

Education – Sociology AQA

Revision notes based on CGP revision guide

Aliza Samorly

- 1.1:** The role of the education system.
- 1.2:** Relationships and processes within schools.
- 1.3:** Class and differential achievement in education.
- 1.4:** Ethnicity and differential achievement in education.
- 1.5:** Gender and differential achievement in education.
- 1.6:** State policy and education.
- 1.7:** Application of research methods to education.

Remember

All evaluation is predicated on generic principles based on:

1. The different 'how and why' provided by different theories to different topics: for example, Marxist explanation versus functionalism, and structural explanations versus micro theories.
2. The comparison of each theoretical perspective for one topic – like the role of education – to culture and identity, for example. Thus, Marxist explanations of the role of education can be assessed with regard to the Marxist explanation of the role of the media, especially that both education and media are secondary agents of socialisation.

Any evaluation points below are key anchors for the above guidelines – application of generic principles of evaluation.

1.1: The role of the education system

Explaining the role and functions of the education system in society.

Some theories examine:

- Positive functions.
- How education maintains inequality.
- Education as a business.

- 1) Functionalism
- 2) Marxism
- 3) Feminism
- 4) New Right

Functionalism

Education serves three functions to help society:

- 1 – Secondary agent of socialisation = to pass on core values and norms.
- 2 – Allocation function = to allocate individuals into appropriate jobs.
- 3 – Teaching skills that are required in the workplace and by the economy.

Durkheim

Education as a secondary agent of socialisation to teach universal norms and values:

- Social solidarity: cohesion, consensus.
- Social order = teaching rules and how to follow rules, and consequently, sanctions.
- Teaching specialist skills.
- Children learn about their role in society and the economy.

Parsons

School as a bridge between the family and adult roles.

Meritocracy = when social rewards are allocated based on talent and efforts rather than based on the position one is born into. Serves as a good indication for social mobility and for weakening the link between sociodemographic variables and achievement. Thus, weakening of the relationship between ascribed (inherited) and achieved (by merit) status.

Equality of opportunities.

- Role allocation = sifting and sorting individuals into appropriate jobs.
- Universal values of achievement.
- Meritocracy = the best students move to the top; the education system rewards efforts and abilities; qualifications that provide access to jobs.
- The welfare state = the platform for the process of meritocracy and equality of opportunities, by providing basic needs to allow ability and potential to be actualised.

Davis and Moore (1945)

- Society is sifting and sorting its members into different positions, meritocracy.
- However, the rewards are unequal: social stratification, and differential achievement. The principles of stratification denote unequal rewards to motivate people to put the efforts into achieving top jobs because of the different better rewards. Competition as an effective mechanism facilitating meritocracy.

Evaluation of functionalism

- Outdated = society and the world have changed dramatically.
- The welfare state provides the mechanism for securing equality of opportunities, galvanising social mobility, and weakening the link between ascribed and achieved status.
- Universal values? Who decides these values?
- Political systems with different values at the core of the social contract.
- Cultural differences and subcultures. Ignoring diversity.
- Globalisation and its effects. 'One big village'?
- People with the best qualifications are not always 'rewarded', and vice versa.
- Marxism: shared values are a label for capitalist ideology; they are not really shared. Meritocracy is a myth to cover up for a system of inequality thus reinforce indoctrination and false consciousness.

Marxism

The infrastructure determines the superstructure. The ruling class has the power in the infrastructure and that power is also reflected in the superstructure, within all its institutions and agencies. Education is part of the superstructure.

Education serves to legitimise inequality through ideology:

- 1 – Prepares children to work by teaching them skills and values that are needed by the employer.
- 2 – Education as an agent to pass on the ideology of the ruling class.

3 – Legitimising and perpetuating inequality through socialisation and support of capitalism.

In other words, the education system is a pivotal mechanism in the process of brainwashing the masses.

Education and ideology Louis Althusser (French neo-Marxist philosopher)

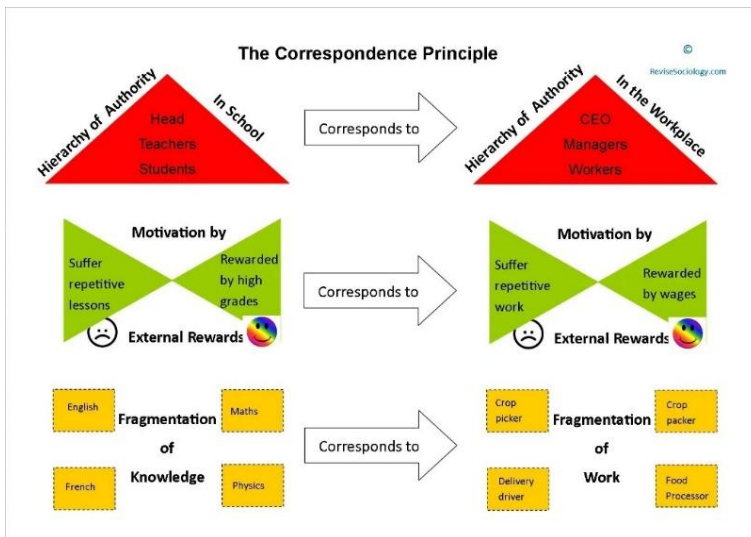
- Education is a vehicle in the ideological state apparatus.
- Spreading bourgeoisie ideology to maintain and perpetuate **false class consciousness**.
- False consciousness protects the capitalist system from the threat of a revolution carried out by the proletariat. If the working class becomes 'aware' of the predicament of its members, the threat to the ruling class is apparent.
- The teaching of ideology is via **formal and hidden curriculum**: content (what is being taught and what is excluded; control of content) and through the rules, structures and discipline.
- Education transmits the idea that capitalism is just and 'right', against competing ideas that are irrational, dangerous and 'wrong'.
- Schools encourage passivity in accepting future roles.
- For both functionalism and Marxism socialisation is pivotal. However, for Durkheim, socialisation is for consensus (positive), whereas for Marxism it is a mechanism of controlling the working class through sly indoctrination.

