

# Understanding culture (Education)

## How is the education system of Great Britain organised?

What was the history of the education system till the 1970s?

### Bullets

- The education system set up in 1945 favoured middle class children.
- It was popular with many parents.
- In parts of Britain, it was changed to comprehensive schools in the 1970s.

### Text

In the 1950s, most areas of England and Wales had a very similar system of education for children between the ages of 5 and 15. This had been set up as a result of the 1945 Education Act. Children all sat an examination known as the 11 + and they were allocated a school based on how they had achieved. Those seen as more academic attended Grammar Schools which taught a very academic curriculum and those seen as less able went to Secondary Modern Schools which taught practical subjects such as metal work and carpentry for boys and needlework and cookery for girls.

This system was intended to be equally fair to all children, in practice, more academic places in grammar schools were allocated to boys than girls. In addition, grammar schools, which prepared children for university and high paid jobs filled up with middle class children. By the 1960s, there was considerable concern in some areas that the system was unfair and unequal for all children. However, many parents liked the grammar schools as their children received an education that was geared to academic success.

In 1965, a weak and unpopular Labour government sent out a circular to all Education Authorities known as 10/65. This told local education authorities, which were run by local councils that they should prepare for comprehensive schools. These would be single schools taking children of all abilities regardless of their success. In some areas, local education authorities changed to this new system of educating all children with some speed. In others, local education authorities failed to submit workable plans, and in these areas, there are still grammar schools.

### Questions

- What arguments are there in favour of grammar schools?
- What arguments are there against grammar schools?

### Keywords

1. Equality - every person has the same chance.
2. Grammar Schools - teach traditional subjects.
3. Comprehensive schools - teach children of all abilities.
4. Circular 10/65 - an instruction telling education authorities to go comprehensive.

How is the school system of Great Britain organised?

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Bullets

- All children must be educated.
- Education systems change over time.
- Education systems are different in different parts of the country.
- Funding of schools varies according to the type of school.

## Text

Although most children in the UK attend local primary schools between the ages of 5 and 11, there are a variety of different types of secondary schools for children aged between 11 and 16. The reasons for this are to do with changes in government policy over time. Governments have changed their views on how schools should be organised for practical, ideological and economic reasons.

In some areas of the country there are grammar schools and secondary modern or comprehensive schools, in other areas there are just comprehensives and in some towns there are also city academies, specialist schools and colleges, independent schools and faith schools. These schools are all allocated money in different ways. Some schools can select the children that they will teach and others must take anyone who applies to them.

What you should understand is that the education system that we have now is the result of social and political change over time.

## Questions

- If you had the chance to design an education system for a country, what would it be like?

## Keywords

1. Education - Learning which can be formal or informal.
2. Grammar Schools - teach traditional subjects.
3. Comprehensive schools - teach children of all abilities.

## What was the influence of the New Right on education?

### Bullets

- Conservative governments objected to comprehensive schools.
- Conservative governments believed in market forces and competition between schools.
- They have encouraged a variety of different schools to develop.
- The Labour Party has continued with this policy.

### Text

The Conservative government of 1979 objected to comprehensive school policy. They had ideological objections to comprehensives, because they thought that education should be selective, with clever children having a different education from weaker students. In addition, many of the early comprehensive schools were not seen as successes. These new comprehensive schools were often very large consisting of two or three schools that were

# Understanding culture (Education)

combined into one new one; some were divided between two sites, sometimes miles apart, and the staff of the combined schools were put into competition for jobs and did not always work well together.

1979 was a turning point in British society because a very ideological Conservative government, led by Margaret Thatcher took power. This government is identified with a set of beliefs known as New Right. The New Right believe that no rules are needed for society because economic factors (market forces) can be relied upon. This impacted on schools, because the New Right believed that they could only improve if they were encouraged to be competitive with each other for students. One of the ways that they did this was by ensuring that local authorities schools were given more control over their own money and also that they were funded by the number of pupils that they taught.

This belief in market forces, along with other New Right priorities of training people for work and creating value for money had far-reaching effects on the system of education in Britain. This process of having different types of schools and funding was developed and adapted rather than stopped by the incoming Labour government of 1997.

## Questions

- What problems were there with early comprehensive schools?
- What are the features of New Right thinking about human behaviour?
- Should schools compete for the best students?

## Keywords

1. Conservatism - a belief in the importance of traditional values and competition.
2. Market forces - the idea that human behaviour is governed by the economy.
3. New Right - very traditional form of Conservatism.

## What types of schools are there?

### Bullets

- Schools are funded with public and private money.
- Some schools are controlled by local authorities but others are controlled by businesses or charities.
- There are many different forms of school.

### Text

There are different methods of funding schools and different types of schools. In practice, the types of schools that you might find in an area depend on where you are in the country.

Community schools are owned by local authorities who allocate money and employ staff. This is probably the most common type of school. These include grammar schools, comprehensive schools, and secondary modern schools.

Foundation schools have more freedom than community schools because the governing body can select pupils and employ staff. These schools may include comprehensives and

# Understanding culture (Education)

grammar schools.

Voluntary-aided schools are owned by charities and they employ staff. They may be religious faith schools. City Technology Colleges are independent from Local Authorities, but do not charge fees. They tend to offer vocational qualifications.

City Academies which are independent from local authorities and many are funded by businesses or charities. They were often set up on the sites of failing schools and many offer vocational education. They have been controversial

In some areas you might also find Independent Schools that are usually run as businesses and charge fees to parents. There are approximately 2,300 such schools in the country.

Specialist schools have extra funding to establish a centre of excellence in certain subject areas, although they must teach the whole curriculum. There are over 2,600 such schools in England. In Wales, you will also find community schools that teach through the medium of the Welsh language.

## Questions

- Should parents be able to pay to get better education for their children than others can afford?

## Keywords

1. Local authorities - These run by councils and they administer their education service among other things.
2. Vocational education - education for work.

## Do schools vary in quality?

### Bullets

- There is still concern that the education system in Britain is complicated.
- Wealthier children still appear to do better than poorer children.
- Schools with good results are better funded than schools in poorer areas.

### Text

Schools vary differently in quality. League tables of results are published and in theory parents can choose the schools that they wish to send their children to. In practice, popular schools can select the pupils that they want to teach. Other schools may have to take any pupils who apply. The Government has created an advice website for parents.

Despite the efforts that have been made to improve schools by governments since the 1940s, there is still concern that standards in many schools are very low.

In addition, in 2003, additional money was given to popular schools with good results so that they could expand to take on more pupils.

In areas where there is a lot of competition for places in popular schools, parents have



# Understanding culture (Education)

resorted to all kinds of strategies to ensure that their children attend those schools. This is possibly easier for wealthier parents than poorer parents

## Questions

- What could be done to improve the education system in Britain?

## Keywords

1. League tables - school results are public and published in newspapers.

## What is the purpose of education?

### What is the purpose of education?

#### Bullets

- Everyone learns throughout their lives.
- Learning is when people seek knowledge.
- Education is when knowledge is provided for people.
- Informal education is acquired through life.
- Formal education takes place in special organisations.
- Non-formal education is acquired through classes and clubs.

#### Text

Learning is the process of acquiring a new skill or knowledge. People learn throughout their lives. We need to acquire new skills and new knowledge quickly. Adults teach children and each other things that they need for their culture to survive. In the past and in many developing countries this would have been done through child labour. Children would learn directly from adults as they worked. Much information would have been passed on through speech and few people would have required even the basic skills to write their own names though more would have been able to read than could write. Even today, we learn necessary skills from people around us and this process is known as informal education (socialisation).

Education is a process whereby people pass on knowledge or skills. Formal education systems where children were taught specific skills and tested in their knowledge developed through religious institutions in Britain in the Middle Ages. Few children were educated; it was not thought necessary to educate girls. The first government Act imposing compulsory education in Britain was in 1880 and then partly it was designed to end child labour in factories and only affected children aged 5 - 10. It also served the purpose of providing a trained workforce who could operate new machines and technology.

In addition, many people enjoy non-formal education in clubs and classes of various kinds. They may gain certificates or simply acquire new skills that they require. This is associated with the idea of lifelong learning where people acquire new skills necessary to deal with a changing society. The differences between formal and non-formal education are not

# Understanding culture (Education)

always distinct; not all classes in school have examinations and evening classes may be very academic.

## Questions

- What is the difference between education and learning?
- What are the differences between formal and informal education?
- Why do people require lifelong learning?

## Keywords

1. Learning - this is when new skills are acquired by a learner.
2. Education - this is the process of passing on skills and information.
3. Formal education - This is provided in institutions whose purpose is to offer teaching and to test student progress.
4. Informal education - People learn things through the process of living their lives.
5. Non-formal education - people attend classes and social groups to learn for the pleasure of learning.

## Education is a system for the socialisation of young people

### Bullets

- Schools socialise children into cultural values.
- Schools impose rules and authority.
- Education also passes on expected values and attitudes that socialise children, but which may not be obvious even to the teachers who pass them on.

### Text

Socialisation is the process of learning the rules and knowledge valued by a culture. One of the most important agencies of secondary socialisation is the education system. It is known as an agency of formal socialisation, because schools and education systems deliberately set out to influence people's behaviour. This process is known as social control

Schools exist to control behaviour. Children are taught to obey authority and respect rules. This is done through a series of complex processes, some of which children are fully aware - discipline systems, punishments, rule books. Some of the things that children are taught are not obvious, but nevertheless still form part of the socialisation process. The socialisation which children are not aware of was first described by a number of writers and is associated with Phillip Jackson among others. Jackson said that if they are to succeed, pupils do not just require knowledge, but also conformity to the socially acceptable behaviour of the school. This deeper knowledge is termed the 'hidden curriculum' and describes the attitudes and approaches of the whole school. Pat McNeil (1986) says that this includes knowledge such as how to get on with teachers and other pupils, how to cope with boredom and how to conform.

The term hidden curriculum is now most often used by feminists and Marxists to describe the ways that social class and gender can be passed on by schools. Feminists such as Dale Spender in the 1970s pointed out that school reading books often showed girls cooking and helping mummy, whereas boys were allowed to have adventures and to be active.

# Understanding culture (Education)

Abbot and Wallace show that although teachers are female, managers in schools are often males. Stanworth suggested that teachers underestimated the abilities of girls.

## Questions

- What unwritten rules do you need to succeed in school?
- What elements of the hidden curriculum can you identify in your school or college?

## Keywords

1. Socialisation - the process of learning the rules for society.
2. Hidden curriculum - the values that are passed on by schools without people realising.

## Schools pass on valued knowledge

### Bullets

- Middle class culture is more highly valued than working class culture.
- Schools pass on middle class values to children.
- Middle class children learn that they can succeed.
- Working class children are rejected by schools and they in turn reject schools.
- Middle class children have access to cultural capital and this helps them succeed in education.

### Text

High culture refers to the kinds of knowledge that often require some education to appreciate fully: art, classical music, ballet, opera, and literature. This is associated with middle class values and is transmitted through schools. Mass culture is the kind of knowledge that people have from the media and tends to be working class culture. It includes knowledge of sports, entertainment and does not require education, though it can be just as difficult to acquire as high culture. Not all knowledge is equally valued by society, and it is high culture that is passed on by teachers and schools.

One of the most influential writers in this area is Pierre Bourdieu (1986). He says that schools value middle class knowledge more than they value working class culture. This gives some children an advantage in school because they are socialised into the same values as teachers. Pierre Bourdieu uses the term cultural capital to describe knowledge and skills valued by society which enables people who have them to succeed in life and have more respect. Bourdieu says many working class children come to be aware, through socialisation that the education system operates to rules that they don't understand. They eliminate themselves from competition by leaving schools early. This is supported by many writers, including Robin Nash who says that the ways that teachers and pupils interact are often affected by cultural capital, so that teachers may treat children differently because of their awareness of the family background.

## Questions

- What evidence is there that middle class culture is seen as 'better' than working class culture?

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Explain the concept of cultural capital.
- Suggest ways in which children with cultural capital may find school less difficult than those without cultural capital.

## Keywords

1. High culture - knowledge of the culture that requires education to understand.
2. Mass culture - knowledge that is accessible to anyone.
3. Cultural capital - knowledge that is valued by people who control the education system.
4. Media - forms of communication that reach large numbers of people at a time.

## Schools train children for work

### Bullets

- Vocational education is concerned with preparing people for the needs of employers.
- In the past, this meant training people for low pay, low status work.
- Since the 1980s, vocationalism has been an important part of British education.
- Modern vocational thinking is associated with the key skills agenda and ICT training because industry requires people to be flexible, easily trained and cope with new technologies as they emerge.

### Text

State education systems are associated with the need to prepare people for work. This is known as vocationalism. In the past, vocationalism was associated with low ability students. In the 1950s in secondary modern schools, less academic boys would be trained in craft skills and girls would be trained in domestic sciences to become housewives. This type of education was low status and did not allow children to go to college or university but kept some people in low pay work.

In the 1970s, James Callaghan, a Labour Prime Minister made a famous speech in Ruskin College, Oxford, where he said that Britain was falling behind its industrial competitors because the education system failed to produce skilled and motivated workers. This has affected government policy and thinking for over 30 years. It influenced many of the changes made by the Conservative governments of 1979 -1997. It formed the basis of National Curriculum. There is still a strong vocational agenda in British schools and colleges that involves examinations, key skills and portfolio approaches to learning.

In the 1990s, there has been a realisation that many high status jobs such as law and medicine also require vocational skills. This has resulted in an agenda in British schools to work on transferable skills and ICT. In addition, there has been a big push to increase the status of Vocational Qualifications such as GNVQ so that people have a variety of routes to higher education other than a traditional route.

### Questions

- What is the difference between training and education?
- Which political party introduced vocationalism into British schools for all children?

# Understanding culture (Education)

- What features of the British education system are associated with vocational training?
- Do vocational qualifications such as GNVQ have the same status as traditional academic subjects in schools and colleges?

## Keywords

1. Vocational education - education for work.
2. National Curriculum - subjects set by government for all children to learn.
3. Transferable skills - The kinds of underlying abilities that are useful in any job: ICT, literacy, social skills, numeracy and thinking skills.

## Education provides children with opportunities to improve their lives

### Bullets

- Education is a route out of poverty for children.
- In the past working class children who went to grammar schools could aim for high status work.
- There is less high status work available now.
- Working class children achieve far lower grades than middle class children.
- Government policies aim to make schools solve the problem of inequality in society by ensuring that working class children have better grades.

### Text

Success in education is the best and most reliable way for people to improve their lives and escape from poorer backgrounds. Functionalists such as Parsons believe that this is the main purpose of the education system, though other sociologists have argued strongly that in reality, those who do best in the education system are already advantaged in other ways.

Historically in Wales, a high value was placed on educational success for children, because it was a route out of poverty. Welsh miners were famous for their libraries and learning and they encouraged their sons to aim for professional work. In the 1950s and 1960s, those who attended grammar schools were the only children educated in the subjects needed to go to university. Working class children who won a place at a grammar school could aim for middle class jobs, and as more middle class jobs became available, many people changed their social class.

Since the 1980s, there has been less movement between the social classes (social mobility), and British society has become more unequal in many ways. The government is aware of this and sees it as a problem. In 2006, 75% of pupils who received free school meals failed to achieve 5 GCSE passes A\* - C. This has led to changes in policy that affect the ways that teachers teach. Schools have been told to improve the behaviour of children, to provide individual learning plans for children and for poorer achieving schools to learn from the success of higher achieving schools.

### Questions

- What do functionalists think is the main purpose of education?

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Why was a high value placed on education in Wales in the past?
- To what extent do British schools offer children the opportunity to improve their lives?
- Is it the role of schools to correct problems in society?

## Keywords

1. Social mobility - movement between social classes.

## Is the education system meritocratic?

### Is the education system meritocratic?

#### Bullets

- Meritocracy is the belief that the best people will do well in education and get the best jobs.
- The British education system aims to provide equal opportunity for all to do well.
- This aim is built into school policy and government control systems for schools.

#### Text

One of the main understandings of the functionalist view of the education system is that it acts as a ladder of opportunity for people to achieve the best that they can, according to their ability. The best people will then go on to gain the best jobs and become the leaders of their society. This belief is known as meritocracy. How true is this picture of the education system? Do all children have an equal chance to do well?

The education system in Britain since World War 2 has operated under the principle of providing equal opportunity for all pupils. This can be illustrated in a number of ways.

All schools are expected to have equal opportunities policies, and for this to be open for anyone to see. This means that all teachers must abide by the policy, and that all governors in schools should ensure that the policies are carried out. More importantly, governors are expected to discuss the effectiveness of the equal opportunity policy at governing body meetings.

Other government bodies also have a duty to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in schools. One of the most important of such bodies is the QCA, or Qualifications and Curriculum Authority who oversee all examination systems in the UK and a statement regarding equality can be seen in all examination specifications that have been approved by QCA. Equally all school inspections report on the extent to which schools provide equality of opportunity for their pupils. The Department for Education and Skills website has an equality statement as its opening sentence referring to 'all' children, specifically.

#### Questions

- What is meritocracy?
- What is the purpose of school policy?
- How aware are you of your school's Equality Policy?



# Understanding culture (Education)

## Keywords

1. Meritocracy - those with the highest ability will rise to the top in any society.
2. Education - this is the process of passing on skills and information.
3. QCA - Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

## What laws govern equality?

### Bullets

- Since the 1970s there have been laws making equality a right.
- These laws have been updated.
- Government agencies exist to ensure that equality is promoted.
- Schools and colleges are expected to be inclusive; this means to provide access to all learners.

### Text

The social unrest of the 1960s drew attention to the fact that certain groups within society did not have the same access to human or equality rights as others. This gave rise to laws protecting the rights of individuals in work and public places. It is agreed that certain groups still do not have full equality in certain areas of life, but nevertheless, laws do protect people's rights in other areas.

The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and other laws mean that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender in the UK. Complaints may be made to courts if schools are seen to offer opportunities to one gender and not the other. The Race Relations Act (1976) and the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) mean that all public organisations have a duty to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote equality between people of different ethnic groups. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) is more recent and means that schools must make adjustments in order that disabled students are not disadvantaged by the facilities or the curriculum.

In educational terms, these Acts have had an impact on how schools are required to think about people who experience difficulties or disadvantage. Since the 1990s, with the publication of the Tomlinson Report on Inclusive Further Education (1996), one of the strongest themes in educational thinking has been 'inclusion'. Schools and educational institutions are expected to adapt their courses, and teaching styles to the needs of the students who use them, so that all learners have equal access to education and learning.

### Questions

- When were the first laws against discrimination on the basis of gender and ethnicity introduced in Britain?
- Suggest reasons why it is necessary to have laws against discrimination.
- Should governments legislate against inequality and unfair treatment? What is your view?

## Keywords

1. Discriminate - to take actions that are unfair to certain groups or individuals.

# Understanding culture (Education)

2. Inclusion - people should have equal access to opportunities and social organisations.

## What is equality?

### Bullets

- Equality of opportunity is when people have the same rights and opportunities.
- British society does offer equality of opportunity, with some exceptions.
- Equality of outcome is when people actually do as well or as badly in the proportion in which they appear in the population.
- British society does not have equality of outcome, and in many cases, inequalities are widening.
- The main areas of inequality are social class, gender, ethnicity and locality.

### Text

A H Halsey suggested that there are two tests of whether equality has actually been achieved in a society. The first of these is equality of opportunity. If everyone has the right to the same opportunities, then a degree of equality has been achieved. British society has largely achieved equality of opportunity. The government wants schools to be meritocratic, and offer equal opportunities. It has mostly succeeded in this test of its ability to meet its own targets.

However, according to Halsey, there is a more stringent test of equality and this is known as equality of outcome. Equality of outcome is when people appear in social institutions in the same proportions in which they occur in the whole society. If 8% of the population comes from an ethnic minority, then equality of outcome is when ethnic minorities form 8% of educational success, have 8% of the best jobs and form only 8% of people in prison. The pattern of society is very different, and ethnic minorities are under-represented in the best jobs and over-represented in prison.

It is this second test of equality that British society fails. Statistics show that people who belong in certain social groups are more likely to go on to have good jobs and powerful positions in society, whereas members of other social groups form the majority of the poor and disadvantaged. Study of education statistics suggests that in fact, the British education system favours members of some social groups and disadvantages others quite significantly. Certain individuals may do well if they come from disadvantaged groups, but in general, the pattern of evidence suggests that they will have to work harder to succeed. The social factors that appear to influence an individual's chances of educational success are: gender, ethnicity, social class and type or quality of school attended. This can be seen in data produced by the Government on their statistics website.

### Questions

- Who defined inequality in terms of opportunity and outcome?
- What is the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome?
- Why is it necessary to distinguish between opportunity and outcome?

### Keywords

# Understanding culture (Education)

1. Equality - people have the same life chances.
2. Equality of opportunity - when people have the same rights and opportunities.
3. Equality of outcome - when people actually do as well or as badly in the proportion in which they appear in the population.

## Are schools equally good?

### Bullets

- Not all schools are equally as good.
- Some people in Britain can afford expensive schools by paying fees.
- Schools with the best results have middle class, wealthy students.
- It is possible that the results are to do with the quality of students rather than the quality of teaching and education offered.

### Text

Schools are not all equal. Some schools have far different facilities, more money and better trained staff than others. It is accepted that a parent's choice of school can have an impact on the quality of education that a child receives. Governments since the 1980s have tried to improve schools by offering parents choices about which schools they should send their children to and developing competition between schools to provide the best service.

Britain has a fee-paying sector in education which is also known as the independent sector. Parents pay money to schools which are run as businesses. These schools benefit from large amounts of tax-free income because they qualify as charities. Some of the best of these schools have excellent results, but there are many schools with limited facilities and poor pay for teachers as well. Not all of these schools are as good as the best. However, what they do have in common is that they prepare children for places at the universities with good reputations.

In the state sector, there are many different types of schools as well. Some are far better funded and have very much better facilities than others. The government tries to give parents information regarding the quality of schools in a number of ways. Inspection reports are available on the Internet and parents are encouraged to visit schools to choose the best for their children. League tables showing the differences in results produced by schools at GCSE were introduced in 1992. The introduction of parental choice and information now means that houses in the catchment areas of good schools have become very expensive and it is known that parents will move to live in catchment areas for schools with good examination results. Anecdotal evidence has been supported by work that has been done by Reay and Lucey. Some parents have been known to lie and cheat to get their children into schools with good results.

