## Contents

### Introduction

v

### 1. Theory and Methods

- Sociological theory 2
- Sociological research 7
- Sources of data 16
- Data and sampling 34
- Influences on research 41

### 2. Education

- The role and function of the education system 50
- Social class, gender and ethnicity in education 57
- The significance of education policies 78

### 3. Methods in Context: Education

- What is a `method in context`? 90

### 4. Culture and Identity

- Concepts of culture 117
- Socialisation 125
- The self, identity and difference 132
- The relationship of identity to other factors 135
- Globalisation of culture and identity 165

### 5. Families and Households

- The family in society 175
- The changing nature of family structures 188
- Roles and relationships within the family 200
- Childhood 208
- Key demographic changes in the UK 215

### 6. Health

- Health, illness and disability 224
- The unequal distribution of health chances 236
Inequalities in health care provision 249
Mental health and illness 260
Health professionals in a globalised industry 268

7. Work, Poverty and Welfare

Poverty and contemporary society 283
Poverty, wealth and income 296
Responses and solutions to poverty 306
How is labour organised and controlled? 316
The impact of work, worklessness and globalisation 326

8. Tackling the AS exam 335

Advice on the new AS-level exams 00

Key Terms 349
References 363
Index 00
These factors contribute to the gendered image that some subjects had which may (or may not) be further reinforced by school brochures, teaching and learning styles. For example, attempting to attract boys to traditionally male subjects through offering activities which are considered traditionally male such as competitive tasks, or tasks which involve physical activity.

Social policy
New Labour introduced a range of policies to tackle boys' underperformance, including The Raising Boys Achievement project, which involved single sex teaching, The Reading Champions Scheme, in which high profile male public figures supported boys reading, and The Dads and Sons campaign which included a set of initiatives to encourage fathers and sons to read together. There have also been numerous attempts to attract more men into primary school teaching.

More recently, in the Education Act 2011, the then Education Minister Michael Gove set out his plans for a return to teaching traditional subjects and a reduction of coursework. It is too early to know how these changes will affect gender differences, but the reduction of coursework might favour some boys who tend to do better in exam-based assessment.

Despite the improvements in girls' educational performance, some feminists argue that the school continues to reflect patriarchal ideology. For example, gendered subject choices still remain marked. This means that where students have a choice over which subjects they study, male students tend to choose science- and maths-based subjects while girls tend to gravitate towards traditional female subjects such as languages, English and health and social care. Feminists argue that this reveals how much girls and boys are still encouraged to conform to gendered expectations. For women this often means that they end up in lower paid, lower status caring professions.

Questions
1. Which two methods are used in this study?
2. What do the researchers find about differences between teachers and students interactions with girls and boys?
3. Suggest how these findings help explain differential educational outcomes for boys and girls
4. Name a limitation of this research
2.3 How does ethnicity affect educational experience?

If you get a question on the reasons for differential educational outcomes between ethnic groups, you will need to explain why certain groups achieve well as well as exploring the reasons why certain ethnic groups underachieve. It is important not so focus on ethnic minorities alone, as the ethnic majority, in particular white working class boys are one of the most underachieving groups currently.

Since the 1970s there has been a growth in exploring the impact of ethnicity on a person's life chances. Nowhere is this more evident than in educational attainment, where there are great disparities between various ethnic groups.

There are clear patterns in relation to those who are likely to achieve in education. In the UK, Chinese and Indian children achieve results significantly above the national average whilst Pakistani, Bangladeshi and particularly African Caribbean boys underachieve. There are a number of reasons for these patterns, some of which are based on factors that lie outside the education system and other factors and processes that occur within schools. Within education:

- While socio-economic factors explain a large part of inequality of attainment, there are still differences in attainment between ethnic groups amongst those students who are eligible for free school meals.
- Chinese students remain the highest-attaining ethnic group. Pupils of any black background remain the lowest-attaining ethnic group although the percentage making expected progress is above the national average.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) perform, on average, less well than students whose first language is English. However, EAL students generally make better progress between Key Stages. Nonetheless, performance of EAL students varies by ethnic group, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani students doing less well than other groups, regardless of EAL status.
- Proportionately more black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are recorded as having special educational needs compared to white, Chinese and Indian students.
- Black Caribbean students are around three times more likely than white students to be permanently excluded from school. There are proportionately more black students in student referral units compared with the proportion of these groups in mainstream schools.
- Schools which successfully help minority ethnic children have strong leadership and strong systems, a culture of achievement with high expectations and intensive support for students and close links with parents.
- Post-16, black (82 percent) and Asian (85 percent) people are more likely to stay on in full-time education at age 16 than white young people (69 percent). Black Africans of working age are the most likely to be currently studying for a qualification (44 percent compared to 17 percent of white people and 24 percent of Indian people).
- Bangladeshi (44 percent) and Pakistani (32 percent) adults are the most likely to have no qualifications.