Correspondence theory (Bowles and Gintis, 1976)

There is an intentional correspondence between school and adult workplace. Schools prepare for work by 'mirroring' various aspects:

The determinants:

- 1) Hierarchy.
- 2) Rewards and sanctions.
- 3) Passive and docile.
- 4) Motivation.
- 5) Fragmentation.



*https://revisesociology.com/2017/07/04/correspondence-principle-bowles-gintis/#google_vignette

Evaluation of correspondence theory

- Capitalism encourages passivity and subordination?
- Curriculum is hidden?
- How does capitalism control the curriculum in content and structures, all over the world, for different cultures?
- Accounting for different political systems and their corresponding different education systems and values?
- The workplace has changed significantly since 1976.
- Schools have changed.
- Marxism: pupils are being taught an illusion of democracy to disguise the perpetuation of the system.

'The Lads' (Willis, 1977)

A case study of Midlands school boys, 'the Lads' who rebelled to form an **anti-school subculture**: instead of schools teaching passivity and obedience, the kids 'mucked about' at school (truancy, mocking peers) and move into working-class jobs to do the same. Again, perpetuating inequality, working-class kids go to working-class jobs.

It is important to note, that while anti-school subculture can be used to argue that working class kids are not always passive, they nevertheless ended up in working class jobs, being still 'trapped' in the system regardless of being passive or not. In contrast to the more optimistic view of Stuart Hall about the promise of youth activism.

Cultural capital (Bourdieu)

Cultural capital = language, skills, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that can explain how middle-class and wealthy pupils have the assets to succeed in education, workplace and society. They continue moving to top jobs.

Habitus = refers to the way people perceive and respond to the social world they occupy: habits, skills, structures, dispositions, discipline, etc. Different social classes have different habitus; middle-class and wealthy is characterised by a cultural capital.

Also, teachers (middle class) can relate ('correspond?!') better to middle-class pupils.

Bernstein, language codes = closely related to cultural capital and habitus; middle-class teachers and pupils are characterised by elaborate language code compared with working-class pupils who tend to use more restricted language code. **Evaluation of Marxism**

- Many people who work in education are leaning on the left-wing ideology.
- Many teachers nowadays were born and are working-class individuals and they understand cultural capital and habitus.
- There is widespread evidence of mobility upwards because of meritocracy.
- There is evidence, however, for differential achievement based on social class, undermining the nature of mobility that is 'free for all'.

Similarity between functionalism and Marxism = examining the macro picture of institutions and the structure of society, ignoring social interactions and dynamic interactions between different social institutions and the individual.

Difference = the perception of inequality. Functionalists argue for meritocracy thus, mobility, compared with Marxists who argue that the system legitimises and perpetuates a strict code of inequality to support the ruling class and capitalism. Functionalism argues that equality is neither possible nor desired, rather they advocate equality of opportunities.

Criticism of functionalism

- Evidence for differential achievements based on class, gender and ethnicity = education is not meritocratic.
- 'Who you know' is still more important than 'what you know'.
- Education fails to provide the right skills for some jobs that the economy requires: engineers, nurses, etc. lack of employees at certain times.
- Functionalism doesn't explain conflict between groups in terms of different ideology and values.
- Ignores conflict.

Criticism of Marxism

- Ignores solidarity and consensus.
- Focus on ruling class versus working class and ignores the middle class.
- Ignores the various gradations within the middle class.

- People are not passive obedient victims and there is some extent of mobility.
- Many people do not think that the existing inequality is legitimate nor justified. Thus, more people are disillusioned, less ideologically brainwashed and more critical of various political and sociological elements.

Feminism

Feminists agree with functionalists and Marxists that education is an agent transmitting values, but feminists argue that the socialisation is for patriarchal values.

1 – Liberal feminists = demand equal access to education for both sexes.

Heaton and Lawson (1996): the education system teaches patriarchal values via formal and hidden curriculum, to reinforce gender differences and inequality (gender stereotypes, division of labour at schools).

However, many girls outperform boys in schools and there is wider equality – all subjects are open, and even in the workforce like the army and police, there are major changes.

2 – Radical feminists = argue that the education system is still patriarchal with negative influences on girls. Thus, they call for female-centred education.

The system continues to marginalise and exploit women, impose gender norms on children, and perpetuate patriarchal messages.

- The problem of sexual harassment in the workplace, compared with ‘general’ bullying and harassment.

3 – Marxist feminists = argue that gender inequalities need to be juxtaposed with inequality attributed to class and ethnicity.