The problem is that it is difficult to know whether schools that produce good examination results are actually the best schools. Karl Turner found that schools with high percentages of pupils with free school meals were unlikely to get good inspection reports. Schools with the best examination results tend to be single sex female, fee paying or in very wealthy areas and which select their pupils. Are their good results because they are better schools, have better facilities or because they have more advantaged pupils? Schools have various

# Understanding culture (Education)

ways of improving their examination results, such as encouraging clever children to sit extra examinations or excluding difficult students before their examinations.

## Questions

- What is an independent school?
- Should parents be allowed to buy privileged education for their children?
- Are examination results the best way of telling the differences in the quality of education provided between schools?

## Keywords

1. Independent school - parents pay fees to educate their children.
2. League tables - schools' results at GCSE are published for parents to see.
3. Value added data - results are adapted to show what students achieved against what they were predicted to achieve based on SATS results.

## Are all children equal?

### Bullets

- Schools are not all equally good.
- Poorer children tend to do less well than wealthier children.
- It might be possible that the problem does not lie with schools, but with the structure of society.
- If that is the cause of the problem, then is it to do with people's poverty or their attitudes?
- The government is spending huge sums tackling poverty by addressing school improvement, but if the issue is social, then this money is wasted.

### Text

The government has struggled to make British education more equal by focussing on schools. However, children only spend about 14% of their time in school. Sociologists have been concerned to look at what happens in homes. There is a long standing and well known connection between family income and examination results. Children from poorer homes tend to do less well in the education system than children from wealthy backgrounds. Children from the poorest families may be a year developmentally behind wealthy children before they even get to school. About 25% of children with free school meals gain 5 good GCSE passes compared to the national average of about 50%. Children from poorer homes tend to have a negative view of the education system compared to wealthy children.

Stephen Gorard and Peter Tymms (2006) said that pupils' examination results and schools' positions in league tables are affected by family wealth and pupil's prior ability. This relationship may be to do with factors that are beyond the control of parents: poor diet, poor health, lack of resources. However, there is also a strong argument, particularly from government, that suggests it can also be the result of poor parenting, poor parental education, broken families and lack of self-esteem. For example, Hibbert et al (1990) found that persistent truancy and non-attendance among children were linked to poor examination results, low status work, marital instability and offending in adult life

# Understanding culture (Education)

Despite a whole sequence of government initiatives and programmes such as Sure Start, Educational Maintenance Allowance, Connexions and Excellence in Cities, which have received billions of £s, it remains true in Britain that children from poorer families do not achieve the same examination results as children from wealthy families. In May 2007, Education Secretary, Alan Johnson announced that another £1 billion would be spent by 2011 on addressing educational inequality. He said "It is now harder to climb the social ladder in Britain than anywhere else in Europe." However, Aldridge (2001) an economist says 'the barriers against bright working class children succeeding are quite low, the safeguards against failure enjoyed by dull middle class children are quite strong'. The evidence therefore suggests that among children with the same measured intelligence, middle class children experience more success in school than working class children.

## Questions

- What does the government feel is the cause of educational inequality?
- Suggest reasons from your own experience why some children tend to do less well in school than others even though they are clearly intelligent.
- Does Britain have a meritocratic system of education?

## Keywords

1. Truancy - taking time from without good cause.

## What are the patterns of achievement for students of different ethnicities?

What patterns of achievement are there for students of different ethnicities?

## Bullets

- Different ethnic groups appear to have differing levels of achievement in school.
- There has been concern about the achievement levels of certain black minorities.
- Close examination of the statistics suggests that in fact, white working class boys are the worst performing educational group.
- Sociologists have difficulty in measuring the impact of ethnicity on achievement because other factors may be involved.

## Text

It was not until 2003 that the government first published statistics showing GCSE pass-rates across different ethnic groups. Nevertheless it has been known for a long time that different ethnic groups appear to have differing rates of attainment in the education system. Statistics show that Indian, Chinese, and African-Asian pupils consistently have higher levels of achievement than other ethnic groups across all the Key Stages. In contrast, Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Gypsy/traveller pupils consistently have lower levels of attainment than other ethnic groups across all the Key Stages.

There is a general concern about the achievement level of Black minorities. For example, there is data to show that they are far more likely to be permanently excluded from school



# Understanding culture (Education)

than other ethnicities. However, official results published in November 2007 show that Black pupils are closing the educational gap at GCSE. The numbers of Black Caribbean pupils achieving five good GCSEs has shown almost double the national increase, meaning that the gap has narrowed by eight percentage points in four years. An interesting fact about the current education system is that the worst performing group (in terms of achieving five A\*-C grades at GCSE) is white working-class boys.

It follows therefore that sociologists have a difficult task in isolating and quantifying any link between low achievement in schools and ethnicity. How do they measure the impact of ethnicity over any of the many other factors that can affect how well an individual does in the education system?

## Questions

- When did the government start to collect data on ethnicity and attainment?
- Which ethnic groups appear to achieve better than the national averages?
- Which ethnic groups appear to achieve worse than the national averages?
- Which social group appears to be the lowest achieving in education?

## Keywords

1. Ethnicity - sense of culture or nationality to which a person belongs.
2. Exclusion - being banned from school for a set amount of time (or perhaps permanently).

## Ethnic achievement and social class

### Bullets

- There are measurable differences in achievement between different ethnic groups.
- Some writers claim that there are ethnic differences in intelligence levels. The supporting evidence is weak.
- The key factor behind educational achievement appears to be social-class.
- Gender is also a factor in achievement with females outperforming males in every ethnic group.

### Text

Although some writers such as H J Eysenck and the geneticist, James Watson have claimed that there are differences in ability between various ethnic groups and 'races', the evidence for this view is very poor indeed. Intelligence tests are often culture bound; it is difficult for someone to succeed in a test not designed for their culture. No ethnic group is naturally less capable than any other although we can identify patterns of achievement associated with ethnic groups. It is important to recognise that there is significant individual variation in achievement within each group. Many black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils will excel and some Chinese pupils will fail.

The biggest factor in determining achievement in school is social class background. Studies of ethnic underachievement often ignore the obvious: if ethnic minorities are working-class then we should expect them to perform like most other members of the working-class, which is to underachieve. However, sociologists need to consider whether ethnic groups are performing even lower than we would expect them to do from their



# Understanding culture (Education)

social class location.

Just as the white ethnic group is represented across the social classes, so it follows that this is the case for minority ethnic groups too. Some, like the Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi community, often seem to be within the working-class. In addition, sociologists note how in every minority ethnic group females perform better than males. So whilst ethnicity plays a part in achievement at schools and colleges, it is part of a complex combination of social class and gender factors too. In attempting to understand the role ethnicity may play in shaping educational achievement we need to recognise other factors both outside and inside school that can play a part too.

## Questions

- What is the evidence that some ethnic groups and races are less intelligent than others said to be weak?
- What other social factors can affect patterns of achievement?
- Can membership of a minority ethnic group be said to 'cause' low achievement in school?

## Keywords

1. 'Race' - 'Race' is a problematic term for sociologists, so is put in quotation marks. It refers to the categorisation of people on the basis of biological differences.
2. Ethnicity - a sense of the culture or nationality to which a person belongs
3. culture bound - heavily influenced by the culture which produced it.
4. Working class - people who work with their hands or have low level educational skills.

## Ethnicity and intelligence

### Bullets

- Open racists have attempted to prove some cultural groups to be inferior.
- The evidence to support these arguments is very weak.
- There must be questions about the motivation of anyone who wishes to prove that other people are of lower ability, lesser status or unequal value.

### Text

In the past there was an openly racist debate furthered by people like Arthur Jensen and Hans Eysenck who said that black students have genetically lower levels of intelligence than whites. This debate was revisited in the 1990s by Herrnstein and Murray (1994) who argued a similar case. In 2006 a campaign across university campuses around the country was launched against Frank Ellis, a lecturer at Leeds University after he claimed that black people and women are genetically inferior. The case has been rejected by most people, but still occasionally surfaces in public debates.

The argument centres on whether there is such a thing as intelligence and if it can be measured accurately. Intelligence testing has sometimes suggested that there may be differences between social groups; however, intelligence tests have been criticised as reflecting the culture and the knowledge of the writer of the test. Importantly, there are other factors that can affect a developing child's measured intelligence: language

# Understanding culture (Education)

development, education, health, nutrition, confidence, expectations and home environment. There are no identified genes for intelligence. Most tests do not measure the ability to learn, just evidence of past learning. In addition, most people have a very mixed biological genetic heritage and very few belong to any of the 'races' identified in any kind of measurable sense.

There is a serious question as to why anyone would want to know that 'race' has an impact on intelligence. It is argued by the psychologist, Sternberg (2005) that people who wish to prove another 'race' to be inferior do this for social rather than scientific reasons. The evidence is that when environmental factors, such as the high proportion of Blacks who live in poverty are taken into account, differences in IQ (measured intelligence) are sharply reduced. White students from similar backgrounds tend to perform just as badly.

## Questions

- What arguments can be used to suggest there is little difference between the intelligence of different ethnic groups?
- Why would people need or want to prove that some ethnic groups are of lower intelligence than others.

## Keywords

1. Measurable - can be measured.
2. 'Race' - 'Race' is a problematic term for sociologists, so is put in quotation marks. It refers to the categorisation of people on the basis of biological differences.

## Social Class, ethnicity and poverty

### Bullets

- Members of minority ethnic groups are vulnerable to poverty.
- There are high levels of unemployment among some groups.

### Text

Modood et al(1997) pointed out that the ethnic groups with the poorest achievement levels - Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black-Caribbeans - tend to be located within the working-class. On the other hand, the relative success of the Indian ethnic group and African-Asians can be explained because they are often located within the middle-class. Research by Cassen and Kingdon for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2007) identified the key characteristic of low achievers as coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (qualifying for free school meals), living in areas of high unemployment, and having single parents who themselves have poor qualifications.

Government statistics show that 70% of Bangladeshi pupils and almost 60% of Pakistani and Black African pupils live in the 20% most deprived postcode areas compared to less than 20% of White British pupils. Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are also more likely than other groups to live in households where the head of household has never worked or is long term unemployed. Access to free school meals is viewed as a good indicator of deprivation and a close relationship exists between free school meals and underachievement. Two-thirds (66%) of Gypsy and Traveller pupils are eligible for free

# Understanding culture (Education)

school meals in primary schools compared to 18% of all pupils. There are also higher than average proportions of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, mixed-race and African-Caribbean pupils who are eligible for free school meals, across primary and secondary schools.

Richard Berthoud (1998) used data produced for the Family Resources survey and discovered that Indian, Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were very vulnerable to poverty. Incomes are low, and often only one partner works. If there are a number of children, this results in child poverty. He discovered that after basic needs had been deducted from income, there was less money available than in White households.

## Questions

- Which ethnic groups are likely to experience poverty?
- Why are those ethnic groups vulnerable to poverty?

## Keywords

1. Deprivation - to be without things that others take for granted.

## Family values

### Bullets

- There is a relationship between parental interest and children's educational attainment
- This relationship is not clear, and there are barriers to some parents.
- Some sociologists suggest that language issues may handicap some children.
- Some writers are critical of certain family types, believing them to contribute to educational failure.
- Many ethnic minority communities support education and encourage their children.

### Text

There is a strong belief that parental interest is important in raising standards in education. In 1997, a White Paper, Excellence in Schools was published. This set out three routes for parents to become more active participants in schools: providing information, becoming parent governors and feeding back to inspectors. Desforges (2003) for the DfES suggested that parental involvement is more important than class in terms of educational attainment. However, others argue there are limits to the degree to which parents can become involved in their children's education for reasons such as poverty, depression, low literacy skills, inappropriate support from schools.

Language has been an area researched by sociologists to explain differential educational achievement by ethnic groups. In some Asian households English is not the main language. However, Cassen and Kingdon (JRF, 2007) found that not speaking English at home was only 'a short-lived handicap', overcome by most pupils by the time they attended secondary school. However, Mac an Ghaill (1988) found that the 'Creole' or 'patois' spoken by African-Caribbeans could cause problems; either through causing misunderstandings for them or not being understood by teachers.

A number of sociologists have suggested that the nature of family life affects achievement

# Understanding culture (Education)

among ethnic minorities. The New Right has criticised single-parent families - a common family type within the Caribbean community. Writers such as Murray and Saunders have suggested that Caribbeans have a family life that is demotivating to boys who grow up without a father-figure. In addition, the New Right point to the fact that large numbers of Caribbean mothers work full-time and unsocial hours. This inevitably results in practical problems of time and money in supporting their children's education and could be a factor in poor Caribbean achievement in school.

Tizzard et al. (1988) found great enthusiasm for educational success in the African-Caribbean community. They encourage of 'Saturday schools' which are typically found in every city with a sizeable Black population. These are schools organised by black community. Within the South Asian community, especially the Indian and African-Asian group, education is seen as a 'positive resource' that helps gain access into the professions and upward social mobility. Parents have high aspirations for their children's education, and parental encouragement and expectations may well be a major contributory factor towards their children's success.

Bhatti (1999) found that many Asian parents valued education but they had very little understanding of the systems by which schools are run. They found schools unwelcoming and unsupportive. The children experienced racism, but the schools did not deal with it effectively. There was little interest in Asian culture in British schools and little positive acknowledgement of the cultural differences.

## Questions

- What difficulties could ethnic minority parents experience in supporting their children?
- In what ways do members of ethnic minorities support their children?

## Keywords

1. Saturday schools - Weekend schools run by and for ethnic minorities to compensate for poor performance within traditional state schools.
2. Demotivating - puts people off something
3. New Right - a political viewpoint associated with Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Governments of the 1980s. It believed that competition was good for society and that poor people were poor because of welfare benefits.
4. White Paper - a Government report outlining possible future policy.
5. aspirations - hopes and ambitions.
6. Dowry - a payment made to the husband's family on marriage.
7. Racism - discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, culture or religion.

## Peer pressure or racism?

### Bullets

- Tony Sewell and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill suggest African Caribbean boys have an anti-school culture.
- Other writers suggest that schools are racist and discriminate against African Caribbean boys.
- Some African Caribbean parents would like Black only schools to counter racism.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

Tony Sewell (1997) identified peer pressure and street culture as a key factor to explain why many Black-Caribbean pupils' achievement declines through secondary school. He sees the high number of boys who grow up in female single-parent families as a factor, and points out that this makes boys vulnerable to negative influences of peer pressure and street culture. Boys are attracted to a culture of masculinity which undermines the value of schooling and education qualifications. Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (1988) illustrates this attitude with his description of the 'Rastas' who arrived late, disturbed other students, interrupted teachers, tried to cause arguments and talked incessantly.

Critics of Sewell argue that he ignores a racist ethnocentric hidden curriculum, teacher attitudes and policies of the educational system. Andrew Pilkington (1999) argues research should centre around two key questions. Is there evidence of racially discrimination in the allocation of pupils to sets/streams? Is there evidence of racially discrimination in the classrooms? Cecile Wright (1992) researched four inner-city primary schools and found evidence that teachers treated ethnic minority children differently from White children. David Gillborn (1990) found something similar in secondary education. He believes underachievement amongst ethnic minority groups is due to racism.

Gillborn and Youdell (2001) found evidence that racism is still a key factor in educational underachievement. In a study of two London schools they found black children were the lowest achieving group when they left school after GCSEs despite being the highest achieving group when they started. Working-class and black pupils were more likely to be allocated to lower sets than middle class children doing work of the same standard. They were also less likely to be entered for higher tiers of GCSE.

Smith and Tomlinson (1989) studied 2,400 pupils aged 11-16 years from a range of ethnic groups who attended 18 multi-ethnic comprehensives. They found achievement levels varied enormously, suggesting that schools could make a significant difference to children of all ethnic groups.

African-Caribbeans have the highest exclusion rate, three times the rate of white pupils. Bourne et al (1994) explain this as White teachers feeling threatened. Others suggest it results from behaviour that stems from frustrations of racism. In schools there is an under-representation of black teachers who account for just 1.5% of the profession (7% in London). In 2007 the Reach group called for more positive role models from within Black boy's own communities consisting of lawyers, doctors and teachers.

Trevor Phillips of the Committee for Racial Equality in 2004 said that many Black parents want separate classes for Black pupils in state schools. Some African-Caribbean parents suggest the creation of 'Black schools' to foster a positive image of Black identity. Equally the Muslim community argues that education for their children should be based on Islam. They point out that 'mainstream' religious schools (Anglican, Roman Catholic and Jewish) receive government aid and so it is discriminating to refuse the same aid to Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. A fear of Islamic fundamentalism appears to have dampened this enthusiasm, but interest in Faith Schools has been revived in the Education White Paper (2006).

## Questions



# Understanding culture (Education)

- What evidence is there of racism in British schools?
- Should there be single ethnicity schools? What are the arguments for and against?

## Keywords

1. Creole - language associated with Caribbean descendents.
2. A-C Economy - The emphasis most schools place on getting as many pupils as possible to achieve 5 GCSEs at grade C.
3. Educational triage - a term associated with Gillborn and Youdell. Triage is a medical term used to prioritise patient's needs. They argue a process of sifting goes on in the education system whereby blacks and the working-class lose out.
4. Ethnocentric -to adopt a viewpoint of the world from one's own culture.
5. Hidden curriculum - the values that are passed on by schools without people realising.
6. Institutionalised racism - term used to describe the presence of racism within mainstream institutions and organizations, including schools and colleges.
7. Saturday schools - Weekend schools run by and for ethnic minorities to compensate for poor performance within traditional state schools.

## Gender and ethnicity

### Bullets

- The improving performance of black females shows achievement levels are not static but are changing over time.
- Black females appear to adopt a subculture that is pro-education but anti-school (Fuller, Mac an Ghaill, Mirza).
- Black girls practice resistance. They do not accept a view of themselves that is negative.

### Text

In 2004 results showed that black girls were scoring higher grades than white boys for the first time. Studies by people such as Mary Fuller (1980), Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (1991), and Heidi Mirza (1992) all reflected how African-Caribbean females did better than African-Caribbean males.

Fuller's study showed how black girls work hard as a way of challenging the racism that is part of their lives. This attitude was a feature of the 'Black sisters' studied by Mac an Ghaill. In school they did the work but had negative attitude as well. They did this to ensure that they were successful in their exams, but they still challenged teacher's racist attitudes. Mirza found that Black girls (74%) were more likely to aim for professional jobs compared to White girls (35%) and Black boys (27%)

Geoffrey Driver (1980) surveyed school leavers in five inner-city schools and found that African-Caribbean females did better than white children. He claims that the success of these females comes from the strength of the matrifocal family tradition in Jamaica. There women are seen as strong and powerful. They offer a really positive role model to their daughters. This strong female attitude carried over to Britain.

## Questions



# Understanding culture (Education)

- How might black female educational subcultures differ from black male subcultures?
- What factors might explain African-Caribbean girls' motivation to succeed at school?

## Keywords

1. Matrifocal family - female-headed lone parent family statistically common within the African-Caribbean community.
2. Resistance - refusing to accept a dominant viewpoint and challenging it in some way.

## Participation in Further and Higher Education

### Bullets

- Minority ethnic students are more likely to stay on post-16 than white students.
- Indians are twice as likely to go to university as white students.
- Minority ethnic students are concentrated in the lower status and less wealthy universities.
- Minority ethnic students tend not to achieve the highest passes in universities.
- Female ethnic minority students seem to be doubly disadvantaged in their applications to higher education.

### Text

The Youth Cohort Study (2002) shows that minority ethnic group members are more likely to stay in full-time education after 16 than white students. In 2002, 75 per cent of Indians were in post-16 full-time education, twice the proportion of whites. The achievement gap between Whites and African-Caribbeans is closed by the age of 18. However, African-Caribbeans are heavily represented in training schemes like New Horizons compared to other ethnic groups. South Asian males are more likely to remain in full-time education than females, whereas the opposite applies to African-Caribbeans. African-Caribbean men are the least likely of any group to have a degree.

Minority ethnic groups are over-represented at Higher Education (compared to their percentage of the population). However, the top twenty universities that most people have heard of are known as the Russell Group. These universities have 30% of all students, 65% of the research money, and 56% of all of the doctorates (top degrees). Broecke and Nicholls found that they are less likely to attract ethnic minority students to apply. Ethnic minority students tend to apply to the less wealthy or famous universities.

Taylor (1993) found a clear 'double disadvantage' for female ethnic minority applicants. One problem is that they tend to apply for subjects which are popular or demand high entry qualifications. Asian females are concentrated in science and social sciences and African-Caribbean females are concentrated in social sciences. The cost of university has put many working-class students off going to university. This may have an effect on ethnic minority students who come from poorer backgrounds. Importantly, a 2007 study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by Clark and Drinkwater found that people from minority ethnic groups with qualifications do not receive the same rewards in terms of jobs and promotion as others.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Questions

- Why do you think South Asian males tend to stay in education longer than females?
- In what ways are female ethnic minority students 'doubly disadvantaged'?
- Why might ethnic minority background students apply to less wealthy and lower status universities?

## Keywords

1. Youth Cohort Study - A study that has been tracking a group of young people through their lives.
2. Russell Group universities - the top 20 universities of the United Kingdom.

## What are the patterns of achievement for students of different genders?

### What patterns of achievement are there for the different genders?

#### Bullets

- Until the mid 1980s, boys outperformed girls in schools.
- This was seen as natural, except by feminists.
- The impact of feminist research changed many attitudes in schools.
- By the mid 1980s, girls and boys were achieving equally well
- Girls are now consistently outperforming boys at all levels and in most subjects.
- This is a cause for concern by many politicians.

#### Text

There are significant differences between the genders in terms of the educational success of girls and of boys. Until the mid 1980s, boys out-performed girls at all levels of the education system, with the exception of 11+. In the 1960s, boys achieved results that were on average 5% better than girls. This was read by most educational writers as being 'proof' that girls were generally less intelligent than boys and that boys were 'late developers'. There was little serious challenge to this type of thinking until the 1960s and 1970s when feminists pointed out that the better school performance of boys was not the result of the superiority of male intelligence, but that the educational experiences of boys and girls were very different. A number of significant studies by writers such as Spender, Deem, Stanworth and Delamont pointed to the sexism of the educational system which they claimed reflected the sexism of everyday life.