(Adapted from Gargi Bhattacharyya, Liz Ison, Maud Blair [2003] and The Department for Education 2012)

The following discussion separates internal and external factors, however it is likely that a combination of the two result in the patterns of educational
attainment that occur. Ruth Lupton (2005), using the 2001 Schools Census and Population Census data explores the level of segregation and isolation experienced by ethnic minorities in nine Local Education Authorities in England. Lupton found high levels of segregation for the different groups, both in school and outside school. She found consistently higher segregation for South Asian students than for black students and concludes that most children from ethnic minorities experience more segregation at school than in their neighbourhood.

Racism in wider society has resulted in certain ethnic groups experiencing greater rates of poverty, unemployment, poorer health, over representation in prisons. Therefore it is no surprise when these groups are groups are also found to be underachieving in education. Therefore the discrimination in wider society may be seen as contributing to the lower aspirations of some ethnic groups. For example, this may lead to some feeling there is little change of trying since their chances in life are reduced by either intentional or unintentional racism.

One example of racism in wider society is put forwards by Mike Noon (2007) who points to evidence which suggests that, in wider society, managers will overtly discriminate against certain workers based on assumptions about their ethnic group. This pervading racism, either intentionally or unintentionally, informs ethnic minorities of their position which undoubtedly feeds into attitudes towards school, teachers and society.

Material deprivation: Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African Caribbean students have higher than average rate of poverty, meaning that they are less likely to be able to afford important school equipment and uniform. As well as this, diet and housing may not be adequate leading to illness and subsequently, absences from school.

Cultural deprivation: It is important to remember that some ethnic groups’ culture may be seen as different rather than inferior. Some have argued that some ethnic groups regard education as less important thus leading to lower
value placed on education and lower outcomes as a result. By contrast, ethnic
groups which regard education as important, such as within Indian and Chinese
families, have above average results. Research now reveals that many white
working classes families have lower than average aspirations for their children,
which is a significant factor in explaining their relative underperformance. In
fact this has become a key area for policy development (see p. xx).

**Family structure:** Tony Sewell (2010) argues that one of the reasons for black
African Caribbean's underperformance is the absence of fathers that is common
in the black community: 59 per cent of black Caribbean children live in lone-
parent households, compared with 22 per cent of white children. Sewell claims
that the lack of a male role model makes it harder for some boys to adapt to the
demands of the school.

**Language:** Engelmann and Bereitier (1996) argue that some ethnic minority
students lack the language which is used in schools which places them at an
immediate disadvantage. The fact that English is not spoken at home in a high
proportion of Bangladeshi families in the UK, for example, has been linked to
poorer educational outcomes. However this is not always the case, and more
complex patterns have emerged.

In England, the 2013 School Census showed that one in six primary school
students in England – 612,160 – do not have English as their first language.
In secondary schools the figure stands at 436,150, just over one in eight. Once
special schools and student referral units are taken into account, the total
rises to just over a million at 1,061,010. These figures have more than doubled
since 1997.

The census of all children in schools in England (the National Pupil Database)
explores the association between the proportion of non-native English speakers
in a year group and the educational attainment of native English speakers at the
end of primary school. The study finds that an increased presence of children
who do not speak English as their first language is not detrimental to the
educational attainment of native English speakers.

Research by Charlotte Geay, Sandra McNally and Shqiponja Telhaj (2012)
funded by the Nuffield Foundation finds that the number of white non-
native English speakers grew dramatically after the European Union’s eastern
enlargement in 2005. Since many of the new immigrants were Polish (and likely
to be Catholic), there was a big rise in the demand for Catholic schooling. In
general this group of immigrants do not underperform as a result of not having
English as their first language. Possible reasons for this result includes the fact
that immigrants from East European countries are often better educated and
have substantially higher aspirations than other social groups. The research
concludes that children of such immigrants may be a welcome influence in the
schools they attend.

**Internal factors**

There has been a lot of research carried out into the processes that occur within
the school in relation to the differences between educational performances in
ethnic minorities. The overwhelming evidence is clear; there are key differences
in the ways that certain ethnic groups experience school life. Bernard Coard
(1971) in his critique of the British education system claimed that it actually
made black children become educationally ‘subnormal’ by making them feel
inferior. Furthermore, Coard stated that West Indian children were told that
their way of speaking was unacceptable implying that they themselves were
second-rate as human beings.
There are a number of key processes in the school which contribute to the differences in outcomes of particular ethnic groups. These include labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, subcultures, the ethnocentric curriculum (see p. xx) and subcultures.