The key argument is that girls do not have a unified experience: black and minority ethnic girls are subjected to stereotypes emanating from ethnicity, religion etc. because of the perception of values attached to such attributes. Thus, difference feminism argue that the problem is more nuanced than just the correlation between gender and class as argued by Marxist feminism. Not all women experience patriarchy in exactly the same way, and they are therefore influenced differently.

Black girls and Muslim girls are aware of this labelling and of the low expectations as a result.

Evaluation of feminism

- Education is increasingly female-dominated; and it spills into increasing numbers of managers and heads of schools, not only teachers.
- Girls are increasingly overperforming compared with boys.
- More girls are going to higher education than boys.
- However, there is still a gender-based pay gap and a restrictive glass-ceiling.
- Women are still more likely to break off their career for childcare, and they perform significantly more housework than men even when they work full time.
- Consider the impact of gender development (competition in sports, etc.) in the context of feminism. Gender identities and various laws.
- Gender is no longer binary, let alone no longer biologically determined. Thus, the existing categories of gender means we cannot talk about feminism in the traditional way. Furthermore, the categories can change and fluctuate. It is no longer a 'simple' issue of men versus women.

New right

The power of individual choice and against state intervention. Minimal government intervention, private ownership, minimal tax and minimal welfare state.

New right supports free market economy with minimal regulation believing that the forces of the market with free competition are beneficial and desirable. Schools should be no exception to that and the government should not regulate schools the same way it should not regulate other public services.

The role of schools should be similar to the role of a business. Thus, schools need to compete with one another and be accountable to parents (marketisation and parentocracy). That is why private schools perform better.

State schools are run by the state and therefore do not compete in similar ways to private schools, and consequently produce lower standards and achievements. They are also not accountable to paying parents. According to new right, the inferior performance is evident in every agency, institution or organisation that is regulated and owned by the state (NHS, Energy, Rail Service etc). No competition and no accountability result in poor performance.

New Right encourages an education market, similar to the workplace.

Evaluation of New Right

- Increased competition at schools might come at the expense of the children especially for those who cannot afford private education or tutors.
- The superiority of exam results in private education cannot be attributed merely to competition and being accountable for paying parents = consider habitus and cultural capital.
- New right is against the welfare state and the higher tax on high earners to fund it.
- Therefore, schools as a business, marketisation and competition.
- Regulation is the cause of poor standards because of the lack of competition.

1.2: Relationships and processes within schools

What is actually happening inside schools?

- interactionists and postmodernist theories emphasise the relationships and processes within schools.

Hidden curriculum

Schools have a **formal curriculum** that includes specific subject content: what is in the curriculum and what is excluded from the curriculum. Simultaneously, schools pass on norms and values via a **hidden curriculum**:

Functionalists = teaching norms and values that are necessary for consensus.

Marxists = teaching norms and values for the ideology of the ruling class via brainwashing to camouflage the genuine purpose of the message passed on by socialisation used by various agents including schools.

Feminists = teaching norms and values to transmit patriarchal ideology.

- Various lessons teach acceptable behaviours and beliefs, manners, respect to authority, understanding hierarchy and following instructions.
- The way to do it = dress code, work and rewards, time management, school rules, sport activities, assemblies, moral lessons, etc.

Organising teaching at schools

Schools have ways to sift and sort pupils into classes to maximise achievements.

1 – **Setting** = pupils are sorted into classes based on their abilities for each and every subject; they can be in different tiers for different subjects.

2 – **Streaming** = pupils are sorted into classes for all subjects based on their abilities; and they tend to remain in their category for all or most subjects. More rigid than setting.

3 – **Banding** = mixed abilities; pupils are sorted into classes with mixed levels of abilities; the bands can have neutral labels such as different colours, letters, etc.

- Some argue that setting and streaming are a form of **labelling** that can lead to **self-fulfilling prophecy**.
- The argument in support of setting and streaming is that pupils can work at a level matching their ability, at their own pace.
- A key problem with streaming is that students may have different abilities for different subjects, and are not sufficiently challenged at a lower level.
- Mixed abilities banding can avoid worsening gaps in achievements but studies demonstrate that teachers are still likely to have low expectations from students at the low level and can match their teaching to low level ability. Higher ability students may be left behind being unchallenged to achieve higher.
- Take into account the issue of social mobility and weakening the correlation between ascribed and achieved status.

Labelling theory

Labelling theory was developed by Howard Becker and it is associated with **deviance** (see another topic). It is a theory anchored in interaction – between society and the individuals.

In education, labelling theory suggests that teachers apply **labels** to pupils based on their potential and attitudes, and that can create **self-fulfilling prophecies**.

The label is influencing how others treat the pupil, and how the pupil perceives oneself.

While pupils may internalise their label, identify with it, and act accordingly, the theory suggests that they can either accept or reject their label.

- It is difficult to assess if, when and how, teachers label students, the extent to which students are aware of their label, and the degree to which they respond to the label rather than express who they truly are.
- It is also difficult to trace how and why some students are more easily 'swayed' by their labels, whereas others reject it or even resort to the opposite direction as predicted by their labels (proving the label 'right' or 'wrong').
- Thus, self-fulfilling prophecy versus self-refuting, and the most important question is the factors underlying the different outcomes of labelling.

Internalising a label can turn it into a **master status** (integrated into identity) that directs much of how others treat the pupil and how the pupil 'match' the label.

Self-fulfilling prophecy could be evaluated in comparison with self-refuting prophecy, in which case the pivotal question is what are the factors explaining individual differences = why some student internalise the label and others reject it?