In general, girls were usually offered a curriculum that prepared them for life in the home whereas boys were offered practical subjects such as woodwork and metal work. School books were written with the focus firmly on males. Even the common style of school uniform was masculine clothing of a jacket, shirt and tie, only modified with a skirt for girls. This reinforced the hidden curriculum idea that education and intelligence were masculine. Even as late as 1993, Scrimgeour investigated education with a small sample of Scottish teachers and found considerable bias in favour of males in terms of practice and materials.

# Understanding culture (Education)

However, this argument has become confused since the mid-1980s when both genders began to improve their school performance significantly. The improvement of girls was more rapid than that for boys. Females are now no longer the gender associated with underachievement. They outperformed boys at every key stage level in 2007 (except Maths KS2). Girls outperformed boys at GCSE in 2007 by 9.1 percentage points. Boys' achievement has been rising alongside girls' since the 1980s; but girls' results have improved more quickly.

In English girls have been moving ahead the fastest at all Key Stages. At GCSE the gender gap is 13.9% with 69.2% of girls getting an A\* to C grade compared to only 55.3% of boys in 2007. The importance of an ability in English to support all other subjects is underlined by the clear lead of girls in all GCSE results. The proportion of girls getting five or more passes at grade C or better in 2007 was 66%; the figure for boys was just 57%. A quarter of boys did not earn any A\* to C grades. Although there is a gender gap in maths and science, it is not nearly so marked.

## Questions

- What gender patterns and trends in educational attainment have been typical of the past 40 years?
- Why is the underachievement of boys seen as a cause for concern?

## Keywords

1. Feminism - a perspective that suggests that men dominate society.
2. Sexism - behaviour that advantages one gender over another.
3. Gender gap - the difference between male and female attainment.

## Male underachievement fact or fiction

### Bullets

- Educational achievement of all children has improved.
- The term 'gender gap' refers to the significant measurable difference in achievement between females and males.
- Females outperform males in every ethnic group.
- Middle-class boys are still relatively successful.
- The worst performing groups in the education system are white and black working-class boys.

### Text

Whilst there is clearly a measurable gender gap in achievement; sociologists regard social class as the biggest factor in determining achievement. Therefore it is only some boys who are failing. Generally speaking middle-class boys perform well in the education system, whilst working-class girls do less well, although better than working class males. It is working-class boys who have recently become the focus of the panic about underachievement.

Warrington and Younger (1999) note that the success of girls should be a cause for celebration and congratulation. Instead it is viewed as a 'problem' with concern expressed

# Understanding culture (Education)

about how males are 'failing'.. Male underachievement is not unique to Britain but appears to be a global phenomenon. There is a danger that by over-focusing upon the new social 'problem' of 'underachieving boys' we ignore the reality which is that the performance of boys as a group has been rising significantly over time. The truth is that exam results reflect rates of improvement for both sexes.

In terms of post-16 education, females are staying on in education and attending Higher Education in ever-increasing numbers. This is having a knock-on effect in the workplace as increasing numbers of females with graduate status penetrate areas traditionally considered as male.

Nonetheless, feminists such as Becky Francis (2006) maintain that despite the focus on male under-performance, a high proportion of working-class girls still fail. In addition, they argue that many females fail to achieve their full individual potential or choose to study different subjects. Where females do succeed, feminists feel it is often in spite of the education system, not because of it. Feminists claim that females are still subject to institutional disadvantage in schools. Furthermore, Hartman points out that the attention that is paid to gender differences in achievement is large when compared to the way larger differences in attainment between the social classes are ignored.

## Questions

- Why do you think male improvement in achievement has been at a lower rate to females?
- Why do you think female success is seen as a problem of boys 'failing'?

## Keywords

1. Gender gap - the difference between male and female attainment.
2. Pedagogy - teaching.
3. Sex Discrimination Act (1975) - law that made discrimination on the basis of sex an illegal offence.

## What social factors appear to benefit girls?

### Bullets

- Psychologists tend to suggest that male and female brains are different.
- Sociologists claim biological differences are over-stated, the differences between men and women are mostly cultural.
- Ideas that contemporary working-class girls lack career motivation and see their futures in terms of domestic motherhood is challenged by writers like Sharpe.
- This female focus upon ambition and getting on in term of careers and earning potential is referred to by Wilkinson as a 'genderquake'.
- There are now more female role models.
- Middle class women still seem to succeed in school more than working class women.

### Text

Females tend to show better literacy skills than males. Some researchers feel that this may be biological in origin; this view is popular with some psychologists. Sociologists are more

# Understanding culture (Education)

likely to argue that it is to do with cultural factors like socialisation and child-rearing practices.

Traditionally high achieving females have come from middle-class backgrounds. Riddell (1992) found that middle-class girls shared the achievement values of the school and sought the approval of teachers. Working-class girls saw their futures in terms of the local job market combined with motherhood and domesticity. However, Sharpe (1994) found working-class girls' attitudes had changed dramatically in the past 20 years with careers, travel and independence now increasingly valued.

Such attitudes reflect what Wilkinson (1994) refers to as the 'genderquake' whereby young females are increasingly striving for a fulfilling career with good earning potential. Thus young women are more confident, assertive and ambitious; striving for gender equality. There has been a huge growth in the numbers of women working, with successful career women operating as positive role models. In 2005, figures show nearly double the number of women entering high status careers such as medicine and the law. Working mothers are providing positive role models for their daughters. Fuller (1984) found in her study of black girls in Brent, that girls were motivated not to end up in dead-end jobs like their mothers. Working class unqualified women still tend to be confined to cleaning, caring, catering and cash registers (the four Cs)

## Questions

- What changes have been observed especially in working-class female attitudes towards education?
- What does Wilkinson mean by the term 'genderquake'?

## Keywords

1. Genderquake - the dramatic changes in attitudes displayed by women in recent years.
2. Role model - An individual who is held up as an ideal example for someone to copy.

## Employment Opportunities and male low achievement.

### Bullets

- Some writers have blamed male rejection of academic success as linked to the rise of femininity.
- They have linked a crisis of masculinity to feminism.
- Others have suggested that the problem is related to the ways that boys create a masculine identity.

### Text

There has been a contraction of opportunities for unqualified working class males. Shores (1998) points out that changes in the nature of work due to the decline of traditional industry has led to male unemployment. This process is deindustrialisation. It is a key factor in working class male underachievement. With the decline in traditional male



# Understanding culture (Education)

manual work, many male students feel unmotivated. They feel that the employment market is increasingly female.

Writers such as Susan Faludi and Robert Bly suggest male underachievement is linked to a 'crisis of masculinity'. Male pupils, it is argued, are sensing wider changes in society, and the growing opportunities and confidence of females generally. Even before leaving school some males are picking up the message that men are not needed by women. Such ideas can be very discouraging and it seems to alienate them further into acceptance of failure or brutal 'laddism'.

Aggleton (1987) studied young men from the new professional middle classes and found that boys distanced themselves from aggressive working class male masculinity. They also reject the idea of hard-work and seriousness. Instead, they aim for a male identity of effortless achievement. Clearly, success without effort is very difficult to achieve indeed.

However, Salisbury and Jackson (1995) say that there is more than one possible form of masculinity for boys to identify with. Archer says that not all of these are aggressive. Notions of maleness are fluid, so boys will behave differently in differing situations. Male identities are, however, concerned with the creation of hierarchies of power and dominance. Some male identities are seen as having more status than others. As early as the 1970s Willis pointed out that hard working academic achievement among boys was seen, even by some teachers, as being effeminate, low status and undesirable.

## Questions

- How have changes in the workplace influenced achievement levels of males and females?
- What is meant by the term 'crisis of masculinity'?
- Why are feminists critical of those who talk of crisis of masculinity?

## Keywords

1. Laddism - an attitude of humorous, casual sporty masculinity.
2. Crisis of masculinity - males feel threatened by the rise of feminism and need to create a male identity for themselves.
3. Effeminate - overly feminine and girly.
4. Alienation - feeling that one doesn't belong or fit.
5. Hierarchy - a layering system where some people are above others.
6. Deindustrialisation - the decline of traditional industry such as manufacturing.

## Government policies and gender differences

### Bullets

- Female achievement is not new, females outperformed males throughout the 11-plus exam of the tripartite system (1944 -1960s) but equal places for boys and girls meant many females lost out.
- The replacement of the tripartite system with comprehensive schools is considered a key factor in improving the achievement of females.



# Understanding culture (Education)

- Education initiatives such as the introduction of comprehensive schools, GCSE exams and the National Curriculum are also seen as benefitting female achievement.
- Coursework is seen to benefit girls' achievement, but Elwood points out that the shift from 100% coursework in English to mainly examination has seen the gender gap widen further.

## Text

It is not necessarily a new phenomenon for females to be academically more successful than males. Chitty (2002) highlights the scandal of the 11-plus exam in the 1950s and 1960s when around two-thirds of those who passed were girls but local authorities had different pass rates for boys and girls to ensure that equal numbers of each sex went to grammar schools. The replacement of the 11-plus exam with comprehensive schools significantly improved the achievement levels of girls - since many were no longer 'failed' in order to have equal numbers of boys and girls in grammar schools.

The introduction of GCSEs have generally been considered to have benefitted female students. One of the features of GCSE was the emphasis upon coursework. Females are seen as more committed and conscientious in completing coursework successfully. However, Elwood has largely refuted this. Looking at results in GCSE English that used to have 100 per cent coursework, the switch to more exams resulted in an even higher differential between female and male performance with girls outperforming boys.

In addition, the introduction in 1988 of the National Curriculum has also been viewed as helping females, since it made all pupils study science and technology - subjects that girls previously opted out of. Having studied science, many females showed themselves and their teachers that not only were they competent at such subjects, but that they could also find them enjoyable, rewarding and possible degree and career choices.

In the 1970s and 1980s there were several pro-female science initiatives such as WISE (women into science and engineering) and GIST (girls into science and technology). These raise the profile of female scientists and offer positive role models for females outside traditional female roles although females are still under-represented in science and engineering subjects at University. Now government policy and research is moving in the direction of tackling male underachievement.

## Questions

- What education policy changes seem to have particularly benefitted females?

## Keywords

1. 11-plus exam - examination introduced with the 1944 Education Act, sat by all pupils in the state sector at the age of 11. Those who passed had access to better educational provision.
2. National Curriculum - a common curriculum for all pupils in state schools introduced in England and Wales in 1987.

## Single-sex lessons and schools

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Bullets

- Many feminists and psychologists have argued that boys and girls should be educated separately.
- Other writers have suggested that there is little evidence to support this point of view.
- Schools and Local Authorities have experimented with single sex education for lessons.
- There is no clear evidence to support either point of view.

## Text

Psychologists such as Baron-Cohen and Goswami say that there is more overlap between the minds of girls and boys than differences. However there are many who are equally convinced that men and women have different minds and patterns of learning.

Leonard Sax, in the USA, has taken the view proposed by many psychologists that male and female brains are different. He is a strong advocate of single sex education, arguing that lessons should be gender appropriate because boys and girls require different education. Certainly, schools and colleges are now more 'girl-friendly' places. There is some sociological support from writers such as Murphy and Elwood (1998) who argue that teachers are now more sensitive to gender issues facing females. Teaching has become a feminised profession, with fewer men choosing a career in education. There has been considerable INSET on equal opportunities that make teachers address sexist attitudes and practices in schools.

Many Local Authorities and schools in the 1970s and 1980s experimented with single-sex classes and other initiatives aimed at improving female performance. Experiments at removing boys from the classroom have been found to be particularly helpful to girls in science and maths lessons allowing them more opportunity to answer questions, grow in confidence and develop an interest in the subject.

There is evidence that girls at single-sex schools out-perform those in coeducation (mixed) schools. Many feminists have argued strongly in favour of single sex education for girls. Research published by the Girls' School Association (2007) showed that girls taught without boys achieve higher grades than those at even the most elite mixed-sex schools. Single sex girls' schools are regularly at the top of school league tables. It is suggested that single-sex schools promote debating skills in girls and lesson content can be tailored to female interests. Curiously, while parents are in favour of single sex education for their daughters, they are reluctant to accept it for their sons.

There has also been opposition to the view that single sex education favours girls. Alan Smithers has argued that the differences between attainment in single sex schools and coeducational schools can be attributed to social class and intake as single sex schools are now mostly found in the private sector or among faith schools and they can select their pupils.

## Questions

- In what ways do single-sex lessons and schools appear to benefit female students?
- Why do you think that single-sex schools have less of a beneficial effect on males?

# Understanding culture (Education)

- What arguments can be made for and against single sex education in the UK?

## Keywords

1. Coeducation - mixed schooling with girls and boys.
2. Single sex schools - only one gender is allowed to attend the school.
3. Private schools - parents have to pay for education.
4. Faith schools - designed for pupils of one religious belief, their religious organisation gives money, as well as the local council.

## What is the link between classroom culture and gendered behaviour?

### Bullets

- Females seem to be harder working and more conscientious at doing homework, coursework and revising for exams.
- Females adopt effective and committed strategies for success driven by long-term goals, in contrast to the male's approach of fatalism (it will be all right on the day).
- Male pupils appear to be under peer pressure to view success at academic work as undermining their masculinity.

### Text

Mitsos and Browne (1998) found that in coeducation schools girls worked harder and spent more time on homework, were better organised, and were more likely to meet deadlines than boys. Lyon, et al (2006), found that females were significantly more conscientious in doing homework. Research by Harris et al. (1993) found that boys were more easily distracted in the classroom and less determined to overcome academic difficulties.

Some males, especially from the working-class, see academic school work as feminine and resist it as undermining their culture of masculinity (Willis, 1979). It simply is not 'cool' to be academically able and can result in being labelled as a 'boffin' or 'geek'. As a consequence they seek alternative anti-school values and adopt 'laddish' attitudes and behaviour (Mac an Ghail, 1994).

Arnot (2004) found female pupils adopted private learning strategies such as asking teachers questions after the lesson to improve their understanding. Evidence shows that females are more likely to revise more effectively. They do not leave it to the last minute like many male pupils who assume it will be "all right on the day". For males poor examination performance is excused away. They blame external factors such as the quality of their teaching or claim that the wrong exam questions came up. Female students are more likely to blame themselves for poor performance and therefore seem more motivated in their revision and preparation to ensure a successful outcome.

### Questions

- In what ways does the behaviour of females inside and outside the classroom enhance their achievement levels?
- What factors have been identified to explain the poor performance of males?

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Keywords

1. Laddism - an attitude of casual sporty masculinity that emphasises humour.

## What are the patterns of achievement for students of different social classes?

What patterns of achievement are there for students of different social classes?

## Bullets

- There is a persistent gap in the achievement levels of working-class and middle-class pupils.
- There is close correlation between a child's postcode and education achievement.
- Although working-class achievement has improved in absolute terms, the relative difference between the social classes has remained largely unchanged.
- Access to private schools offers extra opportunities to wealthier children.

## Text

There is a clear and well known link between social class and educational achievement. Middle class children with similar ability levels to working class children will almost inevitably gain better grades.

Sociologists have long been concerned by this social class gap in achievement. Since compulsory education began, they have known of a huge wastage of working-class talent in the education system. The working-class as a group seem to have less motivation and do less well in examinations.

In addition, the working class are more inclined to leave school at 16 rather than staying on to further or higher education. Although the government blames poor teaching and schools for underachievement, it recognises that a child's postcode is also a factor in determining achievement. Postcodes tend to reflect a child's social class background.

School league tables show that a school's success is based largely on the class background of its pupils. However, as we have seen in other topics, social factors such as gender and ethnicity are also important to educational success.

Bynner and Joshi (1999) found that social class differences had persisted with little change from the 1950s to the 1990s. Although in absolute terms, more people (including the working-class) are achieving more and higher qualifications, the relative difference between the social classes has remained largely unchanged. In fact, Jefferis et al (2002) found the gap between higher and lower class pupils had actually widened between 1958 and today.

Any analysis of social class and education cannot ignore private education. The benefits of private education to those who can afford it were summed up in 2008 by Anthony Seldon. He said "It is not right for any longer for our schools to cream off the best pupils, the best teachers, the best facilities, the best results and the best university places."

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Questions

- Why do you think there is a social class gap in achievement in Britain?
- Should private schools be abolished?

## Keywords

1. Social class - membership of a social group based on status, education and income.

## How are children affected by material deprivation?

### Bullets

- Material deprivation is when children cannot afford the things that they need.
- Material deprivation is associated with poor diet, illness and absences, unsatisfactory housing.
- Material deprivation normally means living in the catchment area of poor performing schools.
- Richer parents can move to catchment areas of high achieving schools or buy private education.
- Material deprivation has an effect on attitudes to school.

### Text

Material deprivation is a term used to describe the effects of low income on a home. Some people cannot afford the things that they need to gain success for their children: computers, good quality food, a place to work, toys, books and games.

Early research, such as that conducted by Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980), emphasised the importance of material deprivation and the link between social class background and educational outcome. Paul Harrison (1985) studied the London borough of Hackney. He found a close correlation between the fact it had major problems of poverty and deprivation and had that lowest examination results in London:

'The typical Hackney home offers fewer toys and books; fewer outings and holidays; shortage of personal space for play or study; and shortage of attention from parents because of unsocial working hours or ... persistent housing and income problems' (Harrison, 1985).

Material deprivation typically means that a child has a less healthy diet leading to illness, absences from school, and less concentration in class. The child may have unsatisfactory housing conditions such as overcrowding, cold and damp accommodation and run down estates. Being poor obviously means being unable to afford private education or being unable to live in the catchment areas of high attaining schools. Smith and Noble (1995) argue that middle-class parents pull their children out of poorly performing schools and move to catchment areas of high performance schools.

In addition, children from low or limited income families may be under pressure to earn money which may affect their studies through tiredness or lack of time for homework. Holmes and Croll (1989) found that if working-class boys do at least an hour's homework a night they perform as well as middle-class boys in examinations. Material deprivation can



# Understanding culture (Education)

also put pressure to leave school at 16 or not go on to higher education or to drop-out of college or university.

Ridge (2007) in a report for the JRF found that the main costs for poorer families were uniform, lunches and school trips. Some parents had difficulty finding sums as small as 50p. In addition, poorer children had fewer stimulating out of school experiences such as family holidays, social activities, trips and lessons such as dance or music. School dinners could be expensive for families who did not qualify, but had a number of children of school age to cater for.

Increasingly, researchers are aware that material deprivation has an impact on people's emotions, so it will affect children's attitude to school. Ridge (2007) points out that poorer children are aware that their experiences of school will not be of the same quality as richer people. Middle class children see education as a route to a good adult life, whereas working class children see education in a negative light and suggest that it stops you looking stupid.

## Questions

- What is material deprivation?
- How may material deprivation influence the life styles and experiences of children?
- How can wealth contribute to educational achievement?

## Keywords

1. Material deprivation - Lack of the physical things you need for a good standard of living.
2. JRF - The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a charity set up to sponsor and report on research into poverty and inequality in Britain.

## What is the effect of cultural deprivation?

### Bullets

- Cultural deprivation refers to values and attitudes of working-class parents which some see as causing educational failure for children.
- Cultural capital is knowledge that is valued by people who control the education system.
- Bernstein argues the language of education mirrors the language of the middle-class home.
- Bourdieu sees the undermining of working-class culture and knowledge in schools as a form of symbolic violence. The subjects that working-class children do well in are devalued as easy.

### Text

Cultural deprivation theory suggests that the culture of working class people is 'not as good' as the culture of middle class people and that it leads to educational failure among working class children. This idea is actually a popular one, though controversial in sociology. One view suggests that working class parents are not so good at parenting.

# Understanding culture (Education)

This approach focuses upon the traits and values transmitted by parents to their children through child-rearing practices and socialisation. This version of the theory is supported by the New Right and supported by commentators such as Melanie Phillips and Sue Palmer, author of *Toxic Childhood*.

However, another view suggests that the working class are the victims of an unequal society. So, the working-class home is seen as less effective in transmitting the values appropriate to education success. Pierre Bourdieu developed the concept of 'cultural capital' and 'habitus' to reflect the importance of culture. He argues the higher up the class structure a family is, the more of the dominant cultural values they possess. Because these reflect the values of the education system, they provide a passport for success. Children from middle class homes are viewed positively by teachers.

This is supported by the findings of Ridge (2007) who discovered that working class children were more likely to complain of being shouted out and overlooked by teachers. Educational achievement is thus more likely when the values of home and neighbourhood reflect the ethos and learning culture promoted in schools.

Basil Bernstein in controversial writing from the 1970s says that one cultural difference is related to language. Middle class children have access to the complex language of books and ideas in the home, whereas working class children do not. He claims that the 'elaborate' linguistic code of the middle-class is the same as the language of textbooks and the classroom. Working-class children, who use a 'restricted' code, are clearly disadvantaged.

Since the middle-class is advantaged in traditional education and subjects, they oppose any new qualifications, such as vocational courses or more recent A-levels. Subjects like Media Studies, which suit working-class children are discredited as 'easy' or 'lightweight'.

Pierre Bourdieu described this undermining of working-class choices, knowledge, accent, and general confidence as a form of 'symbolic violence'. The middle-class is able to define the curriculum and what counts as worthwhile knowledge. This clearly puts the working-class at a disadvantage despite their equal anxiety with the middle class to do the best for their children.

Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1995) talk about 'cultural capital and educational choice' to reflect on how being better educated themselves, middle-class parents have better knowledge and skills to negotiate the education system. Many working-class parents are ambitious for their children, but do not know how to give practical help.

Gillies (2005) found that middle class parents are able to draw on many resources to help their children and concentrate their efforts on training their children in social skills. Working class parents focus on providing their children with strategies to cope with injustice and hardship. Whereas a middle class mother in the sample had confronted the school in a case of bullying, a working class mother had allowed her son to truant from school to avoid bullying.

In addition to cultural capital of the home, there are subcultural values too. These tend to affect boys, and act against them achieving in the education system. For example, Philip Brown (1987) in his study of 'ordinary' school kids in Port Talbot, South Wales, found that

# Understanding culture (Education)

working-class children may be under pressure from some parents and certainly peer pressure to drop-out early from school. They are taught to avoid coming across as a 'geek' or 'boffin' (especially if they are male). Brown found that achieving students in working-class schools often suffered bullying and isolation.