Labelling, attaching meaning to behaviour, is significant in shaping the likely educational outcomes of different ethnic groups. This can result in a self fulfilling prophecy, where the student internalises the label and it becomes true (see p.xx). For example, Fuller (1984) carried out research on black African Caribbean girls in a London comprehensive and investigated how they responded to negative stereotypes from teachers by forming anti-school subcultures. This means that they did not try to gain approval from their teachers who they often saw as racist. Rather they worked hard at their school work whilst also appearing to reject the school rules. This suggests that students have a variety of responses to labelling and also that negative labelling by teachers does not always lead to failure or underachievement of students. Alternatively, Tony Sewell (1998) found that often teachers regard black students as stereotypically ‘macho’. Sewell found that when black boys were labelled negatively or experienced racism, they tended to have a range of different responses.

There have been several policies focusing on raising aspirations and achievement of certain ethnic minority groups. These are known as compensatory education policies such as Sure Start, which also aimed to tackle material and cultural deprivation.

The intentional or unintentional discrimination that occurs in education may take many forms. For example: not recruiting some ethnic groups to senior management in schools (thus not providing students with positive role models) or only offering certain languages in schools. Mac an Ghaill (1988) describes how black boys and girls might respond differently to institutional racism. He claims that black girls will comply with formal rules but will withhold any real engagement with the organisation, while black boys will challenge the school culture more directly and will therefore be more likely to be excluded.

Institutional racism refers to the intentional or unintentional systematic discrimination that takes place in an organisation such as a school.

The impact of marketisation
As with gender and class the introduction of market forces within education has contributed to the widening of inequalities in the education system with regards to ethnicity. This is because:

- Some ethnic minority groups are not able to access information about the schools that is made available. For example, the school brochures may only be available in English.
- Ethnic groups who experience the lowest educational outcomes are often amongst the poorest groups in society. As such, they suffer from a lack of cultural capital that disadvantages them in terms of getting into schools through contacts and particular forms of knowledge which make students attractive to some schools.
- Material deprivation in some ethnic groups means that parents are less able to arrange transport for their children to attend out of catchment schools. Poorer ethnic minority parents are also less likely to be able to move into more expensive catchment areas for the better performing schools. Also, parents are less able to ‘play the system’ by using the league tables.
Section 2: Social class, gender and ethnicity in education

RESEARCH IN FOCUS

David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2000) carried out detailed research in two secondary schools showing the real costs of reform in terms of the pressures on teachers and the rationing of educational opportunity. They claim that recent educational reforms have raised standards of achievement but have also resulted in growing inequalities based on ethnicity and social class. League tables have played a central role in the reforms. These have created an A-to-C economy where schools and teachers are judged on the proportion of students attaining five or more grades at levels A-to-C. To meet these demands schools are developing new and ever more selective attempts to identify able students. This results in measures of intelligence that labels working class and minority students as likely to fail and this then justifies rationing provision to support those (often white, middle class boys) already labelled as likely to succeed.

The ethnocentric curriculum is a curriculum that favours British knowledge and traditions over alternative cultures. Whilst this may not actively result in discrimination, the result is that alternative cultures are not recognised or valued. For example, in subject such as history, the contribution of various ethnic minority groups or individuals may be overlooked.

IN THE NEWS

‘Chinese and Indian children get better grades than other children’

Chinese and Indian students gain more top grades than white British children in every school subject, official figures reveal. The biggest gulf in attainment is in GCSE maths, where Chinese children are three-and-a-half times more likely to get an A than white British children. Fifty-five per cent of Chinese students and 31 per cent of Indian students who took GCSE maths last year achieved an A, according to figures from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Among white British students, the figure was 16 per cent. For black African students it was 14 per cent, 13 per cent for Pakistani students and 8 per cent for black Caribbean students. Significant differences in achievement are also seen in English, geography, history, chemistry, biology, physics, French and religious education. Bristol University researchers suggested the attainment differences were down to contrasting attitudes to education between ethnic minority and white communities. Dr Deborah Wilson pointed to high aspirations among immigrant communities, who ‘almost by definition’ are ‘keen to get on in life’. She said that, with qualifications linked to social progress, ‘it makes sense to focus particular effort at that point’.

