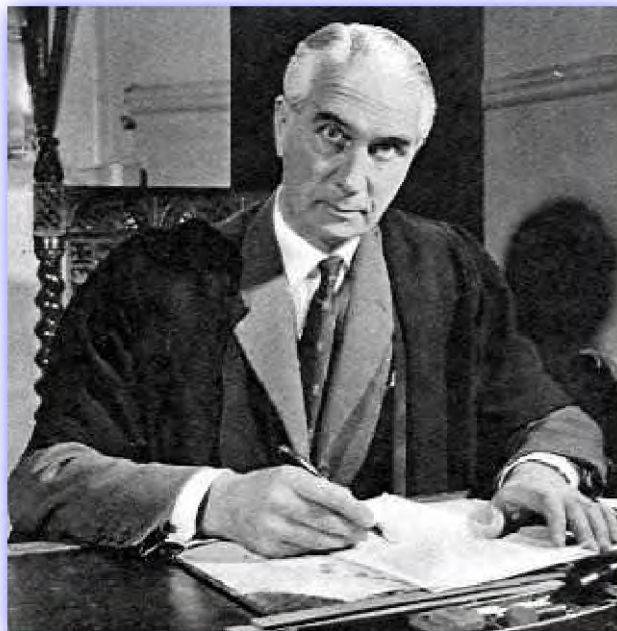
through teacher / pupil relationships. As he argues "...a large number of studies show that, through their experiences of schooling, many students 'learn' to see their role not as thinking, but 'doing what is expected and working hard'".

Examples of what **Seaton** considers some consequences of the hidden curriculum include "learning":

- Good grades go to students who follow rules.
- To allow others to make decisions for them.
- Dependence on authority.
- Obedience to duty.

Tacit Agreements: The ideas of switching-on and switching-off capture, in a small way, one of the problems teacher's face in the teaching and learning process - *contradictory demands* made by a fragmented student body (which is a posh way of saying some students like some things and others don't). This is not particularly a problem when teacher

and pupils are acting in *tacit agreement* about the purpose of education. It's probable middle class children gain no more and no less satisfaction from their schooling than working class children; **Barrett** (1999), however, suggests the former are more likely to *tacitly agree* with teachers about the purpose of education - the accumulation of credentials (qualifications) - and be more inclined, therefore, to participate in teacher-pleasing behaviour.



Mr. Wackford was incredulous at the suggestion any of his pupils could be anything other than ecstatic at the thought of attending his Citizenship classes...

One important aspect of the

breakdown of teacher-pupil relationships we need to note, in this context, is of course *pupil violence* towards teachers and other pupils. **DfES** figures for 2004 show nearly 300 pupils were expelled for assaults on adults, in addition to nearly 4,000 fixed period suspensions. There were also 300-plus expulsions and 12,800 suspensions for attacks on fellow pupils.

Teaching Styles: In terms of the different ways teachers interpret their role (and hence their particular relationship with their pupils), we could note four basic categories of teaching style:

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- **Teacher-centred**, where the teacher directs and informs the class.
- **Demonstrator**, where although the class is teacher-centred and controlled, the emphasis is on demonstrating ideas and encouraging students to experiment.
- **Student-centred**, where the role of the teacher is defined as helping (or *facilitating*) the student to learn by giving them responsibility for their own learning.
- **Delegation** styles involve the requirement for students to work independently on teacher-designed tasks, at their own pace.

Pupil Subcultures

This final section brings together, in a variety of ways, the general ideas we've just examined in terms of how teaching and learning is organised, the formal and hidden curricula and how teacher-pupil relationships develop and impact on pupil orientations towards school and education (not necessarily the same things - you can hate school but value education and, of course, vice versa). Traditionally, the sociology of pupil subcultures has focused on the identification of two basic subcultural types:

1. Reactive subcultures develop, as the term implies, as a *reaction* to what someone is doing - in this instance, the school or teachers. In other words, this body of theory argues school subcultures develop out of the dissatisfaction of some groups of pupils with their treatment within the school.