## Questions

- What is cultural deprivation?
- Is working class culture very different from middle class culture?
- What social skills are required for success in school?

## Keywords

1. Cultural capital - knowledge that is valued by people who control the education system.
2. Cultural deprivation - being without the right knowledge and attitudes to succeed.
3. Elaborate code - Middle class speech patterns with long sentences and a sophisticated vocabulary.
4. Restricted code - working-class speech patterns with short sentences and simple vocabulary used.
5. Symbolic violence - the put-downs by the education system on the working-class for not having or knowing the right manners, accent, confidence and knowledge.

## Are there solutions to material and cultural deprivation?

### Bullets

- The earliest attempt at compensatory education was Operation Headstart in the USA, but the costs were excessive and impact limited.
- The Labour Government of 1997 onwards, largely blamed underachievement on poor schools and teaching.
- Initiatives such as Sure Start, Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities show some acceptance of a link between material deprivation and underachievement.
- Nell Keddie (1973) argued that the working-class home background is not deprived but 'different'.
- The notion of material and cultural deprivation may ignore shortcomings of the schools themselves.
- 2008 research found that by the age of 3 children from poor backgrounds may be a year behind wealthier children in terms of development.

### Text

There have been attempts to improve the achievement of children from materially and culturally poor backgrounds. One of the earliest and most expensive examples of compensatory education was Operation Head Start, developed in the 1960s in the USA. This involved a pre-school programme of play, activities and stimulation for deprived children to attend 'enriched' environments such as summer camps and nursery schools. By 1973 Head Start was not considered good value for money, and wound down.

In Britain, the government tends to link working-class underachievement with poor teaching and schools rather than low income. Large sums of research money have been poured into studies on what makes an effective school, an effective lesson and effective teaching. Examples of such research include the huge Improving School Effectiveness

# Understanding culture (Education)

project by MacBeath and Mortimore.

The Government introduced Sure Start in 1999, aimed at improving health, education and employment prospects through early intervention in pre-school years for children living in the most deprived areas of Britain. However, early official evaluation of Sure Start has found its impact upon children 'disappointing' and Ofsted (McKnight et al, 2005) found EAZs (Education Action Zone) had no impact on Key Stage 3 or GCSE results. This shows that it is aware of a link between deprivation and underachievement.

EAZs have been replaced by Excellence in Cities (EiC) also aimed at improving achievement of pupils from low income backgrounds. Initiatives include low-cost leasing of computers for home use, learning mentors and programmes for gifted pupils. Early evidence suggests EiC is having more of an impact than EAZs.

City Academies are schools in low-income inner-city areas designed to replace 'failing' comprehensives and drive up standards in working-class areas. In 2006 the accountants Price-Waterhouse reported a 6.1% improvement in GCSE results in academies compared to a national improvement of 1.8%. However there is some debate about the value of academies; anecdotal evidence suggests that house prices rise and the intake of the schools change when academies are formed because the funding attracts middle class parents. Academies tend to use vocational GCSEs which count as four passes A\* - C rather than traditional GCSEs.

A government initiative designed to tackle the historically low post-16 staying on rates of working-class students has been the introduction of EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance). This pays pupils up to £30 a week plus bonuses across the academic year. Besides improving staying on rates it is also designed to reduce hours pupils work in part-time employment, contribute to transport costs, and provide funding for course related costs such as field trips.

Addressing cultural deprivation rather than material deprivation is controversial because it implies working class attitudes need to change. Nell Keddie (1976) rejects this ideology that implies that there is nothing of any cultural worth in working-class life. The working-class home, she argues, is simply different not inferior. However, research published in 2007 by Leon Feinstein for the Institute of Education, found that by the age of 3 children from poor families were already lagging by up to a year in development compared to children from wealthier backgrounds.

## Questions

- Why do you think attempts at compensatory education often produce 'disappointing' results?
- What factors that might explain why a child from a poor background is one year behind in terms of development compared to wealthier children at the age of three?
- What policies would you introduce to address working class underachievement?

## Keywords

# Understanding culture (Education)

1. Education Action Zones - A New Labour initiative set up in 1998 to raise the motivation and achievement of pupils in 'deprived' inner-city areas. EAZs are funded by central government and run by an Action Forum comprised of parents and representatives from business, local and central government. Funding was withdrawn for the scheme in 2003.
2. Excellence in Cities - A New Labour initiative introduced to replace EAZs with IT centres, learning mentors, home-lease computers and programmes for gifted pupils.
3. Operation Headstart - 1960s compensatory education initiative in the USA targeted at lower working-class pre-school children, especially those from Hispanic and black home backgrounds.
4. Sure Start - A New Labour initiative set up in 1999 to help families with children under the age of four, targeted on the most economically deprived communities linking health, social and educational services.
5. Effective schooling - government policy has tried to find out what makes a good school and to encourage good practice as a solution to inequality.

## What is the link between social class and interaction within schools

### Bullets

- The strength of the interactionist perspective lies with the recognition of the complexity of meanings that lie behind daily interactions in school.
- Concepts like ideal-types, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy describe key processes, that deny equal opportunities and discriminate against the working-class.
- Streaming may be based on social class. The middle-class see it as a way to exclude inferior and disruptive pupils.
- What counts as knowledge in schools has been shaped by the dominance of middle-class culture.

### Text

Many sociologists see social class achievement as linked to the experiences and meanings that are negotiated in schools and classrooms. According to interactionists the underachievement of working-class pupils is not caused by unequal social structures, but by processes within the school such as teacher labelling and expectations. These result in self-fulfilling prophecies; the hidden curriculum; and anti-school subcultures.

Howard Becker (1963) studied 60 teachers and found they classified pupils in their heads in terms of an 'ideal type'. He found that teachers perceived students from middle-class backgrounds as closest to this ideal and those from manual working-class backgrounds as farthest. They interpret working class behaviour as indicating lack of interest and motivation. This is a classic example of labelling. When it is backed by the authority of the teacher, labels can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the pupil internalises and conforms to the behaviour and expectations associated with the label.

Since the Education Reform Act (1988) there has been a significant move by schools from mixed-ability classes to 'streaming' and 'setting'. There are several reasons for this. Middle class parents pressure schools for streaming as they assume their children will be in the top set. Their children will therefore be protected from weaker or disruptive children who would hold back learning.



# Understanding culture (Education)

Recent research by Stephen Ball (2003), for the Institute of Education, describes streaming as 'social barbarism' in that it allows middle-class parents to separate their children from what they see as 'inferior' pupils. Gillborn and Youdell (2001) found that schools driven by the 'A-C economy' were more likely to allocate working-class to lower sets than middle-class children doing work of the same standard. Much early work on setting found that pupils were placed in sets according to behaviour rather than ability. Working-class pupils were also less likely to be entered for higher tiers of GCSE.

Michael Young (1971) states that what constitutes 'knowledge' is anything defined by an upper-middle class elite as worth knowing. Nell Keddie (1971) studied the humanities department of a large comprehensive school. She found that despite vigorously denying it, teachers treated the knowledge of working-class pupils as inferior. Teachers valued abstract over concrete knowledge and she found questions from working-class pupils were often treated with suspicion, viewed as attention seeking or intentionally disruptive. Middle-class pupils who could express themselves in abstract terms were seen as 'intelligent' and greatly encouraged. Keddie concluded that such teacher attitudes seriously impeded the progress of working-class children.

Much research has been done on schools in the London area in the 1980s and the results suggested that teachers did not just label on the basis of class, but on the basis of ethnicity and gender too. Some research into labelling theory can be criticised because there is no explanation of which comes first, the teacher label or the behaviour from pupils that prompts the teacher to label pupils. It is possible that teachers are not in fact labelling, but responding to previous experiences with similar children. In addition, much research was carried out from the point of view of the pupils, so the teacher experience tended to be overlooked. Safia Mirza pointed out that labels can be resisted, so black girls in comprehensive schools fought back against negative labelling by succeeding against the expectations of their teachers.

## Questions

- What are the characteristics of a 'good' pupil? Which social class fits those characteristics?
- What arguments can be made in favour of streaming
- What arguments can be made against streaming of pupils?
- Is school failure the fault of teachers?

## Keywords

1. Ideal type - concept associated with Becker to describe the image of the perfect pupil.
2. Labelling theory - theory suggesting teachers label pupils and then act as though the labels were true.
3. Self-fulfilling prophecy - the process by which once a prediction is made, it then becomes true because it has been made.
4. Streaming - the allocation of pupils into sets or bands according to their perceived ability.
5. Interactionist or interpretive sociologist - looks at the social meanings people create

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Which social class attends universities?

### Bullets

- Government policy has encouraged expansion of Higher Education with a target of 50% of 18 year-olds attending some form of H.E. course by 2010.
- However, research shows that the costs of higher education may be having a discouraging effect upon working-class applications, especially from males.

### Text

Higher education takes place in universities and colleges beyond 'A' level. Governments in the past 50 years have sought to open up Higher Education and break down the elitist nature of universities as 'middle class institutions'. Oxford and Cambridge may be viewed as upper and upper-middle class since they draw a high proportion of their students from private schools. Tony Blair is famous for his intention of 50% of 18 year-olds going into some form of higher education by 2010. The expansion that has occurred has been from middle-class pupils.

Research by Forsyth and Furlong (2003) found there are a number of factors which discourage the working-class from applying to university. The most significant is the costs of higher education, especially the prospect of debt from tuition fees, student loans and bank overdrafts.

In 2006 the average student left university owing £13,252 (NatWest Bank). Another factor is concern about unemployment after graduation or having to work part-time throughout their time at university which could have a negative effect on their studies. It seems that it is male members of the working-class that are least likely to apply to university.

### Questions

- What are the arguments for and against tuition fees?
- What are the arguments for and against student loans?

### Keywords

1. Higher education - education beyond school and 'A' levels.
2. Degree - the qualification that is awarded at a University or University level institution.

## What influence does locality have on educational attainment?

## What influence does locality have on education?

### Bullets

- The locality in which a child lives can have an impact on his or her chances of attaining high GCSE grades.

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Wealth tends to be located within certain areas in towns and cities as well as in certain areas of the country.
- The study of locality and its impact on education is therefore, mostly a study on the impact of social class and social deprivation on education.

## Text

There is a link between the area in which a child lives and the chances of that child attaining certain examination grades. In Britain, people tend to live in geographical areas that reflect the quality of housing available, so that in your own locality, you will probably know where the facilities are best and the housing is most expensive. In urban or city areas, it is well known that schools serving areas that experience poverty and deprivation such as inner city areas will have significantly lower examination success rates than schools serving wealthy areas. Very rural schools also tend to have poor results.

Detailed statistics are gathered by the government and these are available at local authority, county and school level. In addition, schools and local authorities may vary slightly in the care with which they gather statistics. Schools will be very anxious not to register high rates of truancy, for example, although they will not lie or actively mislead. All official data should be treated with caution by sociologists.

The kind of data that is gathered will include detail such as: average class size, pupil teacher ratios, unauthorised absenteeism, exclusions (permanent and fixed term), numbers of pupils who receive free school meals, and in Wales, the numbers of children educated through the medium of Welsh. These data can be compared across counties and interesting patterns emerge. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taff (2006) had 21% of pupils claiming free school meals, whereas the Vale of Glamorgan had just 10.7%. 67 pupils in Cardiff in 2006 faced permanent exclusion from the schools that they attended, 35 pupils were excluded from Newport schools, but no-one faced permanent exclusion in Blaenau Gwent.

## Questions

- Why does a child's postcode have relationship with his or her chances of gaining good qualifications?
- Why should sociologists treat official statistics with caution?

## Keywords

1. Urban - cities and built up areas.
2. Rural - countryside.
3. Deprivation - people do not have or cannot afford what they need for a good standard of living.
4. Truancy - non-attendance at school without permission.
5. Locality - region where people live.

## What is the link between inner cities and failing schools?

### Bullets

- Inner cities are areas where poor people, some ethnic minorities and recent immigrants usually live.

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Failing schools are usually inner city schools.
- The government is dealing with the problem by closing such schools or targeting them for action.
- Middle class parents have the economic power to buy houses in the catchments of schools with reputations for good results or to find other ways of avoiding sending their children to schools with low attainment and poor results.

## Text

Some of the most challenging schools for teachers to work in are found in inner city areas. These are the areas just on the outside of city centres where the housing is older and the rents and rates are lower, so it is where poorer people tend to live. There are a number of reasons why inner city schools tend to be challenging and difficult and have low average examination pass rates.

In 2003, David Bell, Chief Inspector for Schools (Ofsted) suggested that the issues for inner city schools were to do with difficulties in the recruitment of staff, high turnover of pupils, lack of confidence from the community, and lack of investment. The government has recognised the problem and set up schemes to improve examination results among inner city schools. These include EAZ (Education Action Zone) and EiC (Excellence in Cities). These schemes have been given massive funding. In 2003/4, £350 million was allocated to the projects which have seen limited success

In 1997, over 500 schools in England and Wales were judged to be failing schools and most of these were found in inner cities. By 2003, the number of such schools had dropped to 160. In London in 2007, the number of failing schools was reduced from 26 to 21 but this apparent success was achieved by closing some of the lowest achieving schools. In November 2007, Prime Minister, Gordon Brown claimed he could put an end to educational failure by closing more schools and he threatened the lowest achieving 670 comprehensive schools with take-over or closure.

Diane Reay (2004) claims that certain secondary schools and certain groups of children come to be demonised. This is often to do with social class, gender and ethnicity issues. This means that the inner city schools these children attend have very little chance of improving because middle class parents will send their children elsewhere to be educated. In work with Lucey she found that working class parents often did not live in the catchment areas of high achieving schools, but even when they did, they found it difficult to get places for their children. If middle class parents lived in the catchment areas for low achieving schools their options were to move, to send their children to fee-paying schools, or to apply for faith or selective schools so that they did not have to educate their children in schools with large numbers of working class or ethnic minority children. Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson (2005) found that teachers only work in some inner city schools for very short periods of time, and then leave to work in less challenging schools in suburbs.

## Questions

- Where are failing schools often geographically located?
- What are the two main strategies used by government to deal with failing schools?
- How are middle class parents able to avoid sending their children to failing schools?
- What impact do the examination results of local schools have on the price of houses in an area?

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Keywords

1. Inner city - poor areas of cities where working class people often live.
2. Catchment - the area around a school from which the school attracts its pupils.
3. Demonised - being given a really bad reputation that may not be fully justified.
4. Faith schools - schools partly funded by religious groups.
5. Selective schools - schools that choose which pupils they will allow in.

## What is the link between league tables and indices of deprivation?

### Bullets

- In England, there are league tables for schools based on their examination results.
- Schools with good results attract middle class parents and more experienced teachers.
- Schools that are low in the league tables may have many disadvantaged students.
- Despite being good schools, schools with disadvantaged pupils find it difficult to improve examination results.
- It is argued that league tables are polarising schools.
- Wales and Northern Ireland have abandoned league tables and Wales has abolished some testing (SATS).

### Text

As part of the drive to make schools competitive with each other and to improve, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government introduced examination league tables to the UK for secondary schools in 1992. In 1997, they were introduced for primary schools as well. The league tables were printed in newspapers and freely available on the internet for anyone who was interested to discover how certain schools were doing. This created a culture in which schools could be seen as 'good' or 'bad'. This point was made by Herbert and Thomas (1997) who found that the introduction of parental choice had a polarising effect on schools.

Nevertheless, New Labour in England made league tables even more important because they then used the data to set targets for schools to improve their position on the league tables and to celebrate the headteachers of schools that had improved the most.

There is a relationship between the quality of a school's intake of pupils and the examination results that are achieved by those pupils. It is argued that one of the impacts of league tables has been to make it difficult for schools at the lower end of the league tables to improve because they no longer attract the most able students. This has led to differences between England and Wales in terms of policy on educational testing.

In Wales, the regional government abandoned league tables in 2001. In Wales, testing of children through SATS at 11 and 14, was also scrapped, although there is a short skills test and teacher assessment for 10 year olds. Scottish schools have a different education system but they do not have League Tables either and they test children when the teachers consider that they are ready. Contextual Value Added (CVA) was introduced in 2007 in England and measures how an individual school is doing taking into account elements that can affect results such as gender, special needs, ethnicity, free school meals, postcodes, home language of pupils and the pupil's own prior attainment. This does show



# Understanding culture (Education)

that some schools which are low in the league tables are actually doing very well for their pupils when deprivation is taken into account.

Stephen Gorard (2005) studied 124 secondary schools in Yorkshire and discovered that schools have a limited effect on pupils compared to outside factors such as poverty. He is a leading critic of league tables on the grounds that they are polarising types of schools and acting against social mixing in individual schools. This is happening because middle class people often do not send their children what they see as poorly performing schools.

## Questions

- What are the arguments in favour of league tables of school examination results?
- What are the arguments against league tables of school examination results?

## Keywords

1. League tables - Schools are ranked according to the SATS and GCSE results of their pupils.
2. CVA - Contextual value added data is data that is adjusted for cultural factors that may influence a school's examination results.
3. Polarising - increasing the importance of differences.
4. Deprivation - being without the things that other people take for granted.

## Has the City Academy programme been effective?

### Bullets

- The City Academy programme is a controversial programme designed to improve the results in inner city areas and replace failing schools.
- The scheme is expensive and controversial for many reasons.

### Text

The Thatcher Government of the 1980s sponsored a programme of school renewal and improvement in inner city areas known as City Technology Colleges. Since 2000, the term Academy was used to describe schools that are publicly funded, but not governed by any local authority. These schools are independent of state control. They were designed to deal with the problem of poorly achieving inner city schools, many of which have been closed and converted into academies. By the mid 00s, there were about 50 Academies, but the Labour Government committed itself to opening a further 150 by 2010.

The City Academy programme has been very controversial for a number of reasons. Private sponsors are given considerable control over the schools in return for investment of money. There has been considerable government investment in the schemes. Academies can select up to 10% of their pupils and they do not have to follow National Curriculum. It has been argued that Academies have seen an improvement in examination results. However, other commentators say that the rise in examination results is not due to better teaching or better attitudes among students, but to changes in the intake of pupils and more teaching of vocational courses.

Academies can exclude challenging pupils and these students attend other inner city

# Understanding culture (Education)

schools. Some sponsors of schools have been accused of promoting religious or political ideas in the schools that they control. Not all Academies have been equally successful. The Academies cost large sums to start up, and some sponsors have been given government grants to fund their academies. The quality of the actual results are the subject of some debate, with the government suggesting that they are excellent and critics pointing out that they remain below the average figures for the whole of the country.

## Questions

- Why was the Academy programme set up?
- Why is the Academy programme controversial?
- What are the advantages of Academies?
- What are the disadvantages of Academies?

## Keywords

1. City Academy - publicly funded and privately run school in inner city area.

## What other relevant points are there?

### Bullets

- Some areas may develop a particular culture that affects the way that people think and see the world.
- Children in some areas may not expect educational success or to attend colleges.
- Certain geographical locations can cause practical problems for some children's education.

### Text

Habitus is a concept that has been used in philosophy and sociology for a long time. Most recently the idea has been used by sociologists such as Bourdieu to look at how the culture of the area you live in and the people you live amongst affects the way that you think about and see the world. Habitus is more than geography, but is linked to human geography in that people are said to develop a view of the world that depends on the culture of the people around them.

All children will grow up among a distinct group of people who will share a particular view of the world. This affects the patterns in which they think. People are not really aware of their particular thought patterns or how their behaviour is influenced. Research in Scotland (2003) has shown that 83% of children brought up in middle class families and living in middle class areas expect to go to university. This is therefore part of their habitus. On the other hand, only 41% of children from lower class families expect to go to university.

Archer and Yamashita (2003) studied Year 11 pupils in a deprived and over-crowded inner London school and discovered that despite the high opinion and efforts of teachers, pupils often had a sense of 'not being good' enough for higher education. They also blamed their local area, emphasising its danger and criminality. Some students would not attend certain local colleges because they would have to pass through unsafe neighbourhoods where they would be at risk of crime. This second finding points to practical problems caused by

# Understanding culture (Education)

the location of schools and colleges in some areas.

Research by Forsyth and Furlong (2000) in Scotland discovered that although many students from deprived areas may go to university, they are not from the most deprived families in those areas and often come from the wealthiest families in those communities. They were not rich in terms of the whole of society, only rich in terms of the areas that they came from. Poorer students who attend university were more likely to live at home for economic reasons and travelling became a problem for them. It was expensive to travel back and forth from college, it cut into study time. In addition, because public transport is poor, they often missed lectures.

## Questions

- What problems of habitus may limit the success of working class children?
- What practical problems prevent children in poorer areas from achieving as well as wealthier students?
- Are examination results the best way of telling the differences in the quality of education provided between schools?

## Keywords

1. Habitus - a person's set of typical behaviours acquired from society, a way of seeing the world.

## What have traditional explanations of education suggested about attainment in schools?

What have traditional explanations of education suggested about attainment?

## Bullets

- There is assumed to be a link between intelligence and the ability to do well in schools.
- Psychologists do not agree on a definition of intelligence.
- In the past and in some parts of England today, children are awarded educational opportunity on the basis of intelligence tests.
- Many intelligent people have not been recognised by the testing systems.
- The relationship between ability and school success is not fully clear.

## Text

One of the most common assumptions about the education system is that there is strong link between intelligence, ability and success in examinations. It is this view that is being tested when studying traditional views of educational attainment. Writers in the structural functionalist tradition of sociology claim that the education system is a meritocracy and that the education system exists to allow the most talented students through to fill the most important jobs in society. Testing of ability through examinations is one of the most fundamental elements of the British education system. British children are among the

# Understanding culture (Education)

most tested in the world and this is controversial for a number of reasons, including the emotional impact of regular testing on children.