Pygmalion in the classroom study, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1965)

Pygmalion effect = teachers' expectancies affect the achievements of students. Thus, the expectation 'creates' the reality to follow.

A field experiment in elementary schools in the USA.

Pupils were given an IQ test at the beginning and end of the study. Teachers were told of so-called results about certain pupils being 'spurters' with great potential to achieve, and the other pupils were in the control group.

The findings of this study and others show the Pygmalion effect. It is called Pygmalion based on the Greek myth of a sculptor named Pygmalion, who became infatuated with a statue that he created. The intensity of his love and the 'realistic' nature of his feelings made the statute come to life.

- Other studies have shown that teachers label students according to ethnic, gender and class stereotypes; black pupils are disciplined harsher than white classmates for the same behaviour, and they feel that teachers have low expectations of them.
- Labels can be connected with perceptions of the '**ideal student**';

Halo effect that is based on a first impression because of certain characteristics; it shapes pupil-teacher subsequent interactions in accordance with the halo.

- Compare diagnosis for mental illnesses: higher for ethnic groups for similar clinical picture compared with others.

Subcultures formed at schools

Subculture = a group with shared ideas, norms and values that are different than the mainstream culture in which the group lives in.

Pupils can form subcultures within their specific school; and the main ones are:

1 – **Pro-school subculture** = groups that share a highly positive view of their school and education in general.

2 – **Anti-school subculture** = 'the lads', see Willis's study.

Subcultures may have a positive or a negative influence on students.

Some subcultures may be anti-school but pro-education, others can be based on sporty students and academic achievers' subcultures.

There is a debate about the exact nature of how and why students form subcultures within schools in the first place:

1 – **Ethnicity** = black girls forming a subculture because they were with high abilities and felt their teachers are racist and discriminatory. In which case, the factor of the impact of the primary agent, the family, is likely to be highly influential against the ‘message’ from school.

2 – **Streaming** = subculture emerges as a response to streaming.

3 – **Social class** = working-class boys forming subcultures and are deliberately disruptive to gain respect from within the group. In which case, the factor of the impact of the primary agent, the family, is likely to be highly influential as well.

Identity

Identity = refers to the way in which the individual perceives oneself, and the way others perceive the individual: characteristics such as beliefs, attitudes, appearance, disposition and personality attributes.

Identity is closely related with labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and subcultures.

Identity is a complex concept because it is shaped by various factors: we are born into an identity, with innate predispositions, influenced by many external factors and experiences. Thus, the combination of nature and nurture variables.

Identity can be influenced by the dynamic interaction between these factors.

Postmodernists focus on how individuals choose their identity; free will, intrinsic, lack of determinism that subordinates the individual into a specific role.

1.3: Class and differential achievement in education

Sociologists have examined the effects of social class on achievements at school.

Social class was found to influence educational achievement:

- Pupils from professional background are significantly more likely to move to higher education.
- Pupils from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to take A-levels, compared with working-class pupils who are more likely to take vocational courses.
- Pupils from unskilled backgrounds, on average, achieve lower scores on SATs and in GCSEs and are more likely to be allocated into lower streams or settings.
- Social class is the most significant demographic factor influencing educational achievement.

- Eysenck (1971) and others, suggested that different socioeconomic groups have different relative average IQs. This argument is highly controversial for various reasons. The first question is the existence of the link between socioeconomic groups and the IQs; the second question, to the extent that such a link exists, what is its meaning?
- This controversy is also related to the debate over IQ tests: what do they measure, and are they valid and reliable? An important aspect to think about is: they seem to be able to predict educational achievements, in that sense, they can account for individual differences. Thus, predictive validity.
- It is important to remember that problematic embedded in measuring social class nowadays, and socioeconomic status in particular.

***A note:** the indicators and factors that are significantly correlated with social class and education, such as self-esteem, locus-of-control and learned helplessness. There is a cluster of psychological (and political) variables that are significantly linked with socioeconomic status, especially education.*

The focus in this section is the link between social class and education and it is important to think of the underlying psychological mechanisms that illuminate this link.

Factors inside school

Some sociologists tend to focus on factors inside the school to explain how they affect achievement, in comparison to factors outside the school.

1 – Labelling

Negative labelling can materialise into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Working-class pupils are more likely to be labelled as unintelligent compared with middle-class pupils who are more likely to be labelled as **ideal students**.

Therefore, the label is attached to the social class; achievements or failure to achieve happen in accordance with the label.

An important question then is why do some pupils adopt the label whereas other pupils refute it, fight against it, and achieved despite the label = the importance of individual differences.

2 – Streaming

Ball (1981) found that pupils in top streams were more likely to be from higher social classes, compared with pupils in the lower streams who were more likely to be from working class.

3 – Subcultures

Pupils may respond to negative labelling and its attached frustration by resorting to form anti-school subculture. This can also be linked to the effects that frustration exercises on aggression. However, compare with pro-school subcultures.

4 – See also different language codes.

- See also more details in ‘processes within schools’.

Factors outside school

1 – Material deprivation

The theory of **material deprivation** argues that poverty is a prominent factor explaining differences in educational achievement based on social class:

- Poverty and unsatisfactory living standards: poor housing, lack of nutritious food, overcrowding, lack of heating etc.
- The inability to purchase necessary resources: lack of internet access, books, educational holidays etc.
- Pupils are more likely to work part-time during school time and holidays.
- Unable to afford private tuition, especially when they fall behind then the difficulty is exacerbated because the gap is widened.
- However, the internet can compensate for many disadvantages: free tutoring videos, education via different websites, learning languages, etc.