2. Independent subcultures are similar but involve the idea particular subcultural groups *already exist* within the school (they have developed *independently* of any adult input) and are subsequently *labelled*, in some way (positively or negatively) by those in authority.

Module Link **Crime and Deviance**

The concept of **subculture** (and, in particular, **youth subcultures**) has frequently been applied by Functionalists and Marxists (in particular and in slightly different ways) to explain some forms of age-related crime and deviance. In addition, something like **Cohen's** (1955) concept of **Status Frustration** can be directly applied to explanations of underachievement amongst working class and ethnic minority boys.

In addition, these two basic subcultural types have traditionally been further subdivided into:

Pro-school subcultures - groups of pupils who, for whatever reasons, see schooling in a generally positive light.

Education

Anti-school subcultures: This general category, as you might expect, has been used to describe pupils who, not to put too fine a point on things, aren't too keen on school or what it has to offer (which, to be frank, isn't very much when considered from their point of view).

Module Link

Crime and Deviance

The literature in this area is heavy with studies examining the nature, extent and general impact of anti-school subcultures. **Hargreaves** (1967) and **Woods** (1979), for example, have classically shown significant links between anti-school orientations and wider forms of deviance as, more-recently, has **Johnson** (1999) in relation to schools in Northern Ireland.

The "problem" of "boys behaving badly" is periodically addressed through the media - with popular "solutions" being a return to the National Service of the 1950's.



Much of the research in this particular area, (including **Willis'** (1977) study highlighting the relationship between different types of pro-and-anti school subcultures) has focused on the idea of:

Counter-school subcultures - how pupils (usually, but not exclusively, young, white, working-class boys) developed subcultural groups as an *alternative* to the mainstream culture of schools. **Woods** (1979), for example, adapted **Merton's** (1938) *Strain Theory* of deviance to argue for a range of different subcultural responses (*adaptations*) to school culture - from *Ingratiators* (pupils who try to earn the favour of teachers - the most *positive* adaptation) at one extreme to *Rebels* (who explicitly *rejected* the culture of the school) at the other.

While most traditional (i.e. before you or your parents were born) subcultural theory focused on the behaviour of "lads" (and, by-and-large, the bad behaviour of "bad lads") to explain how and why this general group is complicit in its own educational failure, some (mainly Feminist) research also included girl's behaviour. **Lees** (1993), for example, noted how **female subcultures** developed around two main orientations:

1. Pro-school girls, which included those who **intrinsically** valued education (seeing school as enjoyable and worthwhile) and those who took a more **extrinsic** or **instrumental** approach to their studies (they saw qualifications, for example, as a necessary means towards a desired end and didn't particularly value school "for its own sake"). In addition, some girls saw school as an enjoyable place for *socialising* with friends, without necessarily seeing qualifications as being particularly important.

2. Anti-school girls included some groups who saw school as a pointless waste of time, a disagreeable and uncomfortable period in their life they have to get through before being able to escape into the adult world of work and family.

In addition, writers such as **McRobbie and Garber** (1975) and **Griffin** (1986) have used subcultural theory to explain how and why girls develop different kinds of response to their treatment and experiences within school and society.

In general, the majority of "traditional" subcultural analysis focuses on the idea of pupils and teachers *reacting*, in some way, to each other's behaviour (in terms of *status-giving* or *status denial*, the acceptance or rejection of authority, labelling processes and so forth). However, more-recently, writers such as **Mac an Ghail** (1994) have changed the focus to that of *masculinity* and *femininity*, as well as developing a *class* and *ethnic* approach to understanding pupil subcultures. **Mac an Ghail**, for example, identifies working class subcultural groups such as:

- *New Enterprisers* - boys who want to be self-employed - and
- *Real Englishmen*' - middle class boys disaffected with their school experience.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