However, there is another debate about the value of testing for ability and intelligence. Psychologists do not all agree on what they believe intelligence actually is. One of the most common accepted views of intelligence suggested by Howard Gardner suggests that there are at least seven different elements including spatial awareness, musical ability, emotional awareness and ability with language. It is worth noting that some very famous intellects were not particularly successful in school: Sir Winston Churchill, the wartime British Prime Minister and Albert Einstein, Nobel Prize winning scientist among them. Paul Merton, the comedian, failed 11+ and has very few formal qualifications. It is probable that many clever people have not been recognised by the education system and as a result, been denied opportunities.

In the 1940s, 1950s and in some areas of Britain today, children were selected for the best educational opportunities in grammar schools on the basis of an intelligence test when they were 11. It was the weaknesses of the 11+ system that can be used to highlight the difficulty of linking the ability to pass examinations to intelligence and general ability. In many areas, boys were allowed to pass in larger numbers because there were more grammar school places for boys. The tests tended to be based on cultural knowledge which favoured middle class children. In parts of Wales, 40% of children were awarded grammar school places, whereas in England, fewer than 25% of children were awarded places.

## Questions

- What do structural functionalists believe is the link between ability and education?
- What evidence is there that intelligence tests are not a reliable measure of a person's ability?
- What are the arguments for and against the use of a single examination at eleven to decide on a child's academic ability?

## Keywords

1. Meritocracy - those with the highest ability will rise to the top in any society.
2. Functionalism - A form of sociology where social institutions are studied in terms of their usefulness for society.
3. 11-Plus Exam - Selective examination introduced with the 1944 Education Act, sat by all pupils in the state sector at the age of 11.

## What is the functionalist view of society?

### Bullets

- Functionalism is a consensus view of society.
- Functionalists believe that society is like an organism, with different parts fulfilling different roles to ensure survival of the whole.
- Just like any organism, a society has mechanisms that ensure survival.
- Functional sociologists tend to look at the mechanisms within society in order to understand their functions for that society.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

Functionalism is a view of sociology that suggests that the role of a sociologist is to look at the workings of society, in a scientific manner, in order to discover how it works. There are three basic principles that underlie functionalism

First, a society is a system very much like a biological organism and the various parts of society link together in the same way that organs in a body each fulfil a separate job for the organism. Functionalism is a consensus theory; it suggests that everyone in society works together.

Secondly, just as organisms have mechanisms to ensure the survival of the individual and the species, so societies have mechanisms to ensure that they will succeed. Functionalism suggests that the things that a society needs to survive are functional requirements. These include elements such as reproduction and equilibrium. This view is known as the 'organic analogy'.

Finally, Holmwood (2005) and others have said that social phenomena exist because there is a purpose for them. This is controversial; it leads to the view that many negative things such as crime exist because they fulfil societal needs.

Functionalists take an overview of society, looking at the various organisations that go to make up that society. This approach is known as structuralism, so functionalism is also known as structural functionalism. Functionalists suggest that one of the most important mechanisms in society for maintaining social order is socialisation. This is the process of learning the rules for a society. People learn and then internalise the rules and they become part of their thinking.

## Questions

- What is structural functionalism?
- What three principles underlie structural functional thinking about society?
- In what ways is society like a biological organism?
- In what ways is a society very unlike a biological organism?

## Keywords

1. Organic analogy - society functions like a biological organism.
2. Equilibrium - this is when competing influences on society are in balance with each other.
3. Structuralism - this is an approach that takes an overview of institutions in society and how they work together.
4. Socialisation - The process of learning how to behave in a way that is appropriate for your culture.
5. Social order - stability and equilibrium in society, people know and follow the basic rules
6. Internalise - To make a belief, or an idea part of your personality or way of thinking.
7. Social phenomena - things that happen in society.

## What did Durkheim say about education?

## Bullets



# Understanding culture (Education)

- Emile Durkheim was one of the founders of sociology.
- He believed we need schools to help us to feel part of society.
- We learn social rules and social roles in schools.
- Schools sort out people for the most appropriate jobs for their skills and abilities.

## Text

Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917) was a French sociologist and is known as one of the Founding Fathers of the discipline. Many of his ideas became the foundations of structural functionalism. He was interested in education and trained teachers for part of his career. He believed that education had a number of purposes (or functions) for society.

The first of these is to reinforce our sense of belonging and community (social solidarity). This is done in schools in a number of ways, but it can be seen best in those things which unite people and make them feel part of a group. Think of uniforms, sport activities and competitions against other schools. The study of history gives us a sense of the continuity of our culture.

The next role of education is to maintain social roles and social rules (social order). Schools are like a wider society in miniature, so pupils learn that some people have more power than others, manners are important. They learn the patterns of behaviour that will help them to survive in society when they leave school.

The final function of education is to sort people out to do the correct work for their ability (meritocracy). In modern societies, we have division of labour. Nobody has all of the skills that are needed to survive in our complex world. Durkheim said that schools pass on the general values of society to students and also provide the skills that they will need to work together and produce goods. People must specialise in the kind of work that they do; we have plumbers, carers, check-out operators and doctors. Society could not survive if we did not have people to do different work. People sit examinations, they are sorted out and then encouraged to take up jobs that is suited to what they are able to do. The most able will study the subjects that will encourage their thinking skills, and the low ability children are taught what they need for life.

## Questions

- What did Durkheim consider were the three main functions of education?
- What are the arguments for and against his views?

## Keywords

1. Founding father - One of the first and most important thinkers in sociology.
2. Social solidarity - Societies share common values.
3. Social order - rules and organisation of society
4. Division of labour - different people do different jobs for society.

## What is the functionalist view of education?

### Bullets

- Talcott Parsons is a well known American theorist.

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Parsons is closely associated with Structural-Functionalist theory.
- Parsons suggests schools are an agency of secondary socialisation.
- They train children to accept the norms and values of wider society.
- They act to select which children will be trained for the top jobs in society.
- They teach children that the system is fair and equal to all.

## Text

In the USA, Talcott Parsons (1902 - 1979) developed Durkheim's ideas. He focussed on socialisation. He said that the family was the most important agency of socialisation because it is from our families that we learn who we are and from whom we gain our standing in society. He therefore described the family as an agency of primary socialisation.

For Parsons, the most important agency of secondary socialisation is education. Schools pass on the norms and values of wider society and we learn the rules that apply outside the home. The values that we learn in school apply to all of society, not just our own homes. However, schools have a more serious function than that. They also prepare us for future life. To do that, they act as a form of social selection, choosing what students will do for their future adult roles. Just like society, schools are competitive and the best students will go on to the best jobs whereas weaker ones will have to take low pay and low status work. Schools teach children that it is fair to have different rewards and so they teach children to be competitive.

The values that American schools pass on to children are achievement and equality of opportunity. They reward those who have high levels of success and encourage children to work hard to achieve those rewards. In addition, examinations are held under equal conditions and students have equal access to the high grades as the system is impersonal. This means that students learn to accept that the system is a fair and equal one. As a point of evaluation, it is important to note that the extent of equality of opportunity in education systems is a point of debate among sociologists.

One of the most famous critics of Parsons was Alvin Gouldner who wrote in the 1970s at the height of student rioting against the Vietnam War. He said that structural functionalism says that we are socialised by education. The education system is meritocratic so the best people get the best jobs. People who do not fit in are deviant. So, how come it was all the best and most intelligent who were deviant enough to complain about the war, the lack of equality for homosexuals and women and who challenged traditional ways of thinking?

## Questions

- On whose ideas is Parsons' work based?
- How did Parsons think that the education system worked?
- What criticisms can be made of Parson's theory?

## Keywords

1. Norms - the rules governing normal behaviour in society.
2. Values - The guiding principles or beliefs which affect how people act.
3. Social selection - Students are chosen for their future roles in society.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## What have other writers in the tradition suggested?

### Bullets

- Davis and Moore say inequality is good for society.
- The most talented people have to struggle for their education so they should be encouraged
- Their reward is to have high pay and good jobs when they have finished studying.
- People who do not get the good jobs should accept their situation.

### Text

In 1945, Davis and Moore, following on from Parson's writings and Durkheim's logic suggested that if education systems are unequal, then there must be a functional reason for this inequality. They argued that inequality is necessary and universal because all societies have inequalities. In effect, if it exists, then it must be because it is for the good of society. This analysis became an influential piece of work as it justified the high pay and status of the richest people in society.

The basic argument is that some jobs and positions are more important to society than others. People who are in these special jobs must have skills and personal qualities that set them apart from other people. It is important for society that the best people fulfil these roles even though they may require huge amounts of work and may not always be pleasant.

Very few people have the skill and talent for the best jobs. In addition, a lot of training is required for the top positions. People who undergo extended educational training to get those jobs, or those who study hard, often give up a lot to do so. They may work long hours and have no personal time for fun. This is known as deferred gratification; people work hard now for the sake of possible pleasure in the future. People will not do this unless they feel that it brings them some form of advantage over other people.

They must therefore be given an incentive to sacrifice their time so they should be rewarded in the form of excellent pay and rewards. Their pay and rewards should be significantly better than everyone else has to act as an incentive for them to work hard. Thus, social inequality is a good thing for the whole of society as only those who deserve the best rewards can have them. More than that, because society is unequal, it is clear that inequality serves a purpose for society as a whole, otherwise it would not happen.

Surprisingly, this type of thinking influenced some members of the Labour Party in the 1960s, such as Antony Crosland who became Secretary of State for Education and Science. He thought that one way to make society more equal was to make competition between pupils within schools more equal. This led to the policies that created comprehensive schools.

In 1971, another writer developed the ideas of Davis and Moore. Turner suggested that the education system operated to allow some early selection of very able children from the lowest sections of society for the top jobs through mechanisms such as grammar schools and examination systems. He also recognised that some people strive and do not succeed, so schools need to provide systems to encourage the best, but to let the less able be happy with their situation and to accept that they are not good enough for the top jobs.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Questions

- What reasoning do Davis and Moore use to justify why society should be unequal?
- Why do Davis and Moore suggest we need to pay people in top jobs more than other people?
- To what extent do you agree that inequality is good for society? Put points both for and against this point of view.

## Keywords

1. Deferred gratification - putting pleasure off in the present to get a bigger reward in the future.

## What criticisms of functionalism have been made?

### Bullets

- Structural functionalism is not as popular in sociology as it once was.
- It assumes that everything that happens in society is for the good of that society.
- It does not explain social change well
- It assumes people share norms and values, when clearly they don't.

### Text

Structural functionalism has been a very influential viewpoint, though it has had more impact in the USA than in Britain. It has had an impact on social policy and has influenced governments. It is less popular among sociologists but it still has some value for insights that it offers. One of the main insights is into the way that education systems socialise children and pass on the values of society.

Whilst Parsons wrote a great deal, he did not do much practical research and although he considered himself a scientist, there is little research evidence to support his ideas. This is a weakness because it is difficult to test his theories.

Parsons and structural functionalists seem to confuse cause and effect. They argue that certain social phenomena exist because they are needed by society. If they are needed by society, they must fulfil a function for that society. By that logic, women take care of children in our society because that is what they do. This does not take into account all of the other reasons why women care for children, such as socialisation or even male dominance, which is what feminists would argue. There are many factors that influence how cultures develop that are not good for society: racism, sexism and differences in power, but functionalism appears to overlook these.

Structural functionalists apply the organic analogy to society. This implies that societies wish to be stable and not to change, because organisms tend to avoid change. This does not explain changes to society. Societies appear to undergo massive changes, and sometimes in quite a short space of time. Consider changes that have taken place in the role of the genders in the last 50 years or so.

Structural functionalism seems to believe that people all share the same values and morality in society. This is difficult to prove. There are many different social groups which

# Understanding culture (Education)

all have very different points of view and patterns of behaving. Norms that apply to one group in society do not necessarily apply to another; for example, many youth cultures are openly critical of mainstream society. Alvin Gouldner pointed out that many of the students who opposed America's participation in the Vietnam war and took part in demonstrations against the government in the 1970s were in fact the cleverest students. They were the ones, who according to Parsons, should have been those who would go on to the best jobs in society.

## Questions

- According to functionalists, do we have free will?
- Do functionalists account for those who reject society such as terrorists?
- Do people in society really share values, morals and norms?

## Keywords

1. Phenomena - things that happen.

## How have functional views of education been modernised?

### Introduction

#### Bullets

- According to Functionalists, education has three roles - socialization, skills provision and role allocation.
- Education helps to support society by the socialization of young people to cultural values.
- Education categorizes people to the posts to which they are best suited according to their talents through the use of examinations and qualifications.
- Everyone has the opportunity to succeed in society on the basis of their ability.
- Schools operate according to meritocratic principles, and status is gained on the basis of merit.

#### Text

The functional standpoint on education tends to concentrate on the positive contributions of education to social order. Functionalists argue that education has three functions - socialization, skills provision and role division. Education helps to support society by the socialisation of young people to key cultural values.

Education teaches skills that are required by a modern industrial society. These can be common skills that everyone requires, such as literacy and numeracy, or specific skills that are required for particular occupations. Education allocates people to the posts for which they are best suited according to their talents through the use of examinations and qualifications. This appears to be fair because that is an equality of opportunity - everyone has the opportunity to succeed in society on the basis of their ability.



# Understanding culture (Education)

Pupil behaviour is measured against the yardstick of school rules, and attainment is measured according to their performance in examinations. Every child is judged according to the same standards, without taking into account status in terms of gender, race, family background or class they are born into. Schools operate according to meritocratic principles, and status is gained on the basis of merit.

## Questions

- What are the three functions of education according to functionalists?
- What are meritocratic principles?

## Keywords

1. Functionalists - sociologists who see consensus in our society.
2. Socialization - the process of learning to behave in a manner that is appropriate to your culture.
3. Equality of opportunity - that everyone in our society has the same opportunity.
4. Meritocracy - the best people rise to the top of the social structure as they are the cleverest and the most competent to govern us.

## The New Right

### Bullets

- Education could promote economic growth.
- Education was used to promote economic growth by encouraging competition, increasing the choice available to parents and putting the emphasis on raising standards.
- The new Right hoped to increase competition by conducting new tests and publishing the results.
- They supported national standardised tests and examinations which permitted the direct comparison of schools with each other.
- League tables were used to stimulate more competition.

### Text

In 1976, in an address at Ruskin College, the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, called for the 'Great Debate' on education.

At a time when unemployment was rising and Britain's economy was declining, it was feared that education was failing to produce young people with the appropriate skills for the world of work. It was necessary for schools to improve vocational education and training in order to satisfy the needs of industry.

This emphasis, together with the policies that emanated from it became known as the new vocationalism.

Although it was a Labour prime minister who instigated the 'Great Debate', New Right and Conservative Governments from 1979 onwards reflected his viewpoint. They argued that

# Understanding culture (Education)

education could promote the social changes that they wished to see, in particular the promotion of economic growth by concentrating on improving workforce skills.

Education was used to promote economic growth by encouraging competition, increasing choice (for parents in particular) and by putting the emphasis on raising standards.

Financial savings could be made by compelling educational establishments to compete for students and pupils. Those who were unable to attract students would lose their funding. As a result, they would either have to raise their standards or face the possibility of closure.

The New Right was hoping to increase competition by setting new tests and publishing the results. The aim of this was to provide information to parents, thereby enabling them to choose the best schools for their children.

However, only some types of tests were supported by the Conservative governments of the 80s and 90s. In general, they were opposed to setting course work and allowing teachers to assess the work of their pupils. They preferred national standard tests and examinations that permitted the direct comparison of schools with each other. League tables were used to stimulate more competition.

Opposition came, for example, from Local Education Authorities and from teachers and their unions. There were also divisions within the ranks of the Conservatives. Not everyone agreed with the direction taken by the Conservatives and many of their ideas were very unpopular at the time.

## Questions

- What were the ideas of the New Right?
- What plans did they have?

## Keywords

1. Vocational training - training someone for a particular job.
2. The new vocationalism - education that has the aim of preparing students for life in the workplace.
3. League tables - tables which place schools in order according to their examination success

## The principles of the New Right

### Bullets

- A number of the principles of the New Right are based on the theories of market forces.
- There should be competition amongst schools in the same way as private companies compete against each other.
- Chubb and Moe (1997) state it is necessary for public schools to have the same motivation for improvement as the private sector.
- The New Right intended to use education to promote economic growth.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

A number of the principles of the New Right are based on the theories of market forces. They felt that the British economy was in decline and something needed to be done to change the situation. People had to take the responsibility for their own future rather than depend on the state. So too in schools. There should be competition amongst schools in the same way as private companies compete against each other. This should lead to raising educational standards. It was argued that the best schools would attract more pupils and the poor schools would decline if they do not change things in order to attract more pupils.

Chubb and Moe (1997) state it is necessary for public schools to have the same motivation for improvement as the private sector. This would lead to raising educational standards. It is necessary for schools to attract their 'customers' by being successful and popular schools.

The New Right intended to use education to promote economic growth. The objectives of the reforms was the raising of standards increasing the choice available to parents and improving the partnership between parents and schools, as well as improving the link between further and higher education and the needs of the economy.

Examinations and setting tests was one method of moving forward. Publishing the results would inform parents which schools had the best results. The League tables were introduced which published pupils' examination results for the public. By now, everyone could compare schools with each other and parents could gather information before deciding on the choice of schools for their children.

## Questions

- What were the principles of the New Right?
- How did they intend to raise standards?
- Have these policies been successful?

## Keywords

1. League tables - tables that put schools in order according to examination success.

## The Education Reform Act

### Bullets

- Some subjects were compulsory under the National Curriculum.
- They included attainment targets that stated what every pupil was required to know in the four key stages.
- City Technical Colleges were established that were sponsored by private industry.
- Schools gained greater control over their own finances.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

The National Curriculum was introduced in 1988. Pupils aged 11 - 16 years had to study Mathematics, English, (and Welsh in Wales), Science, History, Geography, Technology, Music, Art, Physical Education and a Foreign Language. The core subjects were Welsh, English, Mathematics and Science. The remainder were the foundation subjects.

The National Curriculum also contained Attainment Targets that stated what every pupil needed to know in the four key stages, at 7, 11, 14 and 16 years of age. This would then be checked in formal tests at the end of every stage - the SATs. The hope was to raise standards in schools by encouraging schools to compete against each other.

This Act emphasised parental choice - parents had the choice of sending their children to a school of their choosing. This again stimulated competition among schools.

City Technical Colleges were established in cities which concentrated on teaching technology. These were sponsored by private industry, so that the state did not have to pay the full costs of building the colleges. They were also independent of Local Education Authorities.

Schools also were given the choice of withdrawing from local authority control and being funded directly from central government. Schools were given more control over their own finances, with Headteachers and governors being responsible for the budget. The schools, therefore, received funding based on the number of pupils on the school register. The aim of this was to reward schools who succeeded in attracting a large number of pupils, and motivate other schools to improve. There was some opposition from Teachers' Unions and not all the plans came to fruition.

From 1994 onwards, the focus was on the four core subjects only.

## Questions

- What was the content of the National Curriculum?
- What were City Technical Colleges?

## Keywords

1. Core subjects - Welsh, English, Mathematics and Science.
2. Foundation subjects - the remainder of the subjects such as History, Geography, French, Music, Art, ICT, Physical Education, Design and Technology .
3. Attainment Targets - that which is required for all pupils to know in the end of every key stage.
4. City Technical Colleges - educational establishments in cities that concentrated on teaching technology.

## New Labour

### Bullets

- The New Deal in 1998 offered education and training for young people between 18 and 24 years old who had been out of work for over six months.

# Understanding culture (Education)

- The Labour Party familiarised pupils with the world of work throughout their time in school, in the hope that this would provide suitable and better workers for industry.

## Text

When the New Labour Party came to power in 1997, Tony Blair stated that education was his priority and that variety and choice were important.

New Labour argued that having one comprehensive system that provided the same education for everyone was no longer suitable. It needed to be modernised and there was support for the idea of specialist schools. These were centres that specialised in certain specialist subjects, and Tony Blair believed that these afforded greater opportunities for all.

In the New Deal in 1998, education and training was offered for young people between 18 and 24 years old who had been out of work for over six months. A promise was also made to increase the number of student places for students from a working class background in higher education. In 1998, Labour changed the method of obtaining student grants to a system of having low-interest loans. Some argued that this widened the class gap in terms of access to higher education.

Although there was more choice available to young people, it was still difficult to get rid of the obvious division between academic and vocational education. The numbers of pupils who pursue vocational course as opposed to 'A' level courses remain small. The majority of white middle class students choose the traditional academic curriculum as before, and working class students and those from ethnic minorities tend to choose vocational courses.

As a result, the Tomlinson review of 14-19 education was set up to try to get rid of this division once and for all. The aim of the New Labour government was to familiarise pupils with the world of work throughout their time in school, in the hope that this will provide suitable and better workers for industry.

## Questions

- What was the New Deal?
- Should education become more vocational?

## Keywords

1. Vocational education - education with the aim of preparing students for life in the workplace.

## Evaluation of the policies

## Bullets



# Understanding culture (Education)

- The study undertaken by Ball, Bowe and Gerwitz confirmed the differences between schools.
- Neighbouring schools compete against each other for pupils.
- Education is less egalitarian according to the study.
- There were a number of criticisms of the new vocationalism.

## Text

Some sociologists have evidence which supports the view that inequality is continuing. Between 1991 and 1994, Stephen Ball, Richard Bowe and Sharon Gerwitz studied 15 schools in 3 neighbouring LEAs. The study comprised of a mixture of LEA schools, grant-maintained schools and one City Technical College (CTC). The establishments served diverse areas, some with a predominantly middle class population, and others with a higher number of working class residents.

They visited the schools, attended meetings, examined documents and interviewed a sample of the teachers. They interviewed 150 parents who had children in primary schools who were about to choose which secondary school the children would attend. They also interviewed the headteachers of some of the primary schools and examined LEA documents in respect of changes in the selection patterns.

They sought to discover what were the effects on the education system, of giving a choice to parents and stimulating competition between schools, particularly the effect of the opportunities on different social groups. The study reached the conclusion that educational changes substantially influenced secondary schools, particularly those who were short of pupils and who had to do something to arrest the decline. The most successful schools could feel fairly satisfied, but they too were beginning to change some of their practices.

The schools were not all as enthusiastic about attracting every student. Because of the publication of the league tables, they were more eager to attract children with academic ability who would raise the school's position in the table and add to its prestige.