2 – Cultural deprivation

The theory of **cultural deprivation** argues that working-class culture and parenting are not aimed to achieve educational success.

- Middle-class parents are more likely to be engaged in their children’s achievements and welfare at school.
- Working-class pupils are more likely to lack knowledge and values that facilitate achievements, including museum visits, and educational holidays and camps.
- However, poverty does not necessarily mean the ‘spirit’ of education and its values is lacking from poor household. If anything, sometimes the value of education is at the core of the values in some poor families (the same applies to ethnic minority disadvantaged groups).

3 – Class affecting attitudes to education

- Styles of parenting can explain some differences in achievement.
- Working-class parents are less interested in socioeconomic mobility than middle-class parents who are more active towards mobility.

- Sugarman (1970) suggested that people from different social classes have different attitudes and outlooks at aspects that are important for educational achievements such as ambition and deferred gratification.
- Hyman (1967) argued that the values of the working class impose a barrier because of the low value attached to education.
- ✚ The difficulty with such arguments is they tend to ignore or explain when working-class pupils and parents pay a special interest in schooling and education in general, and vice versa. Having said that, it doesn't really change the existing link between social class and achievements.
- ✚ Integrate the correlates of class with various personality factors.
- ✚ Another issue is ethnocentrism = assessing a culture from the point of view of one's own culture.

4 – The two Bs (Bernstein and Bourdieu)

- ✚ Bernstein (1970) argued that working-class pupils in the East End of London used short forms of speech, a restricted code of language, compared with middle-class students who used elaborated code of language similar to their teachers.
- ✚ Bourdieu (1971, 1974), a neo-Marxist: suggested that there are cultural differences between social classes, but that doesn't mean that one is superior and the other is inferior. Middle-class students have a visible advantage because they have a cultural capital that equips them appropriately to school and achievements (language, skills, knowledge and attitudes).
- Middle-class families also pass on cultural capital to their children as primary agents of socialisation.
- The main problem with such theories is they cannot account for individual differences within a given social class, and for the reasons underpinning psychological attributes attached to different social classes.
- Social capital = can be also an important factor: pupils are more likely to achieve because of who they know; this is very important with regard to private education and connections being made at private schools and universities, especially with access to high-powered jobs.

1.4: Ethnicity and differential achievement in education

Ethnicity = a group of individuals who identify with each other on the basis of shared attributes such as a common cultural background, nation of origin, ancestry, traditions, language, history etc. This sense of shared identity distinguishes the group from other groups, including the mainstream culture.

* The main changes to the 2021 Census of England and Wales, compared with the previous Census, were:

- the 'Roma' group was added under the 'White' ethnic group
- a write-in response was added for the 'Black African' ethnic group

The ethnic groups were:

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Any other White background

Other ethnic groups

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

In Wales, 'Welsh' is the first option in the White category.

Ethnicity is another key factor affecting achievements at schools: like with social class, some ethnic groups perform better than others; there are significant variations of average achievement levels across different ethnic groups.

In summary

1 – Higher levels of achievement

- Chinese and Indian pupils are the highest achievers at GCSE and perform above the national level.
- Mixed ethnicity: tend to perform above the national level at GCSE.
- Female black and male Asian have some highest rates of students continuing to higher education, including in comparison with white British.

2 – Lower levels of achievement

- Roma/gypsy pupils performed the least well at GCSE and are the least likely to enter higher education. Similar to Bangladeshi students with respect to university, although they achieve above the national level at GCSE.

Thus, the picture can be mixed, and there must be a combination of factors underpinning data about the link between ethnicity and educational achievements.

- Some argue, controversially, that IQ plays a significant role and that intelligence is inherited.
- ***A note:** the difference between genotype and phenotype. The impact of external factors on inherited attributes, including physiological, and the debate over what IQ tests actually measure? The question of validity of IQ tests versus its apparent reliability (standardised).*
- Some also argue that IQ tests are biased, and sometimes test for cultural-based knowledge rather than intelligence (a question of validity). However, predictive validity.

The Swann Report (1985)

The report found that controlling for social and economic factors demonstrates that there are no significant IQ differences between different ethnic groups.

Factors inside school

1 – Labelling

In similar way to social class, labelling theory suggests that teachers have different expectations from pupils that are predicated on attributes such as their ethnicity. These different expectations lead to labels, and the labels materialise into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Gillborn (1990) found that **'the myth of the black challenge'** leads to negative labelling of black pupils, leading to failure; they are perceived to pose a challenge for schools and teachers, and were more likely to be excluded from school.

On the other hand, the same process operates with high positive expectations from Asian pupils, leading to success.

2 – School curriculum

School curriculum can be regarded as **ethnocentric**; focusing on white British/European culture and view of the world. Thus, it is more fitting with mainstream, white and middle-class culture. Languages are primarily European (most learn French, Spanish and German), and assemblies and school holidays are centred around white British and Christian calendar.

- There are however some changes in recent years to minimise this.
- In many schools in the western world there is far greater diversity in the curriculum, languages, etc.
- The same for the celebration of various holidays and festivals, including content in assemblies and classes.