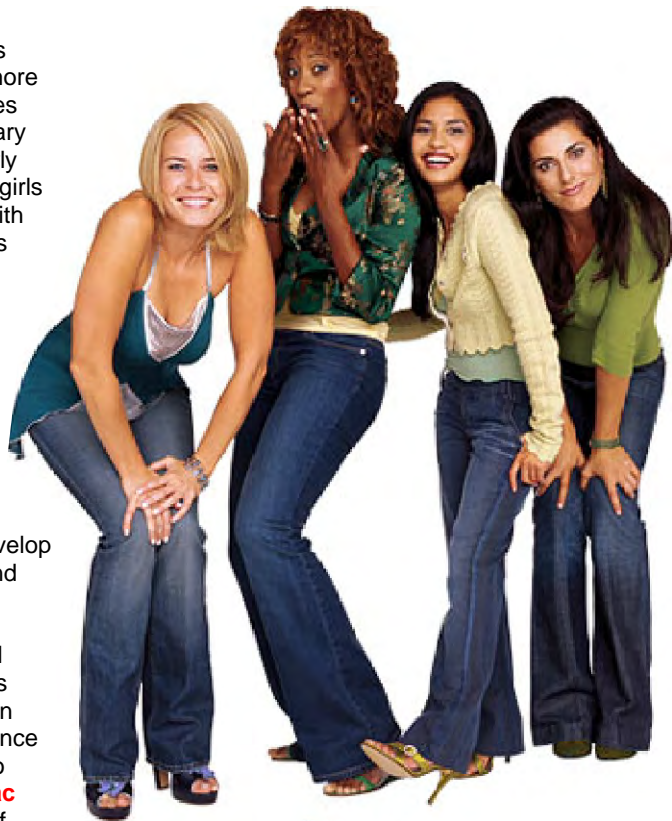
Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of the pupil subcultures:

- Participant Observation.
- Official statistics (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Tried and Tested

- Explain what is meant by the term the "learned dependence" (2 marks).
- Suggest **three** reasons for pupils conforming to school authority (6 marks).
- Outline some of the orientations to schooling identified by subcultural theories of teacher - pupil relationships (12 marks).



Girls thinking about behaving badly. Possibly. Maybe.

Relationships and Processes: Explanations

Recent developments in subcultural theorising have led in two main directions:

1. Subcultural theory has been questioned, not so much in terms of the behaviour it seeks to explain, but more in terms of the idea of *subculture* itself. For example, we need to ask if pupil subcultures really exist, since there seems little evidence these groups develop any real forms of *cultural production* and *reproduction* within the school setting (that is, there's not much evidence of *cultural identities* nor any coherent and consistent way of recruiting and socialising new members). In addition, the concept of subculture suggests some sort of permanence and rigidity within groups, whereas recent types of research (see below) suggest this is not the case.

Identity, rather than "subculture", has become the new focus for explaining pupil behaviour. **Shields** (1992), for example, argues "**post-subcultural theorising**" thinks about identity in terms of its *fragmentation* (lots of different identities co-existing within schools, for example), rooted in "fleeting gatherings" rather than rigid groups and focused on *consumption* (the things people buy and use - which can be real, in the sense of actually buying stuff, or metaphorical, in the sense of buying into a particular *lifestyle*).

Lifestyle Shopping: **Delamont** (1999), for example, has linked achievement and underachievement in her concept of female *lifestyle shopping* - the general rejection of "failing working boys" who were not seen as having either the educational / work prospects or

attitudes that make them particularly attractive future partners. In this particular instance girls were more likely to focus on their own educational achievement rather than be “distracted” by possible relationships with boys who had few, if any, educational and career prospects. The basic idea here, therefore, is that whereas in the (not too distant) past female lives were intimately and dependently bound-up in the behaviour of boys, this has changed quite dramatically as opportunities for girls – both educational and in the workplace – have opened-up.