This emphasis was a stimulus for some schools to restart streams and sets and direct more resources towards those children who were likely to be successful in examinations and tests. This led to fewer resources being allocated to Special Needs and more directed towards marketing activities in order to attract more pupils - colourful brochures, open evenings etc. Neighbouring schools no longer collaborate, but compete against each other for pupils.

Parents and pupils situations changed with the advent of the educational reforms. As LEAs had less control over pupil allocation to the schools, parents had a better opportunity to steer the market. Middle class parents were seen to be exploiting the situation by placing more emphasis on their own educational and cultural values.

Middle class parents are in a better position than working class parents to ensure that their children attend the school of their choice. There are a number of reasons for this. Middle class parents have more cultural capital than the majority of working class parents. Collecting information about the educational system and turning to your own advantage requires perseverance, knowledge, time and money. Money also brings other benefits in its wake, for example, paying for public transport to schools that are further away.

# Understanding culture (Education)

The study did not find that working class parents did not have less of an interest in the education of their children. However, they lacked the material resources and cultural capital to influence secondary schools. Many working class parents preferred to send their children to the nearest school.

The study concluded that encouraging choice amongst parents, publishing league tables, open registration, budgeting by formula and other policies that were devised to make education more market-orientated had all made education less egalitarian. It was seen that those who are already at an advantage gain greater benefits and that those who are disadvantaged are losing more ground. The ideology of educational establishments is changing, and is more concerned about attracting the talented and the privileged than helping the disadvantaged.

Some critics strongly attacked the new vocationalism which characterises the different youth training schemes. Dan Finn refuses to accept that its real aim is to achieve the objectives it alleges. Finn states that confidential government papers which were disclosed to the London publication Time Out in 1983, show that the true purpose of the YTS was to restrict the number of workers who would join trade unions, in order to minimise the bargaining power of the workforce. The YTS would also directly reduce the wage levels for young people. The same could be said of more recent training initiatives.

John Clarke and Paul Willis came to a similar conclusion. They argued that the new vocationalism was a means of producing people who wanted to work but who were caught in the middle between education and the world of work. Trainees could be used instead of other full-time workers, and as a result would be cheaper for the employer.

Philip Cohen has studied the educational content within training schemes. Rather than reskilling the population - that is, training them in specific skills such as bricklaying - Cohen perceived that these courses were deskilling the workforce. The real condition of the labour market was being concealed and the fact that unemployment is one of the structural characteristics of society.

## Questions

- What were the discoveries made by Ball, Bowe and Gerwitz?
- What were the conclusions of the studies?
- What was the criticism of the new vocationalism?

## Keywords

1. Egalitarian - equality.
2. Ideology - a system of beliefs.
3. The new vocationalism - education with the aim of preparing students for life in the workplace.

## How have Marxists criticised the education system?

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Introduction

### Bullets

- Marxists see that the ruling class or 'bourgeoisie' rule the workers or 'proletariat'.
- The bourgeoisie have the wealth and the power to rule.
- The proletariat are exploited because they are not treated fairly.
- Marxists argue that the education system plays a key role in disseminating the ideology of the ruling class.

### Text

Marxists see capitalist society as being ruled by the economy. The minority, the ruling class or 'bourgeoisie' rule the majority, namely the workers or 'proletariat'. The bourgeoisie have the wealth and the power to rule. The proletariat are exploited because they are not treated fairly. This is the basis of class inequality.

Institutions such as organised religion, the mass media, the political and the education systems all reinforce the ideology that the rich and powerful should control society. They promote an ideology or belief that our society is fair and just and that the proletariat should quietly accept capitalist society.

Marxists argue that the education system plays a key role in disseminating the ideology of the ruling class.

### Questions

- Explain the Marxist view of society?
- What institutions reinforce capitalist ideologies?
- Does your school or college promote capitalist ideas? How?

### Keywords

1. Capitalist society - a society in which the ruling class benefit at the expense of the workers.
2. Bourgeoisie - the ruling class.
3. Proletariat - the workers.
4. Ideology - a system of beliefs

## The Labour Party

### Bullets

- The Labour Party has traditionally been influenced by Marxist thinking.
- New Labour has moved away from its traditional policies in England.
- In Wales, there is still a link with ideals of inequality.

### Text

Traditionally, the Labour Party has been associated with Marxist principles. It believes that the interests of the working class should be promoted. Historically the Labour Party has been associated with policies that promote equality of access to education.

# Understanding culture (Education)

The Labour Party introduced comprehensive schools, student grants and other educational legislation that made education more accessible to a wider range of people.

Since the arrival of New Labour in 1997, that traditional link with Marxism has broken down. The Labour Party is much less associated with working class ideals because it has followed New Right ideas of competition and market forces in education.

Nevertheless, the Labour Party in Wales has remained much more traditional than the Labour Party in London and has introduced a slightly different range of legislation that is concerned with improving education access for learners. It has abolished the unpopular SATS and made access to Higher Education cheaper for Welsh students applying to Welsh Universities.

## Questions

- Why is the Labour Party associated with Marxist ideas?
- Why is there a difference between Labour Party policy in England and in Wales?

## Keywords

1. Legislation: laws that have been made.

## Bowles and Gintis

### Bullets

- Bowles and Gintis believe that education supplies the workforce with the type of personality, attitudes and values that are most useful to capitalists.
- The hidden curriculum contributes to this by moulding the workforce of the future.
- Bowles and Gintis believe that the hidden curriculum provides a tolerant and an obedient workforce.
- They argue that education is an indirect benefit to capitalism as it legalises inequality.

### Text

The American sociologists, Bowles and Gintis (1976), considered that the main function of education in capitalist countries is to regenerate the labour market.

They proposed correspondence theory. This suggests that educational inequality mirrors the inequality of wider society.

If capitalism is to succeed it must have an industrious and obedient workforce that is too divided to challenge the authority of the rulers. According to Bowles and Gintis, education supplies a workforce with the type of personality, attitudes and values that are most useful to capitalists.

The education system succeeds in fulfilling this aim by means of the hidden curriculum.

# Understanding culture (Education)

The hidden curriculum includes things that children learn by attending school rather than the alleged educational objectives. There is a correlation between the hidden curriculum and the needs of the workforce. According to Bowles and Gintis, the hidden curriculum moulds the workforce of the future in the following ways:

In a study of 237 members of the senior year in a secondary school in New York, Bowles and Gintis showed that the grades gained had more to do with personal characteristics than academic ability. A relationship was detected between low grades and creativity whilst the higher grades were associated with reliability and punctuality. The American education system was creating an unimaginative, uncomplaining workforce that could be dealt with easily by employers.

Very little control is given to students in respect of the subjects they study and the methods of study. That prepares them for the nature of the relationship in the workplace, where workers are expected to listen and obey.

In capitalist society the workforce must be motivated by external rewards such as pay because the work is so dreary. The wage packet is the external reward, in exactly the same way as the external reward of qualifications was the motivation in school.

Bowles and Gintis allege that knowledge is divided into fragments and kept in 'neat' compartments. The approach to education corresponds to the way that the workforce is divided. Bowles and Gintis believe that jobs in factories are also divided into specific tasks to be done by different individuals. A fragmented workforce is easy to control - an example of dividing in order to overcome.

Bowles and Gintis, therefore believe that the hidden curriculum provides a tolerant and obedient workforce that unquestioningly accepts authority, and is motivated by external reward and which is divided. They also argue that formal parts of the curriculum correspond to the needs of capitalist employers.

They argue that education is indirectly beneficial to capitalism by legalising inequality. By making a society appear to be fair and just, it obscures the awareness of class, and safeguards the stability of society.

Although education is free and open to all, and individuals can apply for jobs as they wish, Bowles and Gintis insist that some have much better opportunities than others. The children of rich and powerful people tend to gain better qualifications and better paid jobs, irrespective of their abilities. This is what the education system seeks to hide behind the myth of meritocracy. Some who are deprived of success blame themselves and not the system which has condemned them to fail. The idea that we are competing on a level playing field is a myth.

## Questions

- Explain what is the 'corresponding theory'.
- How does the hidden curriculum mould the future workforce according to Bowles and Gintis?



# Understanding culture (Education)

## Keywords

1. The correspondence theory - a view that says education mirrors wider society.
2. Capitalism - a society in which the ruling class benefits at the expense of the workers.
3. Hidden curriculum - subliminal messages conveyed to pupils without their realisation.
4. Hierarchy - a particular order, where rulers are at the top and everyone knows their place.
5. Meritocracy - the best people rise to the top of the social structure because they are the most talented people and the most competent to rule us.

## Althusser

### Bullets

- Althusser believed that education socializes working class children into accepting their subordinate status to the middle class.
- Education conveys the ideology of the ruling class.
- Education prepares individuals for the world of work, in order to accept their position in a capitalist society.

### Text

Louis Althusser (1971) believed that education socialises working class children into accepting their subordinate status to the middle class.

He also stated that the media, the law and religion reinforce this message and pass on an ideology or belief system, namely the ideology of the ruling class. He used the term state ideological apparatus to describe the role of these agencies.

In a capitalist society, he sees education taking over as the main agency of social control. Education reproduces the attitudes and behaviour for divisions of labour. It teaches people how to accept their position, to be exploited, and to show the rulers how to control the workforce.

Education prepares individuals for the world of work, and to accept their position in the capitalist society.

### Questions

- What is the ideology of the ruling class?
- How does education convey this ideology?

## Keywords

1. Socialization - the process of learning to behave in a way that is appropriate to your culture.
2. Ideology - a system of beliefs.
3. Exploit - to take advantage.

# Understanding culture (Education)

4. Capitalism - a society in which the ruling class profits at the expense of the workers.
5. Ideological state apparatus - institutions that are used in capitalist societies to transmit ruling class ideology.

## Educational opportunities and the proletariat

### Bullets

- University students are more likely to come from professional and middle class backgrounds rather than the working class.

### Text

Marxists correctly claim that the education system benefits the wealthy in society. University students are more likely to come from professional and middle class backgrounds than from the working class. This is particularly true of the old universities and those that are high in the league tables, and that have close associations with private schools. Oxford University, for example, accepts a substantial number of students from the private sector, even after considering the 'A' level results.

Connor and Dewson (2001) state that only one in five higher education students came from a working class background. This partly reflects their low grades at GCSE and 'A' Level, but also that there are a number of students from working class backgrounds who have the necessary qualifications but opt not to continue to higher education. This supports Marxist ideas that the education system is elitist.

A survey of 2000 young people demonstrated that students from the working class showed more interest in jobs and financial matters than middle class students.

Some of the most common reasons given for not considering higher education level were - wanting to start working, wanting training and to work at the same time, wanting to be independent, they were aiming for a job that did not require being highly qualified, and they were concerned about the cost, namely of student loans and the fear of not being able to repay the debt.

This evidence can be used to support correspondence theory in that working class children are socialised into not challenging middle class power over education and the myth of meritocracy.

However, the people who experience the most discrimination in Marxist terms are women and members of ethnic minorities. Yet it is these who are the two groups who are increasingly attending universities.

### Questions

- Why do fewer young people from the working class go to university?

### Keywords

# Understanding culture (Education)

1. Higher education - education past the age of 18 that takes place in universities and colleges.

## What criticisms have been made of Bowles and Gintis?

### Bullets

- Critics say that Bowles and Gintis overemphasise the correlation between work and education.
- Some pupils reject education and do not become good employees.

### Text

The work of Bowles and Gintis is considered to be extremely controversial, and it has been criticised by Marxist critics and others.

Critics agree that Bowles and Gintis overemphasise the correlation between work and education and that they have failed to provide adequate evidence. A number of points have been made by their critics.

The education system was established much later than the beginning of the industrial period. For a long time, industrialists were employing an uneducated workforce and thriving. This weakens the alleged relationship between education and economic development.

Insufficient research was undertaken to the allegation that schools had an effect on personality. Detailed research into life in schools was not undertaken, whilst admitting that the hidden curriculum in fact was influencing pupils. Other research suggests that little attention is paid to school rules by many pupils, and their respect for teachers is minimal - in contrast to Bowles and Gintis' idea of a docile workforce for the future.

Bowles and Gintis were criticised for ignoring the influence of formal education. Reynolds insists that it is not the objective of the curriculum to develop a workforce that is obedient. Pupils are taught to appraise and question, to know about social and political matters.

In a study of workers in England by Richard Scase, only 2.5% were of the opinion that educational qualifications were an important factor in deciding social class. This does not suggest that education has succeeded in legalising inequality in Britain.

According to David Reynolds, it would be impossible for British capitalists to completely rule schools. Local authorities have a great deal of freedom in the matter of organising education. Teachers do have freedom within the classroom.

The Bowles and Gintis research was completed in the 70s. Since then, there have been many changes to the education system which suggests that their assumptions could be more relevant today. Local authorities lost some of their power and control over education, for example, by the establishment of grant-maintained schools; teachers lost their freedom as a result of the national curriculum; and there has been a growth in vocational training.

# Understanding culture (Education)

The Marxist, Henry Giroux, sought a new analysis, following the criticisms made of Bowles and Gintis. He claimed that pupils from the working class participated in designing their own education. They do not accept everything they are taught. They take advantage of their own culture to find ways of responding to the school - often by opposition (anti-school subculture).

## Questions

- What criticisms have been made of Bowles and Gintis?
- Do schools act as a form of mind control for capitalism?

## Keywords

1. Correspondence theory - the view that schools mirror wider society.

## What critical theories of education have developed recently?

### Introduction

#### Bullets

- Paul Willis looked at the reasons for the development of anti-school sub-culture groups.
- Not every pupil unquestioningly accepts rules and authority.

#### Text

Functionalists have a view of education that seems optimistic and unrealistic to many sociologists. However, Marxists view the education system as being a form of mind control. Neither picture is entirely satisfactory. Sociologists have looked at other ways of explaining how education works.

Pupils respond to their education in different ways. Some groups accept teachers' rules and authority unquestioningly, whilst others spend most of their time breaking the rules and avoiding work.

In the 1970s, the media gave a great deal of attention to inner-city schools and to the misbehaviour of their pupils. This motivated sociologists such as Paul Willis to look into the reasons for the development of these working class groups of 'undisciplined' school pupils, or anti-school subcultures.

Paul Willis's study entitled 'Learning to Labour' is an important Neo-Marxist approach on education. He began with a Marxist perspective, but went on to criticise Marxist viewpoints as being too negative.

Willis tried to understand the experience of being in school from the children's

# Understanding culture (Education)

perspective. He soon discovered that schools were not as successful as Bowles and Gintis thought in terms of producing a docile and compliant workforce.

The school studied by Willis was on a working class housing estate. The main focus of his study was 12 working class boys who he shadowed for their last 18 months in school and in their first few months in work. Willis referred to the boys as 'lads'.

He claimed that they had their own anti-school culture which was opposed to the common values of the school. He claimed that boys developed an anti-school culture because school was irrelevant. His material is now very dated, but it has been influential over the years.

## Questions

- What was the purpose of Paul Willis's study?
- What is anti-school subculture?

## Keywords

1. Subculture - a small group of people with different values to mainstream society.
2. Anti-school - some pupils in schools create friendship groups that withdraw from the objectives and values of the whole school.

## Anti-school culture

### Bullets

- The boys in Willis's study did not see a value in academic work.
- They were looking forward to leaving school and being in full-time work.
- Willis makes the comment that the education system cannot mould pupils' personalities in order to create ideal workers.
- There was a similarity between the anti-school culture and the factory floor culture.

### Text

The following were characteristics of anti-school culture. Boys felt that they were above teachers and other pupils who conformed. They placed little or no value on academic work, and they had no interest in gaining qualifications. One of their objectives was to miss lessons or do as little work as possible when they did attend. School equated to boredom, the adult world was far more exciting. Means of identifying with the adult world were smoking, drinking and not wearing school uniform.

Boys were very keen to leave school and looked forward to having full-time work. They were prepared to take any job as long as it was male manual work. Any manual work was acceptable. They saw little benefit in studying for years in order to have a job requiring mental ability. There was no money in that and they would lose their independence.

Willis makes the observation that the education system fails to mould pupils' personalities in order to create ideal workers. They do not kowtow to authority nor are they obedient and docile.



# Understanding culture (Education)

Willis observed characteristics on the factory floor that were similar to the anti-school culture, e.g. sexism, racism, lack of respect for authority and the same emphasis on the value of manual work. It was equally as important also to have fun and freedom.

Both cultures found ways of coping with boredom and monotony - by having fun and forcing the teacher or manager to yield a little ground. Yet, they knew how far they could go and they would never challenge authority head to head. They knew that it would lead to punishment or dismissal.

Willis believes that education reproduces the type of workforce required by capitalism, but not intentionally. Boys in school are not forced to behave in the way that they do, nor are they forced to look for manual work; rather it is they in their subculture who choose that type of work. They learn from their fathers, brothers and others in the community. The attraction is the adult male world.

Willis concludes that anti-school culture is neither good nor bad for capitalism. The boys realise that capitalist society is not meritocratic. They understand that there are no means for them to improve their lives on their own and they must work together to improve the situation of the working class, both in school and at work. They know that there are no jobs available locally and that studying at school will not prepare them for work. They understand the importance of manual work, but they do not know to what extent capitalism has succeeded in taking advantage of them.

Willis demonstrates therefore, that voluntary abstention from school prepares one section of the workforce for their future role. The force of work reproduces itself unintentionally and indirectly in school.

## Questions

- What are the characteristics of the anti-school subculture?
- What were the similarities between the anti-school culture and the factory floor?
- What are Willis's conclusions?

## Keywords

1. Factory floor culture - friendship groups in the world of work, in the workplace .
2. Anti-school culture - some pupils in school create friendship groups that abstain from the objectives and values of the whole school and create their own culture.
3. Capitalism - a society in which the ruling class profits at the expense of the workers.
4. Meritocracy - the best people rise to the top of the social structure as they are the cleverest and the most competent to govern us.

## Criticisms of Willis

### Bullets

- Some said that Willis's sample was not typical of the pupils in the school he studied.
- Willis disregarded the variety of subcultures within the school.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

David Blackledge and Barry Hunt made a number of criticisms of Willis's work. They suggested that Willis's sample was insufficient. He concentrated on 12 pupils, all males who were not typical of the pupils in the school he studied. Therefore, this study cannot be used as a general picture of working class children and education.

Willis disregarded the broad variety of subcultures in the school. Many of the pupils were in the middle, between both extremes of wholly conforming and the other of being wholly committed to the anti-school culture.

Willis misinterpreted some of the evidence, for example that some boys copied their fathers' attitude towards work. Some of the fathers were very proud of their work and their good relationship with the managers, whilst their sons rejected everyone who did not belong to their own little world.

Twenty years later, a similar study was undertaken in the West Midlands by Mairtin Mac an Ghaill (1994). Some of the young working-class boys - 'the macho lads' - were similar to Willis's boys. They rejected teachers' authority and school values.

However, when Mac an Ghaill conducted his research, it was a period of high unemployment when a number of the traditional low-skill working-class jobs were disappearing. Because of this, the 'rebellious' behaviour of the boys was not so suitable - the jobs for them were disappearing. Often, a period in a youth training scheme was followed by unemployment, and this became the norm for a number of working-class boys.

## Questions

- What were the criticisms of Willis?
- What were the conclusions of Mac an Ghaill?

## Keywords

1. Subculture - a small group of people with different values to mainstream society.
2. Anti-school - some pupils in school create friendship groups that abstain from the objectives and values of the whole school and create their own culture.

## Post-modernists

### Bullets

- According to Post-modernists there are more changes taking place all the time in the present age.
- This is an age where it is not expected for a person to stay in the same job for their lifetime
- Society and families have changed.

## Text

# Understanding culture (Education)

Post-modernists argue that the age that we are living in is different from any other period because so many changes are occurring all the time, and this of course also affects and influences the world of education. There are differences and concerns because of the number of languages that exist, the number of ethnic groups that co-exist in towns and cities and changes in working patterns. All of these influence education.

According to some, this is the post-Ford era, where it is not expected that a person will stay in the same job for life. The workforce of the future will have to be trained in schools to be flexible and with more than one skill to enable them to fit into this pattern.

Society has also changed. By now there are a number of single-parent families, same-sex couples are accepted and religion has to appeal to a multicultural society. To enforce one common curriculum on everyone is going to lead to some problems.

Post-modernists also argue that they are constantly being 'watched' in today's society. Not only because of CCTV cameras but also because of the increase in maintaining records of everything on paper and setting targets in order to monitor people in schools and in jobs.

Moore and Hickox (1994) state that it is impossible to provide a curriculum that suits everyone, either a national or vocational curriculum, because of the changes that are constantly taking place. Because of the increase in monitoring also, record keeping and setting targets, pupils suffer as they constantly have to sit tests and examinations. This causes strain and concern for some.

## Questions

- What is the argument of the Post-modernists?
- How has society changed?
- What do Moore and Hickox say?

## Keywords

1. Multicultural - different cultures.

## Feminist criticisms of education

### Bullets

- Feminists argue that education reinforces patriarchy.
- There are different groups of feminists.
- The hidden curriculum exists from a female perspective.
- A number of feminists argue that what is taught in schools continues to create gender inequalities.
- Feminists view education as a gender socialization agent.

### Text

# Understanding culture (Education)

Feminists argue that education reinforces 'patriarchy'. It must be borne in mind that there are different groups of feminists, but they all study the role of education as a secondary socialisation agent. They emphasise patterns of inequality and show how patriarchy is conveyed culturally and is reproduced through education.

Sylvia Walby (1999) mentions the 'triple system' of oppression where ethnicity and class complicate the situation for women, and that it is necessary to look at patriarchy, capitalism and racism together.

Liberal feminists argue that changes in education and equal opportunities policies are necessary in order to be rid of patriarchy, so the introduction of the National Curriculum does so by ensuring both sexes study the same subjects in school.

Marxist feminists argue that the role of women in society is decided by the economy's needs. They see the capitalist system at fault for the socialization of women to supporting men in the home and in the workplace. Education reinforces these ideas.

Black feminists argue that being female and black is different from being female and white. These experiences can be seen in schools and colleges and the ways in which teachers and books treat the students differently.

Radical feminists argue that the only way to see an end to patriarchy is when women are freed from the negative (and aggressive) influence of men over women - both physically and emotionally. The classroom and the playground are seen as sources of this type of aggression.