3– Institutional racism

Some sociologists perceive the British education as **institutionally racist**: with policies and procedures that may discriminate against some ethnic groups, even if unintentionally.

Wright (1992) found that despite teachers' commitment to equal opportunities, Asian girls received less attention from teachers, and African-Caribbean boys were more likely to be punished and be excluded from class.

4 – Subcultures

Pupils can form **subcultures**: both pro-school and anti-school, in alliance with other factors affecting this tendency.

- It is important to account for the role psychological factors play in this sociodemographic picture, and not just with regard to ethnicity.
- Low self-esteem, learned helplessness, and external locus-of-control.

Factors outside school

1 – Cultural deprivation

- **Language** = a barrier for children from immigrant families on arrival to the UK. But that can be a temporary obstacle. And they learn super quickly.
- **Language code** = applied to social class as well as ethnicity.
- **Labelling theory** suggests that while language may not be an obstacle in for itself, it is **dialects** or having an **accent** that can influence teachers' expectations and how it affects their labelling process and its consequences.
- Sociologists suggested that emphasis on education vary across ethnic groups: Indian and Chinese with high importance for education, leading to parental expectations and a strong desire to achieve.

2 – Material deprivation

- Relative higher rates of divorce and single-parent families within the African-Caribbean households could lead to **material deprivation** that can also influence lower expectations and achievement.
- **The Swann Report** found that socioeconomic status was a factor influencing low levels of achievement of African-Caribbean pupils.
- Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean groups are more likely to be in a lower class with occupations with lower prestige and lower income (cleaners, routine occupations such as assembly line workers). This results in poor income, periods of unemployment, living on benefits, **poverty** = material deprivation with all its manifestations and consequences.
- Chinese, African-Asian (from Indian origin who lived in Kenya and Uganda and moved to Britain during the 1970s) and Indian groups are more likely to be in higher class positions, with higher income and more prestigious jobs and are less likely to suffer from material deprivation.
- **Free meals at school** are given to children from families at the lowest income level: it can be an indicator for material deprivation in the family. And it is also used for means-tested bursaries as an indicator of eligibility including for higher education.

Evaluation

- Self-fulfilling prophecy can be reactionary and turn to **self-refuting prophecy**, to fight proactively against the label.
- Pupils may form and belong to **anti-school subculture yet be pro-education** and work hard for educational achievements, entry to university and prospective jobs and mobility.

1.5: Gender and differential achievement in education

While it used to be that women were more likely to be underachievers compared with men, since the 1980s the picture is changing:

In summary

- 1 – Girls achieve higher in primary schools with tests based on the National Curriculum.
- 2 – Girls attain better results in almost every subject in GCSEs.
- 3 – Girls are more likely to pass their A-levels.
- 4 – More women than men continue to higher university education in the UK.

Factors inside school

1 – Reasons for the previous underachievement of girls

- Teachers' low expectations.
- Textbooks and teaching resources reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Girls receiving less attention and encouragement from teachers.
- Schools encouraging passivity and deference from girls.
- Girls tending to think being intelligent is unattractive.
- Career advice being influenced by all of the above, and other factors.

2 – Reasons for girls currently outperforming boys

- Initiatives such as **GIST** (Girls into Science and Technology) and **WISE** (Women in Science and Engineering): aimed to address gender differences in choosing STEM subjects by encouraging girls to choose sciences at schools.
- The **'feminisation of education'** = teachers are overwhelmingly female and girls are more likely to look up to them and consider them a positive role model to emulate.
- Teachers focus on education with girls compared with discipline with boys.
- Also, some argue that girls have better organisational skills and strive for perfection: affecting their coursework and revision for exams.
- Teachers labelling girls as 'ideal pupils'.
- The effect of the National Curriculum and **league tables** = the need to enhance achievements and compete, especially given the increasing **marketisation** of education.
- ✚ **Archer** (2006) argues that the visible improvement in educational achievements of girls is nevertheless still 'fragile and problematic', especially with regard to particular ethnic groups: black-working-class girls being regarded as loud and

aggressive, and high-achievers Asian and Chinese girls regarded as 'robots' who lack independent thinking.

Factors outside school

- There are corresponding significant changes in the role of women in the society and economy spheres: more women are working, are in leadership positions, and are high earners. This increase matches awareness and motivation of girls towards educational achievements as a vehicle for greater independence and higher status.
- Feminist influence and positive role models and expectations.
- The change in the nature of work for women, in the labour market and the opportunities that are available for women, including online businesses that many women combine with staying at home and childcare.
- The change in family life and structure: on average women tend to marry and have children later in life.
- The change in media.
- The change in social expectations.
- Sharpe (1994) found that girls' priorities have changed and they tend to put careers first (compared with earlier prioritising of getting married and having children), they were more confident, ambitious and committed to follow their path and achieve their dreams.

A crisis of masculinity?

While some focus on factors inside and outside schools to explain how and why girls are more likely to outperform boys in recent years, others focus on a **crisis of masculinity** that contributes to the increasing trend of boys to underachieve:

- Boys might be going through an identity crisis: the rise of female independence, the decline in being a sole or major breadwinner, the loss of traditional working-class occupations, and the rise of male unemployment.
- These factors might also lead to frustration, low expectations and forming anti-school subcultures.
- Interpretivists argue that the lower expectations that teachers have towards boys can lead to labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy, which is why boys tend to be more disruptive.
- The feminisation of teaching results in boys having less and less role models to look up to, compared with girls.
- Reading can be considered a 'girl thing'; avoiding reading can affect various necessary skills, such as language, analysis and communication.