In terms of the above, therefore, *subcultural theory* (as a distinctive body of knowledge that seeks to explain various types of behaviour) has been questioned – not in the sense of denying that “something” is happening in social spaces like schools (some pupils, as they have probably always done, still hang-around together in groups that can be more-or-less rigorously defined and labelled in some way) but rather in terms of how we explain this behaviour. In this respect we can note a more-recent idea that is increasingly used in place of subculture, namely:

2. Neo-tribes: The concept, originally suggested by **Maffesoli** (1996), has been developed by writers such as **Bennett** (1999) to point towards a different way of conceptualising the idea of *pupil subcultures*; neo-tribes can be broadly conceptualised as dynamic, loosely-bound, groups that involve a range of different - and fleeting - identities and relationships centring around *lifestyles* rather than a “way of life”. In other words, this concept questions the idea of subcultural groups (something relatively permanent and tangible) and replaces it with the idea of loose-knit associations and interactions that chop-and-change over time (in a postmodernist sort of way). Neo-tribes, therefore, fluid social groupings that are inherently unstable – distinctive groups, for example, come together and disband at various times (they are *temporal* – the product of a particular time, place and set of circumstances – rather than permanent).

As **Maffesoli** (1996) puts it, a neo-tribe is “...without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar [subcultures] and refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form”.

Thus, whereas concepts of subculture are rooted in (modernist) ideas about *class*, *gender*, *age* and *ethnicity* (see, for example, something like **Hall and Jefferson's** (1976) classic exploration and analysis of youth subcultures in post-war Britain), the concept of neo-tribe involves, as **Hetherington** (1998) argues, “new forms of collective behaviour based on shifting and arbitrary forms of



Sisters doing it for themselves?

association”. Thus, in the context of teacher / pupil relationships within a school, neo-tribal behaviour becomes a “performance of identity recognizable to others who share a particular identification” – in other words, ritualistic behaviour of some description that is adopted, adapted, applied and discarded by different groups at different times.

As we’ve suggested, therefore, school relationships and processes are both complex and interconnected (for example, the hidden curriculum links into teacher-pupil relationships which, in turn, influences the development of pupil subcultures / styles). In this final section, therefore, we need to establish a general framework within which we can interpret these ideas. This framework can be developed around two school processes identified earlier, the *formal and informal* (or hidden) curricula. In this respect, we’re interested in examining the formal curriculum in a little more depth since this aspect of school organisation arguably sets the tone for the informal curriculum.



Neo-tribes

An ambience?

A state of mind?

A lifestyle?

Not, in any way, shape or form, a subculture?

One of the first sociologists to question the *ideological* nature of the formal curriculum was **Young** (1971) when he argued the way knowledge is:

- **Categorised,**
- **Presented** and
- **Studied**

is significant for any understanding of school organisation and processes. If people believe it's possible to identify the "most important" areas of knowledge in society, then some form of *consensus* is manufactured - and on this consensus can be built a system of testing and evaluation whereby individuals can be assessed against their knowledge and understanding in a way that appears:

Objective: Since there is agreement about what constitutes knowledge, testing can be measured against known standards of competence.

Fair: Pupils can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they *reach* certain standards (as, for example, with things like Key Stages, GCSEs and A-levels).

Meritocratic: Success or failure in reaching "agreed standards" can be expressed in terms of *individual characteristics*. If standards exist and children have an *equal opportunity* to achieve them then success or failure is down to individual levels of effort, motivation and so forth.