Post-feminists argue that the word 'woman' does not have only one meaning but several. A woman can be black, white, lesbian, working-class or middle class. This is the post-modern idea that there is not one single theory or concept that explains any thing.

Heaton and Lawson (1996) refer to the hidden curriculum discussed by feminists. This occurs in several ways - literature that portrays women as being dependent on men - Kelly (1987) states that women are 'invisible' in science subjects. A number of women feel uncomfortable studying some subjects. Culley (1986) states that when studying computers that boys take over and exclude girls. In a number of cases the teachers were not seen intervening.

Heaton and Lawson argue that some teachers still have sexist ideas with regards to some tasks, e.g. boys moving furniture and girls cleaning. A number of feminists argue that what is taught in schools still creates gender inequality despite the National Curriculum. Sport tends to concentrate more on boys' successes and the choice of 'A' levels in some subjects still tends towards traditional patterns of gender segregation. Although there are more women teachers in England and Wales, in schools and colleges there are more men in the senior management posts. And there is a shortage of Black female teachers. Feminists state that all this gives the misconception that positions of power are held by men.

Feminists view education as socialization agent for gender roles, although different aspects are dealt with by different feminists. The education system reinforces the ideology that men are in authority and that the hidden curriculum contributes towards it. What

# Understanding culture (Education)

must be remembered, of course, is that girls generally do much better than boys in many areas of education. Feminist views of women as the victims of the education system may need to be challenged in the light of female achievements.

## Questions

- What is the argument of Feminists?
- What are the different viewpoints of feminists?
- What is the argument of post-feminists?
- Are girls the victims of the education system?
- How does the hidden curriculum teach gendered behaviour?

## Keywords

1. Patriarchy - dominance of males.
2. Secondary socialisation - what is taught by schools, peers, media, religion, colleagues.
3. Capitalism - a society in which the ruling class profits at the expense of the workers.
4. Hidden curriculum - messages that are passed to pupils without them realising.

## How do processes within school affect educational attainment?

### Introduction

#### Bullets

- What takes place within educational institutions has an effect on a pupil's education.
- Processes such as labelling and banding and the hidden curriculum are influential.
- A number of sociologists believe that the informal or hidden curriculum is equally as important as the formal curriculum.
- Teachers enforce social control.

#### Text

For a long time, studies of the role and effectiveness of education have dealt with the extent to which it reproduces cultures and inequalities in the wider society.

The key here was the relationship between the home and the school and what affected the performance of the school was seen outside the school.

More recent viewpoints argue that what occurs within educational institutions has an effect on education. This led to putting an emphasis on processes such as labelling and banding and the hidden curriculum.

It is obvious that a number of things occur within schools. One aspect is the formal curriculum which is presented to pupils, such as the core subjects, Welsh, English, Mathematics and Science as well as other compulsory subjects. This is the National Curriculum used in England and Wales. A number of sociologists believe that the informal curriculum is equally as important if not of greater importance. This is referred to as the



# Understanding culture (Education)

hidden curriculum, e.g. a school hierarchy teaching pupils that everyone has their position - teachers who have power over the pupils, a definite organisation and structure to the day with the emphasis on punctuality, school uniform and of course, the rules regarding behaviour and respect within the classroom.

All these contribute to some pupils doing well and succeeding and others not succeeding. Marxists use the concept of a hidden curriculum to emphasise the way in which schools prepare working-class pupils for the world of work - by familiarising them with hierarchy and through punctuality. The term 'hidden curriculum' is used also by feminists to draw attention to the ways that schools convey messages about sex and gender roles to pupils.

Teachers also enforce social control. Teachers have to apply rules and pupils have to obey teachers or they will be punished. They have to adhere to the rules even if they disagree with them. Neither teachers nor pupils have a choice in terms of whether or not they attend school.

## Questions

- What is the hidden curriculum?
- What is hierarchy?
- How are teachers agents of social control?

## Keywords

1. Hidden curriculum - messages passed to pupils without them realising it.
2. Hierarchy - a particular order, where rulers are at the top and everyone knows their place.
3. Social control - the way in which the social rules of the cultures within which people live, affect their behaviour.

## Anti-school culture

### Bullets

- From the standpoint of education, interactive situations often concentrate on interaction in the classroom.
- Social roles within a school are neither static nor unchanging.
- Teachers' expectations that are based on labelling can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- According to some sociologists, the way in teachers label pupils can influence their attainment.

### Text

Interactional viewpoints as a rule concentrate on interaction on a small scale. They take it for granted that people interpret the world in terms of meanings that are created in interactive situations. They are often critical of structured viewpoints such as Marxism and functionalism which see behaviour formed by the social system.

From the standpoint of education, interactive situations often concentrate on interaction in the classroom, and the meanings that lead to that interaction and the relationships which develop from it. What was given the main attention here was the extent to which

# Understanding culture (Education)

interaction within the classroom could have an effect on pupils' progress, or lack of it.

Social roles within a school are neither static nor unchanging. Teachers disagree about what constitutes the ideal teacher and the ideal pupil. Pupils develop new patterns of behaviour. Subcultures are formed as pupils develop ways of coping with school life. One aspect of the interactive view of education deals with the way in which teachers react to a pupil's behaviour.

The work of Howard Becker is very influential in examining labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy within education, the way in which teachers and pupils interact with each other. His work showed how teachers labelled their pupils, e.g. 'rebellious'. He argued that teachers always reinforced their first negative opinion when interacting with pupils and that led to the pupil retaining that label.

Hargreaves (1967) discovered whilst observing what happened in secondary schools, that teachers formed an initial opinion about pupils by observing their behaviour, their ability and their potential. This meant that they could classify the pupils into certain categories. Over a period of time, they grew to become labels. This information was then used to explain behaviour and attainment. Depending on the label, this could work either positively or negatively.

Cicourel and Kitsuse (1971) conducted a study in a school in the USA and discovered that a pupil's social class was an important influence when being assessed. Even if children from a working-class or a middle class background were of similar ability, those from the middle class were put on more advanced courses.

Teachers' expectations based on labelling, can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is when a pupil is labelled and that then influences his/her behaviour. Again, this can be either positive or negative.

A study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1964) shows that the way in which teachers label pupils may have a positive effect on their attainment. The researchers told the teachers in a school in California that they had discovered one group of children who were likely to do well, and quickly. That was not the case - the children were chosen at random. A year later, some members of this group had shown a great deal of progress.

Rosenthal and Jacobson's conclusion was that they had done well because of the way that they had been labelled. The teachers expected more of them and behaved towards them in a particular way - a prophecy that seemed to come true.

This study has been very influential, but nevertheless, many have criticised it for both ethical and methodological reasons.

David Hargreaves (1975) suggests that the success of labelling is dependent on other factors such as how often the label is used, does the pupil accept and respect the teacher's opinion, do other teachers support the label, and is the label used publicly or privately.

The labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy theories suggest that the ways in which teachers react to individual pupils can have an effect on their educational career. It is also possible

# Understanding culture (Education)

for whole groups of pupils, not only individuals, to be treated in different ways.

From the perspective of interactionism, pupils have different experiences of school. They are treated differently by teachers, they are labelled differently, and are often placed in different bands and sets.

Pupils see different meanings to their education and discover different ways of relating. Schools set definite standards and expect pupils to behave in a particular way.

However, not every pupil is either able or willing to conform to the images of an ideal pupil expected by the teachers. If they fail to do this, perhaps pupils then form their own subcultures which reject some of the school's values.

## Questions

- Explain the interactive viewpoints.
- How do teachers label pupils?
- What is a self-fulfilling prophecy?
- Which studies show this?
- What are the positive and negative effects of labelling?

## Keywords

1. Subculture - a small group of people who have different norms and values from mainstream society.
2. Labelling - putting a label on an individual and then believing that label.
3. Self-fulfilling prophecy - in the context of education, something is prophesied, and because it is prophesied it becomes true or it is forced to come true.

## Grouping Pupils

### Bullets

- There are different ways of grouping pupils in a class .
- Some say that the method of grouping does not influence their attainment.

### Text

The way in which schools group pupils to be taught can have an effect on how well they do. There are several methods of grouping - mixed ability, streaming, banding, sets.

In mixed-ability groups, the pupils are encouraged to work together and this reduces the class differences and conflict. But some people say that it is easier to teach children for examinations if they are put into sets first, and then work can be aimed at a specific pupil level.

There are a number of studies that have conducted research into this.

Sukhnandan and Lee (1998) state that when comparing sets and streaming with mixed

# Understanding culture (Education)

ability groups there wasn't a positive or a negative effect on a child's attainment at either primary or secondary school.

Ireson and Hallam (2001) state pupil grouping has little influence on their general achievement.

## Questions

- What is the difference between mixed ability, streaming and sets?
- What are sociologists' views on this?
- Should children be taught in groups of similar ability and background?

## Keywords

1. Mixed ability - a mixed class of able and less able pupils together.
2. Streaming - pupils put in a group according to their ability, and are taught in that group for every subject.
3. Sets - putting pupils in a group according to their ability in that particular subject.

## Subcultures

### Bullets

- David Hargreaves linked the existence of subcultures in schools to the system of labelling and putting into sets that occurred in schools.
- Paul Willis's study supports this evidence.
- Girls' behaviour is less of a problem.
- Mac an Ghaill saw a group of girls, 'The Black Sisters' succeed despite their opposition to the educational system.

### Text

In his early study, David Hargreaves (1967) linked the existence of subcultures in a school to the system of labelling and sets that occurred in the school.

The pupils who were labelled as problematic were placed in the lower sets and those whose behaviour was acceptable were placed in the higher sets. Those with negative labels were beginning to consider themselves to be failures. They tended to be in the same group socially as well as interrupting lessons, refusing to do homework and being impertinent with the school's teachers. This is an early example of subcultures developing in the school.

Paul Willis' (1977) famous study 'Learning to Labour' supports this evidence. Sewell (1997) also discovered anti-school values amongst boys in his study. Afro-Caribbean boys were constantly confrontational in school through smoking cannabis and behaving violently towards other pupils and towards teachers. Sewell saw this partly as a response to racism in the school and the racism amongst teachers.

Hey's (1997) study looked at the response of girls who were placed in lower sets and who were labelled as failures in the school. She observed that girls' behaviour was less of a problem than boys' behaviour although some of them played truant. They tended to support each other and create a network of friends from the same background as them,

# Understanding culture (Education)

namely the working class. They responded to their situation in the school in the way they treated other boys and male teachers. There was not as much conflict as there was with the boys.

Mac an Ghaill (1988) conducted a study of young women of African-Caribbean and Asian backgrounds in an inner-city sixth form college, the 'Black Sisters'. They were very critical of the college, the schools that had put them in sets and discriminated against them, and how their ability was neither considered nor encouraged. But they decided that gaining qualifications was the best thing they could do, and they succeeded by being determined and by supporting each other.

Symbolic interactionism is accused of being too narrow and fails to take into consideration external factors which affect schools. The policies of the state and other conditions play a full role in educational attainment - interactionists should consider this when conducting a sociological study thereby avoiding basing any interpretations solely on definitions and meanings.

Meanings are not created in the classroom alone. They have a broader base. Many interactionists refer to the existence of class differences within education, but they fail to explain how those differences began.

A number of other explanations are put forward about the behaviour of pupil groups - factors from outside school, such as comparative deprivation and marginalisation, change in the economy and in the world of work, and sexism and racism in schools.

## Questions

- What were David Hargreaves' findings?
- What other studies support this theory?
- What were the findings amongst female pupils?

## Keywords

1. Subculture - a small group of people who have different norms and values from mainstream society.
2. Comparative deprivation - being without things that other people have.
3. Marginalisation - on the fringes.

## To what extent do cultural factors explain different attainment levels between social groups?

### Introduction

#### Bullets

- Education should be based on equality of opportunity.
- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to develop their talent and ability fully.



# Understanding culture (Education)

- However, class, ethnicity and gender make a great difference to educational attainment.
- Research indicates that levels of educational attainment are likely to be greater in the highest social classes.

## Text

In western industrial societies, there is general consensus that education should be based on equality of opportunity. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to develop their talent and ability fully without being dependent on class, ethnicity, gender or any social characteristics.

However, from the standpoint of educational qualifications, evidence clearly demonstrates that people who have some special social characteristics tend to do better than others.

Class ethnicity and gender make a big difference to educational attainment.

1. Class is the most important influence. Its effect on educational attainment is almost three times greater than ethnicity.
2. Ethnicity comes next. Its effect is twice as great as gender.
3. Gender. Although it was given considerable attention during recent years, gender is the least important. The effect of class is over five times greater on educational attainment than the effect of gender. (Gillborn & Mirza 2000 )

Research shows that levels of educational attainment are likely to be higher in the upper classes of society. The children of parents from the highest social class are more likely to stay on in a 16+ school, they are more likely to pass examinations whilst in school and are more likely to gain admission to university.

In a study of 8,529 boys who were born 1913 - 1952 and educated in England and Wales, AH Halsey, AF Heath and JM Ridge discovered there were definite class differences. Their sample was divided into three groups depending on the father's occupation:

1. The service class who worked as professional people, administrators and managers.
2. The middle class, namely clerical workers, salesmen, self-employed and technicians.
3. The working class that included manual workers in industry and agriculture.

Halsey et al. found that when comparing a boy from the service class with a boy from the working class, the service class boy was 4 times more likely to still be in school at the age of 16, 8 times at the age of 17 and 10 times more likely at the age of 18. In addition, they had an 11 times better chance of going to university.

Jefferis et al conducted research into 11,000 children who were born in 1958. Jefferis et al. (2002) found that those children who had suffered from poverty in childhood had fallen behind those from a middle class background in mathematics and reading by the time they had reached 7 years of age.

# Understanding culture (Education)

Many reasons are put forward to try to explain the educational 'failure' of the working class.

## Questions

- What is the evidence with regards to educational attainment?
- What were the findings of Halsey et al.?

## Keywords

1. Equality of opportunity - that everyone in our society has the same opportunity.
2. Educational attainment - academic success.

## Cultural Deprivation

### Bullets

- Hyman argued that the system of values of the lower classes created an obstacle to their improvement.
- These values are not typical of all members of the working class.
- Sugarman alleges that many middle class occupations provide an opportunity for advancement in income and status.

### Text

Herbert H Hyman argued that the system of values of the lower classes created an obstacle to their improvement. Drawing on much of the data gained from opinion polls and surveys undertaken by sociologists, Hyman outlined the following differences between the system of values of the working and middle classes. (In the 1960s)

Members of the working class place less value on education. They put less emphasis on formal education as a means of personal achievement, and see less value in staying on at school beyond the school-leaving age.

Members of the working class place less value on attaining a higher occupational status, when evaluating jobs, they emphasise stability and tend to reject the risks associated with higher-status occupations.

Compared with their middle class contemporaries, members of the working class believe that there is less opportunity for personal advancement. This belief is likely to be the basis for the low value put on education and a higher occupational status. Hyman argues that although he has based it on a realistic assessment of the situation - the working class has less opportunity - the belief itself further reduces the opportunity.

The values outlined by Hyman were not typical of all members of the working class - there was a significant minority who did not share them.

This minority included many manual workers and white collar parents. These workers identified themselves more with the middle class and because of this, they had greater aspirations.

# Understanding culture (Education)

Therefore, according to Hyman, the motivation to succeed either in school or outside, is generally lower for members of the working class.

In 1970, Barry Sugarman linked some aspects of the middle class subcultures more directly to differentiated educational attainment. He demonstrated an explanation for the difference in attitude and outlook between the two classes, by arguing that the nature of manual and non-manual occupations accounted for these differences.

Sugarman alleges that many middle-class occupations provide opportunities for advancement in terms of income and status. This encourages planning for the future, e.g. investing time, energy and money in training, to meet the requirements of higher status posts. Many white-collar jobs also provide adequate income for future financial investments, e.g. mortgages and insurance policies. In comparison, working class jobs reach the maximum income fairly quickly, but provide fewer opportunities for promotion. In addition to this, there is less job security associated with them. Manual workers are more likely to lose their jobs than white-collar workers.

Sugarman argues that differentiating in the nature of jobs tends to generate differences in attitude and outlook. As they have less control over the future, less opportunity to improve their status, and less income to invest, manual workers tend to be concerned about direct immediate satisfaction.

He also states that these attitudes and tendencies are an integral part of the working-class subculture working-class pupils therefore, are socialised in them. This could be partly responsible for the low level of educational attainment.

## Questions

- What was Hyman's argument?
- What was Sugarman's argument?
- Do working class people have a different culture from middle class people?

## Keywords

1. Subculture - a small group of people with different values to mainstream society.
2. Manual occupations - jobs that need to use hands
3. Non-manual occupations - jobs that do not use hands.

## Cultural deprivation theory

### Bullets

- Those who are at the bottom of the class system are being deprived of some values, attitudes and special skills that are essential for educational success.
- This theory blames children and their families for educational failure.
- Children who are culturally deprived are lacking in essential skills, attitudes and values.
- A number of researchers have alleged that there are patterns of class differences.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Text

Many of the viewpoints mentioned above have been used to support what is known as the cultural deprivation theory.

This theory states that those who are at the bottom of the class system are being deprived of some values, attitudes and special skills that are essential for educational success.

This theory puts the blame for educational failure on children and their families, their neighbourhood and the subculture of their social group. The child who has been culturally deprived is lacking in skills, attitudes and important values that are essential to high educational success. His environment is culturally as well as economically poor. Cultural deprivation puts the blame for the child's failure on his or her background. This draws attention away from the failings of the education system which may contribute to, or account for class differences in attainment.

A number of researchers allege there are class differences in language patterns and these could be partly responsible for class differences in educational attainment.

Basil Bernstein (1990) stated that there are two language patterns - the limited code and the extended code. The limited code is found in the everyday spoken language used by people who know each other well. Short simple sentences are used and often details and explanations are omitted. The extended code explains things in greater detail and uses long, complex sentences. According to Bernstein both languages are familiar to the middle class but only the limited code is used by the working class. Teachers in school use the extended code and therefore working class children are at a disadvantage from the outset.

## Questions

- Explain what is meant by cultural deprivation theory.
- What was Basil Bernstein's view?
- Do middle class and working class people use language in a different way?

## Keywords

1. Cultural deprivation - there is no access to skills and values that are aids to success, for some people.
2. Limited code - everyday, spoken language used by people who know each other well.
3. Extended code - a rich language that uses long, complex sentences.

## The middle class

### Bullets

- Douglas says that middle class parents show a greater interest in the education of their children.
- There is an emphasis on high attainment.
- Some state that it is easier for middle class parents to keep in touch with the educational progress of their children.

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Working class parents do not feel at ease in a middle class situation such as a school.

## Text

In 'The Home and the School' (1964), J. W. B. Douglas studied the educational career of British children born during the first week of March 1946, through primary school up to the age of 11 years. In a second publication, 'All Our Future' he followed the progress of 4,720 persons from his original sample through secondary school up to the age of 16 in 1962.

Douglas placed the students in groups according to their ability, that was measured through tests including IQ tests. Also, he divided the students into 4 social class groups and found important variations in educational attainment between students of similar ability but from different social classes.

By comparing the attainment of 'high ability' students, Douglas found that 77% of upper middle class, 60% of lower middle class, 53% of upper working class and 37% of lower working class had gained good certificates in 'O' level examinations. By comparing students of lesser ability, he found that more attainment differences were related to the social class.

Douglas also found that staying within the education system was also related to social class. Within the 'high ability' group, 50% of students from the lower working class had left secondary school in the fifth year compared with 33% from the upper working class, 22% from the lower middle class and social class differences were greater for less ability students.

Douglas related educational attainment to many factors including students' health, size of family and the quality of the school. The most important factor apparently was parents' interest in their children's education.

In general, middle class parents showed a greater interest in their children's education, by visiting the school more frequently to discuss their children's progress.

They were more likely to want their children to stay on in school beyond the official school-leaving age (16), and encourage them to do so. Douglas found that parental interest and support became of increasing importance as an incentive for higher attainment as children became older.

Douglas also showed the importance of children's early years, because, often, early years' performance is reflected throughout the secondary school. He suggested, during primary socialization that middle class children received more attention and motivation from their parents. This forms a base for high attainment within the educational system.

Apart from this comment, Douglas does not study pre-school socialisation in detail. There is much research, mainly by psychologists, that explores the relationship between raising children, social class and educational attainment.

Behaviour patterns set out during childhood have important and long-term effects. In



# Understanding culture (Education)

particular, the personality of a child is moulded during the years of primary socialization.

There are social class variations in the patterns for raising children.

These variations have a significant effect on attainment levels in the educational system.

Compared with the working class patterns of raising children, there are identifiable features of the middle class child rearing. There is an emphasis on high attainment. Parents expect and demand more from their children. They encourage their children to continually improve their performance, in many areas, from children's games to talking and behaviour at the meal table.

In rewarding success, parents suggest incentives for their children's high attainment. By giving their children individual attention and setting high standards of attainment for them, parents provide an environment that motivates and nurtures intellectual development. In this manner, the patterns of bringing up children in the middle class set the foundation for high attainment in the educational system.

The above views have come in for strong criticism. Some suggest the fact that working class parents visited the school less frequently than middle class parents meant that they had less of an interest in their children's education. Tessa Blackstone and Jo Mortimore point out that working class parents do not have as much time to visit the school because of the demands of their jobs, e.g. flexible working salary of the fathers who are in non-manual posts.

The parents of working class children do have an interest in the education of their children, but they do not feel comfortable visiting the school because of the attitude of some of the teachers. Blackstone and Mortimore state that the teachers represent authority and perhaps because of the parents' childhood experiences, they do not feel comfortable meeting them.

Blackstone and Mortimore also cite evidence from the National Child Development Study and found that 89% of middle class children and only 75% of working class children attend school where there was a good communication system between the school and parents so it was easier for middle class parents to keep in touch with the educational progress of their children.

Even if Douglas is correct, in that large variations exist between social classes in terms of the patterns of bringing up children, the view that behaviour patterns set during childhood have a long-term effect, has been questioned.

In an important article 'Personal Change in Adult Life', Howard S Becker shows that behaviour can change suddenly depending on the situation. He argues that changes in adult behaviour patterns clearly show that human values are not an expression of patterns established during childhood.