The role of subcultures

See the above arguments regarding negative labelling, sorting boys into lower streams or sets, can lead to rebellious disruptive behaviour of boys and the forming of anti-school subcultures, compared with the more likely pro-school subcultures by girls.

The role of gender and subject choice

Girls are more likely to choose essay-based A-levels such as English and Religious Studies, and boys tend to choose more technical subjects such as Math and Physics.

- Subject choice can still be influenced by socialisation.
- Science can still be perceived to be a masculine subject.
- Parental expectations and the pressure to conform for traditional social norms.
- Teachers and role models.
- See all the above 'scattered' relevant arguments at different sections.

1.6: State policy and education

The 1870 Forster Education Act introduced elementary schooling for 5-10 years old in England and Wales.

1944 Education Act (Butler Act)

- Secondary education free and compulsory.

Pupils took a test at the 11+ exam at the end of primary school and the test determines which type of school they will attend.

- Schools intended to be 'equal but different'.

The educational theory = individuals have three different types of intelligence: academic, technical or practical.

- **Tripartite system**

1- **Grammar school** = for students who are 'academic' in preparation for qualifications and university study.

2- **Technical school** = for pupils with technical intelligence in preparation for jobs in certain trades; vocational, mechanics, engineering.

3 - **Secondary modern school** = for students with practical intelligence who failed the 11+ exam; offering basic education in preparation to move straight into the job market.

Selective education

There is still a debate today about selective education, especially as grammar schools and the 11+ exist for some authorities.

- Politicians on the right, tend to endorse grammar schools, compared with left-wing politicians who tend to think they are unfair, and that the 11+ are culturally biased.
- The question of the three types of intelligence is debatable.
- The tripartite system is unfair because students can develop different skills and abilities at different stages and for different subjects.
- Grammar schools were overwhelmingly for students from the middle class, favouring white pupils; ethnocentric.

1965 Labour government and comprehensive schools

Introduced by the Labour government in the 1960s so all local pupils attend the same secondary school; for the system to provide equality of opportunities: 'a grammar school education for every child'. It is predicated on the vision for meritocracy.

By the middle of 1970s most educational authorities established comprehensive schools and no 11+.

- Despite subsequent reforms, the vast majority of pupils in the UK attend comprehensive schools. Yet they tend to be reliant on a single-class, depending on the specific population in the local area.
- Criticised for still sorting students into streams or sets depending on testing scores.
- Positive for lack of labelling that is visible by the 'name' of the school and its objectives.
- Some argue it doesn't provide the necessary employees for vocational jobs.

1976 and vocational education

Labour government, James Callaghan, Ruskin College speech:

- Argued that the education system needs to allow students to learn skills that are necessary for the job market.
- Vocationalism = link between school and work.
- Youth Training Schemes = 1983, job training for school leavers aged 16-17.
- NVQs 1986, and GNVQs 1992 = vocational courses with practical qualifications.
- The New Deal 1998 = people on benefits had to attend courses if they refuse work.

Criticism

- Vocational education doesn't teach skills, instead it teaches work discipline.
- Vocational education provides cheap labour.
- Aims to reduce unemployment statistics.
- Feminists argue that it forces girls into traditional female low-paid jobs such as beauticians and childcare.

1988 Education Reform Act

The first **GCSEs** General Certificate of Secondary Education, were first introduced in 1986 and the first exams were sat in 1987. They are aimed to provide qualifications without necessarily continuing for A-levels and university degree, for those who decided to leave school at 16.

Tests are at the end of year 11 (starting year 10).

Conservative Government, Margaret Thatcher, influenced by the **New Right**. Objectives

- Expanding choices offered by the educational system.
- Encouraging competition to create 'marketisation'.
- Tightening the link between education and the economy: offering more vocational courses and work placements.

The reforms were aimed for **marketisation**:

- Parents can choose which school to send their child (not completely free choice, depends on available places) and get information from league tables, OFSTED, etc.
- Schools attracting more students get more funding.

National curriculum

Pupils will be taught the same things = compulsory subjects for all 5-16 years old.

Core subjects with English, Math and Sciences are increased.

SATs

Standard Assessment Tests; regular and standardised.

Testing knowledge on the National Curriculum and monitoring the school, and comparing schools.

Key stage 1 SATs: May of year 2 (age 7), informal, in classroom, untimed, from 2023 non-statutory.

Key stage 2 SATs: May of year 6 (age 11), more formal compared with KS1.

League Tables

Demonstrating how schools perform compared with each other.

Formula funding = schools are funded based on a few factors but primarily on funding per child; how many students are in the school.

Local Management of Schools

Head teachers in control of budgets rather than local authorities.

Schools can withdraw from their local education authority and become grant-based schools by getting money directly from the government and utilise budget as they decide; aimed to improve standards.

OFSTED

Office for Standards in Education; was introduced later.

To inspect schools and provide information for parents to make a choice about which school to send their child.