Module Link

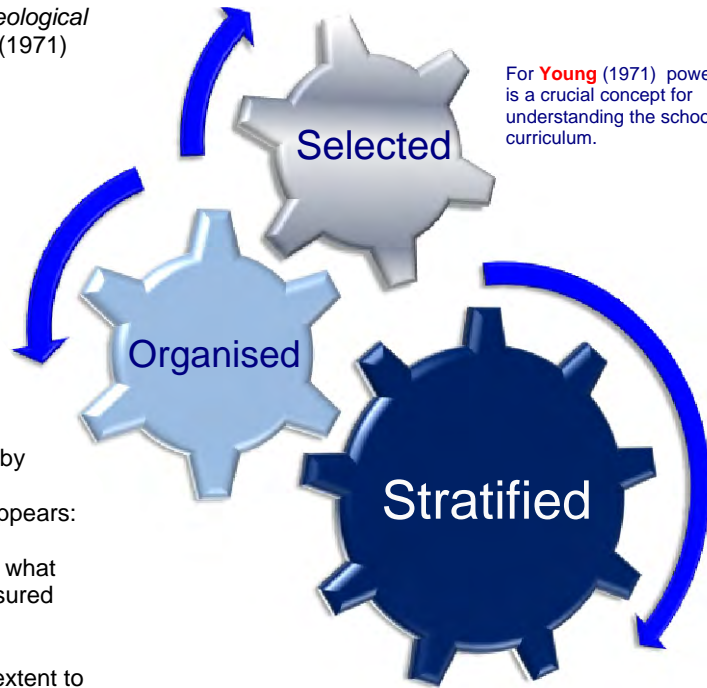
Education

In the Section on **Educational Policy** we've seen evidence of the ways both Conservative and Labour educational policies have focused on developing a rigid and extensive "testing regime" in schools over the past 25 years.

Young (from a **Marxist** perspective) argued the *formal* curriculum reflected the interests of powerful social groups in terms of the way knowledge was:

Selected - involving decisions about which subjects appear on the curriculum, the content of each subject and so forth.

Organised - involving decisions about how teachers teach (alone or in groups, for example), how pupils should work (competitively or co-operatively, etc.),



For **Young** (1971) power is a crucial concept for understanding the school curriculum.

classroom organisation (who is in control) and the like.

Stratified within the classroom, the school and society. This involves thinking about why theoretical knowledge is considered superior to practical knowledge, the division between vocational and academic subjects, how subjects are *compartmentalised* (taught separately) rather than *integrated* (related to each other), teaching children different levels of knowledge, based upon assessments of their ability and so forth.

In a similar way, (a different) Michael **Young** (1999) argues the formal curriculum is changing, in various ways, as our society changes (under the influence of global economic and cultural factors, for example). These changes, he argues, are reflected in two types of curriculum:

1. "Of the Past" - something that is broadly characteristic of the way the school curriculum is currently organised (if that's not a contradiction in terms).
2. "Of the Future" - the broad way in which the school curriculum will need to change if it is to keep pace with changes happening in both wider society (the national dimension) and the world generally (the global dimension).

Michael Young (1999) "Knowledge, learning and the curriculum of the future"

Curriculum of the Past

Knowledge and learning 'for its own sake'
 Concerned with transmitting existing knowledge
 Little value on relationships between subjects
 Boundary between school and everyday knowledge

Curriculum of the Future

Knowledge and learning 'for a purpose'
 Focus on creation of new knowledge
 The interdependence of knowledge areas
 Link between school and everyday knowledge

Finally, we can complete this Section by developing these basic ideas a little further, using **Bernstein's** (1971) argument that the way knowledge is organised

(in his terms "classified and framed") has consequences for the kinds of messages children receive about the nature and purpose of education.

Bernstein (1971) "On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge"

Characteristics of Strongly Classified and Strongly Framed knowledge.

There are right answers and these are already known.

Pupil's personal experience is largely irrelevant (unless specifically requested as an example and then it will be right or wrong).

Knowledge is divided into subjects. When one is being studied, other subjects are irrelevant.

"Education" is what goes on within the school

Teachers determine the time and pace of lessons.

Education involves matching the individual performance of pupils against fixed standards.

Characteristics of Weakly Classified and Weakly Framed knowledge.

There are no right answers. Education is a process of explanation and argument.

The personal experiences of pupils are always important.

Subject boundaries are artificial. Pupils should link various forms of knowledge.

"Education" never stops. It occurs everywhere.

The pace of learning is determined by the pupil and their interests.

Education is seen as a process of personal development.

Tried and Tested: Research Methods

Assess the strengths and limitations of **one** of the following methods for the study of pupil identities.

- (i) Visual (Creative) Methods.
- (ii) Structured Interviews (20 marks).

*This question requires you to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods to the study of this **particular** issue in education.*

Tried and Tested

(a) Explain what is meant by the term the "lifestyle shopping" (2 marks).

(b) Suggest **two examples** for each of the following: the selection, organisation and stratification of knowledge (6 marks).

(c) Outline some of the ways the school curriculum can be said to be "ideologically orientated"(12 marks).

(d) Critically examine some of the relationships and processes at work in secondary schools (20 marks).



School's out for summer...

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