But if Becker is correct, then educational attainment is a reflection of what is happening in the classroom rather than what is occurring at home.

Recent research lends Douglas' suggestion some support in that parental interest is the

# Understanding culture (Education)

key factor in explaining the class differences in educational attainment. Leon Feinstein (2003) researched data from two longitudinal studies - The National Child Development Study and The British Cohort Study. He claimed that the main factor accounting for the class differences in attainment was parental interest in their children's education. However, as in Douglas's study, parental interest was measured by teachers. And the same criticism is ongoing - that working class parents do not feel at ease in a middle class establishment such as a school, and perhaps their jobs with long hours and shift work make it difficult for them to visit the school.

Children who are born into the middle or upper class have an innate advantage. Their culture is more compatible with that of the school, therefore they are more likely to be successful.

The idea of 'cultural capital' was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977). He refers to the way the middle and upper classes have cultural capital as well as financial capital. They have an advantage over the working class because their parents give them support in terms of books and reading, literature, art, classical music, visits to museums, theatres and art galleries. This culture is closer to the culture of the school, and therefore they are more likely to be successful. This success then manifests itself through high qualifications, senior posts, high salaries and a high standard of living.

Alice Sullivan (2001) has examined Bourdieu's theory further. She tried to measure the cultural capital in four comprehensives schools in England. She gave a questionnaire to Year 11 pupils to try and discover which books and newspapers they read and also which television programmes they watched. Her research confirmed that there was a strong connection between the cultural capital of parents and that of their children. This supports Bourdieu's supposition that cultural capital is taught by parents in the home.

Sullivan goes on to compare pupils' cultural capital with their GCSE results. Again, there was an obvious connection. Those who had the best results had high cultural capital and the pupils who gained the best results also came from families with a professional background which further confirmed, therefore, the link between cultural capital and social class.

## Questions

- Explain Douglas's views?
- What criticisms can you identify?
- Explain what is meant by cultural capital.
- What evidence do Bourdieu and Sullivan offer for their viewpoints?

## Keywords

1. Primary socialisation - what is first taught to a child by its parents.
2. Cultural capital - the knowledge that a culture regards as valuable.

## An evaluation of the debate

### Bullets

# Understanding culture (Education)

- Compensatory education targets children in some areas that were failing in the education system.
- Funding was provided to enrich the lives and culture of those who did not have that support at home.
- According to some, this ignored the main reason for educational failure, namely material deprivation.
- Whilst poverty will persist, children from low-income families will be severely disadvantaged within the education system.

## Text

The theory of cultural deprivation has had a significant influence on education policies in the 1960s and 1970s. If children were culturally deprived, then they should have some form of compensation to atone for this deprivation. This is the thinking behind compensatory education. The idea was to target children in some areas who had failed in the education system.

Funding was provided to try and 'enrich' the lives and culture of those children who did not have this innate support at home. An attempt was made to try and raise the standards of literacy as well as cultural experiences.

This idea came under severe criticism from Bernstein as this put the blame on a child's home background rather than on the weaknesses of the education system and the schools. Also, according to Morton and Watson (1973), it ignores the main reason for educational failure, namely material deprivation. Whilst poverty continues, children from low-income families will be severely disadvantaged in the education system.

In 1977, when the Labour Party came to power, 'Education Action Zones' (EAZs) were established to try and tackle the problem. In this case, disadvantaged areas had additional help. The schools and the Local Education Authorities worked with local businesses and other industries. They received more funding.

These Labour policies placed a greater emphasis on the weaknesses of schools. But according to Curtis (2003) some of the outcomes were disappointing.

The latest schemes, namely 'Excellence in Cities' help more schools and contribute more funding. According to Mc Knight et al. (2005), this scheme, to date, has shown some improvement.

## Questions

- What is compensatory education?
- What was the view of Bernstein and Morton and Watson?
- Can education make up for material deprivation in the home?

## Keywords

1. Cultural deprivation - there is no access to cultural capital for some people, so they do not gain the cultural knowledge that helps to be successful.

# Understanding culture (Education)

2. Compensatory education - education that targets children in some areas that are failing in the education system.
3. Material deprivation - not having those material things that you require to have a good standard of living.

## To what extent do material factors explain different attainment levels between social groups?

### Introduction

#### Bullets

- Some sociologists state that children who grow up in poverty have the lowest levels of educational attainment.
- Fewer from the working classes go on to further and higher education.

#### Text

Some sociologists state that children who grow up in poverty have the lowest levels of educational attainment. The gap between the poor and the remainder of the population is growing as the children grow older.

Fewer from the working class go on to further and higher education. A number of sociologists have tried to explain this by referring to shortcomings in the lives of these children namely cultural and material deprivation.

Children, who live in poverty, possibly live in small, sometimes cold houses. Some children have to work in the evening and at weekends to get money and therefore there is no time for homework and preparing for examinations. There is no money available to buy resources to support the child's education, such as books, a computer, additional tuition etc. And a number of children choose to leave school at 16. Poverty can also lead to sickness which could in turn lead to absence from school.

According to Smith and Noble (1995), there are a number of additional hidden costs that are part of maintaining a child's education, e.g. school uniform, school dinners, travelling to school, necessary equipment, educational trips with the school etc. There have been schemes in existence all along to provide financial assistance for some families who meet certain criteria, e.g. free school meals, financial assistance to buy school uniform, but in recent years there have also been financial cutbacks. In the 1990s, some Local Education Authorities cut back on their grants.

In poor schools, some have requested substantial financial contributions for school trips from the pupils themselves as the schools did not have the necessary funding. If funding was not available, then the children would miss out and therefore their educational experiences are not as rich as those of other pupils.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Questions

- What is the link between poverty and educational attainment?
- What is the opinion of Smith and Noble?

## Keywords

1. Cultural deprivation - no access to cultural capital for some people, so they do not gain the cultural knowledge that helps them to be successful.
2. Material deprivation - not having those material things that are required to have a good standard of living.

## Longitudinal Studies

### Bullets

- Longitudinal studies follow people over time.
- The results for longitudinal studies suggest poorer children do less well in school.
- It is possible that boys are more affected by poverty than girls.
- Government policy only recently been directed at poverty; explanations of underachievement tend to focus on schools.

### Text

There have been a number of longitudinal studies into educational achievement. A longitudinal study is one that takes place over a length of time. Sociologists track children's performance over time. Many of these longitudinal studies consist of thousands of participants and follow participants over a number of years. The best known is probably the YCS or the Youth Cohort Study. These longitudinal studies all tend to suggest that poverty is a factor in educational underachievement. This is not a new discovery.

In the early 1960s, J W Douglas linked poverty to underachievement in his classic *The Home and School*. In the National Child Development Study (1969) and (1974) which tracked all the children born in one week in 1958, the link between poverty and underachievement were explicit and clear. In 1980, Halsey, Heath and Ridge published the famous longitudinal study *Origins and Destinations*. Again poverty was identified as a critical factor in school failure.

Fernstein (2003) noted that the educational achievement of a 26 year old could be accurately predicted by the wealth of the household when the child was 22 months. Gaps were already opening up in attainment levels between children of different social background before they had all of their first teeth. Dorling (2007) compared 1968 and 2005. He suggested that there has been an increase in inequality in Britain so that in some areas, more than half of all households are poor.

Kingdon and Cassen (2007) discovered that factors associated with poverty such as free school meals, low levels of family employment, single parent families and poor educational qualifications of parents all contributed to low achievement. Disadvantaged children also attend schools that rate low in the league tables. They considered that one solution to the problem for poor achieving students was better financing of schools and high ratios of teachers to pupils. A number of studies have suggested that the effects of poverty may be



# Understanding culture (Education)

more serious for boys than girls, because of the way in which boys create notions of masculinity.

Despite the consistency of these findings from longitudinal studies, the government has persisted in tackling problems of underachievement by creating policies that are directed at changing schools and teachers. As a point of evaluation, you might note that school funding under the New Right was directed towards high achieving schools because it was believed that if schools were in competition for funding, they would all improve.

## Questions

- What is a longitudinal study?
- Why are longitudinal studies useful in sociology?

## Keywords

1. Longitudinal study - takes place over time.

## Access to Education

### Bullets

- A number of working class children have to leave at the age of 16.
- From 1990 onwards, the method of funding higher education was changed.

### Text

A number of working class children have to leave school at 16 as they need the money. And even for many of those who have stayed on in the sixth form, the cost of higher education is out of their reach. They are unable to afford getting into debt by having loans as their parents are unable to give them financial assistance.

According to Smith and Noble (1995), some Local Educational Authorities provided 'Educational Maintenance Allowances' and 'Further Education Awards'. But only the very poorest students were eligible for these and not every Education Authority provided the same amount. Therefore there are many students who deserve support but do not qualify for extra help.

In 2002, the British government announced that it was providing a grant of £30 per week from September 2004 onwards to help some 16-19 year old students to stay in education. This scheme had already been piloted in some parts of the country and evidence showed a 6% increase in those who had stayed on in education. (DfES 2002) Unfortunately, these grants were small, and therefore there was insufficient assistance available for all those who wished to continue their education.

During recent years, there has been some debate about funding higher education. Between 1962 and the end of the 80s, the state paid the fees of every student in higher education and there were grants available for the cost of living for those who met the criteria. (These were 'means-tested'.) But as more students chose to go on to higher

# Understanding culture (Education)

education, the government sought to find means of cutting back on these increasing costs.

From 1990 onwards, the Conservative government decided to freeze grants and loans to students were offered as an additional means of support. Between 1990 and 1998, the value of loan increased whilst the value of the grant was reduced.

From 1999 onwards, the Labour government abolished grants - the only choice available by now was loans. According to Merryn Hutchings (2003), the government justified these changes by stating that graduates would earn a higher salary than non-graduates, and therefore it made sense for them to contribute to their own education. There are differences between Wales and England as the Welsh Assembly Government offers more support to Welsh students in Welsh universities.

## Questions

- Why isn't every school pupil able to go on to higher education?
- What was the Conservative Party policy?
- What was the Labour Party policy?

## Keywords

1. Grant - money provided by the state to pay for higher education.
2. Loan - money lent by the government to pay for higher education but which has to be repaid.
3. Fee - a financial entitlement for a higher education course.

## The Rich

### Bullets

- Middle class parents have a higher family income.
- This leads to more resources.

### Text

In general, it can be stated that the higher a child's social class, then the family income is higher. This, therefore, enables the child to have a number of educational benefits such as a warm, comfortable house with nice big rooms and a desk to work at, a computer with Internet access, course books and additional private lessons reference books and even a choice of private school.

Middle class parents also have the choice of moving house to the catchment area of a school they have chosen for their children - a good school with high examination results.

Middle class children are less likely to be obese and have better health than working class children. They are likely to take expensive holidays and to attend clubs and classes after school which will support their education.

# Understanding culture (Education)

## Questions

- How does a higher family income assist a pupil from a middle class background?

## Keywords

1. School catchment - the area from which a school takes its pupils.

## Evaluation

### Bullets

- Some sociologists are concerned that students from poor backgrounds are turning away from higher education.

### Text

A number of sociologists are concerned that the changes to the methods of funding higher education is turning students from poor backgrounds away from higher education as they are apprehensive about going into debt and they do not have rich parents to help to pay the debts.

Claire Callender (2001) says that a substantial increase in the number of working class students in the 1990s was not seen, due to a lack of financial support.

Hutchings (2003) says that if students from low-income families went to university, they often had to get evening jobs in order to pay for their course. This may then possibly have the effect of them obtaining a lower degree or even having to leave the course before completing it.

## Questions

- What is the concern of a number of sociologists?
- What is Callender's opinion?
- What is Hutchings opinion?

## Keywords

1. Income - money coming into the family home regularly. This may include benefits or wages.

## Are boys the new educational failures?

### Introduction

### Bullets

- Over the past fifty years, boys' educational achievement has improved.
- But girls' educational achievement has improved at a faster rate than boys.
- It is unfair to label all boys as underachievers

# Understanding culture (Education)

- There is a close correlation between boys who underachieve and social class.

## Text

During the 1960s and 1970s, sociologists were concerned about the educational underachievement of girls. By the 1990s, they were more concerned about the underachievement of boys.

Over the past fifty years, boys' educational achievement has improved. But girls' educational achievement has improved at a faster rate than boys in some subjects at some levels. According to Coffey (2001), it is unfair to label all boys as underachievers - some boys do very well.

According to Epstein et al (1998), only some groups of boys underachieve. There is a close link between boys who underachieve and social class - a number of boys from the working class fail.

## Questions

- What are the changes that have taken place since the 1960s?
- What is the opinion of Coffey and Epstein et al.?

## Keywords

1. Underachievement - a pupil who does not fulfil his/her academic potential.
2. Labelling - developing an 'opinion' about a pupil - interactionists consider labelling to be stereotyped and negative.

## Boys

### Bullets

- Boys were not pushed sufficiently by teachers.
- Male identity crisis contributed to their underachievement.
- Some boys have difficulty in being both academic and popular.
- The gender gaps in examination results becomes wider during secondary education.
- There is a self-fulfilling prophecy amongst some boys.
- By now, girls are more ambitious.

## Text

According to Mitsos and Browne (1998), boys are not pushed sufficiently by their teachers. They are more likely to be sent out of the classroom for misbehaving. Their masculine culture encourages boys to be masculine and 'macho' - they are more likely to be anti-education and of creating an anti-learning subculture (e.g. Paul Willis' study). Perhaps some working class boys have a lack of motivation because of the decline in traditional male jobs - they do not see the point of working hard if there is no decent job for them at the end of it. Some boys are overconfident in assuming their GCSE levels and this leads to them not working hard enough whilst preparing for them. There is some

# Understanding culture (Education)

evidence to suggest that girls are more likely to spend their leisure time doing things that will contribute to their educational attainment, e.g. reading or discussing. Girls are more likely than boys to read a work of fiction and this is the type of book read in early years of primary school. They therefore have an advantage over the boys in that their oral skills are being developed.

Mitsos and Browne state that the 'crisis of masculinity' is a contributory factor. As women's employment increases and the male traditional jobs decline, it can be difficult for boys to see themselves as the main breadwinner of the family. For some young boys, the future appears to be hopeless.

According to Mac an Ghaill (1994), some working class boys try to deal with this 'masculinity crisis' by adopting an aggressive attitude - defining school work as something effeminate.

According to Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002), in their research, boys had difficulty being popular as well as successful academically. Boys who were conscientious and academic were labelled with homophobic names, because of the connection of being diligent with the idea of being effeminate. This can lead to an anti-school subculture where boys refuse to accept the general values of the school.

GCSE and Key Stage results show that the gender gap becomes greater during secondary education, from years 7 to 11. This is the stage when boys try to establish their masculine identity, and this can of course mean the rejection of any behaviour or attitudes that are considered to be feminine. Becky Francis (2000) has examined the problems that boys and girls face in the educational system, stating it is possible for inequality to have a negative effect on boys as well as girls.

Although boys demand more attention in the classroom, they were more likely to be criticised for their behaviour than girls. When Dale Spender conducted her research in 1983, it was believed that boys had more ability than girls in the majority of subjects. By the end of the 1990s most pupils believed that there was an equality of ability although some believed that girls were the more able.

Francis says that children's perception of the perfect pupil varied between girls and boys. The perfect boy behaved well without interrupting the lesson. The perfect girl worked hard and did her work on time.

Boys thought that they did not have to work hard to gain good marks in examinations, and this of course diminished their chance of success.

Some viewed the situation in a more negative way, by taking for granted that boys were not going to do well educationally. One boy said that teachers did not expect boys to perform as well as girls and therefore boys would respond accordingly. It was much easier for them to watch television or play football rather than do schoolwork as this was what was expected of them. Francis states that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy from the standpoint of their educational attainment - boys have heard that girls perform better than them; therefore they give up and behave as they are expected to behave.

Neither girls nor boys wanted to be labelled 'swots', but Francis states that this is a

# Understanding culture (Education)

greater fear and problem amongst boys than girls because of the masculine image that boys wished to portray. By rejecting school and teachers, boys were likely to gain status from other boys - they were more likely of playing around in lessons, of talking about football rather than working as they should. The masculine culture, therefore, held back some boys.

Francis accepts that such behaviour is nothing new, but she says it is on the increase and has an effect on boys' performance. Perhaps it is only a minority that are affected, but the numbers are sufficient to affect the overall performance of boys and girls in examinations.

Francis also states that there is no evidence of prejudice against boys in the school curriculum or in the learning materials, but boys demand more of the teachers' attention than girls. One matter which came to the fore was that girls were more ambitious than boys, and this was a motivation for them to gain the necessary qualifications in order to choose the career they wanted to pursue.

## Questions

- What is the opinion of Mitsos and Browne?
- What is the evidence put forward by Becky Francis?
- What effect did the self-fulfilling prophecy have on boys?
- Why do some boys underachieve?

## Keywords

1. Male identity crisis / male masculinity crisis - men are concerned that they no longer have a definite role; because of social and economic changes.
2. Anti-school culture - some pupils in school create friendship groups that abstain from the objectives and values of the whole school.
3. Self-fulfilling prophecy - in the context of education, something is prophesied, it comes true or it is forced to come true.

## Ethnic Groups

### Bullets

- Those ethnic groups that have the lowest attainment also have the highest number of people in the lowest social classes.
- A number of African-Caribbean boys underachieve in the education system.
- Ethnic variations in educational attainment change over a period of time.
- There are several reasons for ethnic variations in attainment.

### Text

In 2000, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) published a report entitled 'Education Inequality'. It was based on information from 118 local education authorities and showed that every group - white and ethnic minorities - had improved their educational attainment and there was substantial differentiation between the attainment of ethnic groups (Gillborn and Mirza 2000)



# Understanding culture (Education)

It is important to note that those ethnic groups with the lowest attainment - Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Afro-Caribbean - also have the highest number of people in the lowest social classes (Demack et al. 2000)

A number of Afro-Caribbean boys underachieve in the education system. Their attainment declines during their period in secondary school as compared with a general increase amongst pupils of other ethnic backgrounds.

Tony Sewell (1997) suggests a number of reasons for this: a number of boys have been brought up by single mothers and they do not have a male role-model to show discipline. They are more likely to be influenced by their peers. Some gangs emphasise masculinity and opposing authority, such as teachers and the police. This masculine culture is strengthened by the media - with gangsta rap and hip hop fashion. They are accepted by their peer group but they have been rejected by their fathers, mainstream society and the education system that, to them, often appears to be racist. In school, this masculine culture can lead to the rejection of teachers' authority, rejecting the value of educational qualifications and rejecting the norms and values that are conveyed by schools.

A number of people criticise Sewell for drawing attention away from racist society and the education system which is also a racist establishment. The ethnic variations in educational attainment does not remain the same - they change over a period of time. By the time statistics on ethnic variations are published they are usually two to three years out of date. It is important to remember this. There is no one explanation for ethnic differences in attainment - usually there are several reasons.

## Questions

- What is the educational pattern for African-Caribbean boys?
- What are the views of Tony Sewell?

## Keywords

1. Underachievement - a pupil who does not fulfil his/her academic potential.

## Girls

### Bullets

- Women's priorities have changed.
- Education is now important to them.
- Feminism has drawn attention to women's rights.
- A number of equal opportunities programmes were established.

### Text

There have been huge changes in work with more women working now. This shows that there has been a change of attitude.

Sue Sharpe compared the attitude of working class girls in London between the 1970s and the 1990s - by the 1990s, girls' priorities had changed. Education was important to them and they wanted a job and a career and a means of supporting themselves financially.

# Understanding culture (Education)

Feminism has drawn attention to women's rights and number of equal opportunities programmes were established to try to attract women to areas which were previously considered to be masculine domains.

Changes in work were seen with the decline in the traditional male jobs and an increase in jobs in the services sector that greatly appealed to women.

## Questions

- Why have girls improved?

## Keywords

1. Feminism - the view that society is patriarchal and is ruled by men.
2. Services sector - jobs that provide services rather than production, e.g. childcare.

## Moral Panic

### Bullets

- Some sociologists allege that moral panic is the concern for boys underachieving.
- It is the media that have misled the public by exaggerating the problem.
- There is little evidence that girls are more successful than boys at the highest levels.

### Text

Weiner, Arnot and David (1997) allege that the concern about the under achievement of boys is a moral panic. It may perhaps be a means of responding to the feminist standpoints on education. They say that it is the media who have misled the public by exaggerating the problem. Rather than celebrating the success of women in education, the attention has turned towards the decline of boys.

The media see the underachievement of Black working-class boys as a special problem as it is likely to lead towards black unemployed working class men who turn to crime. This links in with the underachievement of boys with the idea of the existence of the under-class.

Weiner et al. accept that some changes have taken place - more girls are successful at GCSE examinations and the National Curriculum had influenced gender differences in the optional subjects up to the age of 16. But the differences in optional subjects shows itself at 'A' level and boys continue to get better grades than girls at 'A' level. Weiner et al. state it is the underachievement of girls that is apparent in the education system at the higher levels, not the underachievement of boys. What we have here is a backlash against the success of girls. Men see women as a threat and fear their equality.

Weiner et al have a strong argument. There is not much evidence to suggest that girls have more success at higher levels than boys. But, nevertheless, some boys find it difficult

# Understanding culture (Education)

to gain success within the education system.

According to the New Right, the increase in one-parent families and the number of divorces are partly responsible, because of the lack of a role-model for boys. They blame individuals and families for the moral decline in society values. Also responsible, is the increasing decision by women to be financially independent.

Gender differences in educational attainment must be put into perspective. Class has over five times more of an effect on educational attainment as compared with gender and twice the effect of ethnicity (Gillborn & Mirza 2000)

Underachievement amongst boys is often exaggerated. The educational performance of boys has generally improved - at GCSE, A level and higher education. The difference is that the educational performance of girls has increased at a faster rate. However, evidence shows that a substantial number of working class pupils, particularly boys, are not part of this improvement.

## Questions

- What is a moral panic?
- What are the views of Weiner et al?
- What does the New Right say?

## Keywords

1. Moral panic - the ability of the media to portray an event or social group as a threat to the fundamental values of society.
2. Underachievement - a pupil who does not fulfil his/her academic potential.
3. Subclass - this is associated with the standpoint of the new right. A social group that is below the working class and is over-dependent on benefit payments.