1988 Education Reform Act

Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To raise standards• To make schools more accountable• To run schools on 'market principles' and improve efficiency/competition• To give parents (consumers) greater choice	
Details	League Tables, National Curriculum, SATS (testing), Grant Maintained Schools, Formula Funding, Open-Enrolment, Ofsted Inspections	
Evaluation	Pros	Cons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare performance of schools• Continuity between schools• Central government control• Same diet for all• Specialist schools – more choice• Schools compete – raise standards• Greater freedom for headteachers – prioritise spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political interference in education• Less choice – minority subjects gone• Quite academic• Pressure on pupils• Many students fail and feel worthless• Schools become exam factories• Do not analyse 'value added'• Create sink schools• Some schools had more money• Entry examinations re-emerged• Too much parent power

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[Marketization policies](#)

*<https://www.slideserve.com/slone/education-revision-2013>

New Labour reform (1997-2010) Third Way ideas

New Labour wanted to reduce educational inequality and introduced reforms to encourage equality of opportunities and extend the idea of marketisation:

The orientation of New Labour is based on **Third Way** ideas = to combine state intervention (old Labour) with New Right politics such as marketisation of education.

Marketisation under New Labour

- Allowed schools to specialise in certain subjects: music colleges, Mathematic colleges etc.
- Promoting diversity.
- Created **Academies** = opened new schools in disadvantaged areas where existing schools were considered to be 'failing'.
- **Interventionist policies** such as reducing infant class sizes to a maximum of 30, numeracy and literacy hour in primary schools, and trying to increase number of people moving forward to university level.
- Introducing **university tuition fees**.

Equality

- **Sure-Start centres** = compensatory education designed to narrow pre-school gaps; improve early education and childcare: free childcare and early education for all 3 and 4 years old.
- **EMA** Education Maintenance Allowance = means-tested grants to encourage education post 16 years of age.
- In Curriculum 2000 a **vocational A-levels** were introduced, for subjects like business, health and social care, leisure and recreation, and travel and tourism.
- **Education Action Zones** are groups of schools seeking to raise standards in areas of social deprivation, uniting businesses, local education authorities and parents.
- **Free school meals** and breakfast clubs, means-tested.

The vision underpinning all New Labour reforms

1 – **Equality of opportunity**

The idea that everyone is entitled to have the same opportunities: equal access to education.

Outcomes may still be unequal because of differences in potential and abilities but policies seek to guarantee the platform for **meritocracy** and **socioeconomic mobility**.

2 – **Equality of outcome**

Promoting an equal society, narrowing gaps between rich and poor and actively ensuring equal outcomes; providing support to those in need. Affirmative action/corrective policies, and nowadays: equality, diversity and inclusion.

Privatisation

In the 2010 General Election, no single party managed to win a majority in the House of Commons. Consequently, the Conservative and Liberal Democrats parties formed a coalition government with David Cameron as a Prime Minister.

- The Coalition government **accelerated privatisation** by implementing that any school rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted can apply to become an academy without a sponsor. Schools that were found failing turned into sponsored academies. The result, increasing number of schools run by private organisations.
- **Free schools** were introduced = set up by parents, teachers and religious groups and they don't need to adhere to the National Curriculum; it was argued that it will provide more choice for disadvantaged areas.
- **Changes to the National Curriculum:**
 - A-levels linear and all papers taken at the end of the 2-year course.
 - Coursework and modular exams were removed from GCSEs.
 - Formal grammar increased in English curriculum.
 - Pupil premium providing extra funding for schools with students on free meals.

Criticism

- Good teachers are recruited to the academies and free schools thereby **undermining** other local schools.
- It is **difficult to monitor** if and how pupil premium is being spent for the welfare of disadvantaged pupils rather than the school as a whole.
- The maximum **tuition fees for higher education** were raised to £9,000 per year = considered to be socially exclusive because loans available were increased as well, and debt accumulated can be threatening for working-class students.

Ball and Youdell (2007) identified two types of privatisation:

1 – **Endogenous** = from within schools: schools increasingly operate like private businesses that compete with one another and treating parents like customers; the result of marketisation.

2 – **Exogenous** = external influences because of the increasing role played by private companies within education. Academies and free schools are often run by private companies; services to schools are also provided by private external companies.

Globalisation

- UK economy is continuously influenced by globalisation and schools are affected: preparing the young generation for a global market, increase in service sector and less manufacturing jobs.
- The UK education system is competing with other countries in the global arena (international league tables).
- The UK government adjusts policies to match successful education systems such as adopting free schools as in Sweden.
- Different political systems operate differently for various reasons including the sociocultural and economic context and it can be difficult to guarantee a successful policy because of different conditions.

Policy orientations today

1 - Conservatives

- One of the ideas promoted at the 2017 General Election was to increase the number of selective grammar schools.
- Another idea was to end free school meals for all infants.

2 - Labour

- In 2017 Labour proposed to implement free tuition fees for university.
- Proposing a National Education System, similar to the NHS, unclear what exactly it is.
- Increase in funding for early years.
- Free school meals for all primary children.
- In 2019 it was proposed to cancel SAT tests altogether.

3 – Liberal Democrats

When Liberal Democrats were in government they introduced 'the pupil premium' to increase spending on disadvantaged pupils. They propose to treble the premium for pupils in early years.

1.7: Application of research methods to education

See revision guide pp. 34-35 for notes on:

- Using unstructured interviews to study anti-school subcultures.
- Using covert participant observation to investigate labelling.
- Using closed questionnaires to examine parental attitudes.
- Using official statistics to study mixed-abilities teaching.