Separate research reveals that Chinese parents are more likely to pay for private tuition to supplement their children’s learning at school. They are less likely than white British parents to think schools should single-handedly cover all education that is needed, according to research from King’s College London, commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation.

Questions

1. What is meant by the ‘rationing of educational opportunity’?
2. What is the A-C economy?
3. What effects have the A-C economy had on results in terms of social class and ethnicity?
4. Which social group is likely to succeed as a result of the A-C economy?

KEY SOCIOLGETIST

Tony Sewell (1997) researched how African Caribbean students were regarded by their teachers, peers and white students at an inner city boys’ comprehensive school. He found that school expectations and influences such as music and fashion, promoted sexist and racist perceptions of black masculinity. Sewell highlights that masculinity and ethnicity are complex and shifting requiring more study to be understood.

Questions

1. What is an ethnographic study?
2. What influences African Caribbean students educational performance
3. Suggest ways in which African Caribbean boy’s performance in particular might be improved
Questions

1. Which ethnic minorities achieve higher than average results?
2. In which GCSE subject is the biggest gap in attainment?
3. What percentage of Chinese and Indian students get an A in this subject?
4. What reason does Dr Wilson give for these differences in attainment amongst ethnic groups?
5. What is the difference between Chinese parents and white British parents?
6. Suggest two other reasons which might explain why some ethnic groups achieve better results than others in education.

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The former Education Minister, Michael Gove, influenced the decision to allow only British writers to be taught in GCSE English at some schools. This decision was felt by many commentators to be a reflection of a culture which, at worst, discriminates against alternative cultures and, at best, does not value the contribution of key figures who are of ethnic minority decent in the UK and elsewhere.

STUDY TIP

It is very important not to generalise about the outcomes of some ethnic minorities. Also, be careful not to assume that there is not variation in educational performance within ethnic groups. For example, social class differences and gender can result in a wide array of differences within some ethnic groups. Black African Caribbean girls in particular are known to be highly successful in education while for black African Caribbean boys, the story is very different.

IN THE NEWS

GCSEs and ethnicity

Laura – this will need some introductory text.
Check your understanding – from the social class part of the Section

1. Identify three characteristics of anti-school subcultures.
2. Name two characteristics of elaborated speech codes, and two characteristics of restricted speech codes.
3. Identify two problems with cultural deprivation theories.
4. What is meant by the working class experiencing a ‘poverty of aspiration’?
5. Suggest three external factors that have contributed to the gender patterns.
6. Why might boys and men be experiencing a ‘crisis in masculinity’?
7. What two problems still exist for girls and women?
8. What impact are the coalition government policies likely to have on the gender gap?
9. Which ethnic groups are likely to achieve above average results and which ethnic groups are likely to underperform?
10. Give two examples of an ethnocentric curriculum.
11. Name one weakness of cultural deprivation explanations.
12. What effects does not having English as a first language have on educational outcome?

These practice questions need cutting down

Practice questions

1. Define the term ‘material deprivation’ [2 marks]
2. Using one example, briefly explain how material deprivation may affect educational achievement [2 marks]
3. Outline three ways in which the organisation of schooling may advantage middle class students [6 marks]
4. Define the term ‘gendered subject choices’ [2 marks]
5. Using one example, briefly explain how gender may affect educational achievement [2 marks]
6. Outline three ways in which the organisation of schooling may disadvantage boys [6 marks]
7. Define the term ‘institutional racism’. [2 marks]
8. Using one example, briefly explain how an ethnocentric curriculum may affect educational achievement. [2 marks]
9. Outline and explain two reasons why some ethnic groups do better than others in education. [4 marks]

Read Item A then answer the question that follows:

Item A

There are persistent differences in the achievement of girls and boys in education. In 2014 the performance gap between boys and girls has now reached its the widest ever - 6.7 percentage points - at the top grades of A* and A. Sociologists argue that a whole range of factors that can explain this gap. There has been a huge shift in attitudes towards women in wider society, for example, resulting in women having much higher aspirations educationally. Similarly over 90 per cent of women now participate in paid employment. However, sociologists also point out that factors in the have greater impact on gender patterns, for example, labeling and student subcultures.

Applying material from Item A and your knowledge, evaluate the view that differences in educational achievement between girls and boys are the result of factors and processes within schools. [20 marks]
Section 3: The significance of education policies

This Section will explore the following debates:

- What is the impact of education policies developed since 1979, including selection, marketisation and privatisation?
- What is the effect of social policies on different groups, have they led to greater equality of education?
- What is the impact of globalisation on access to education and education policy?

All three governments since 1979 acknowledge that a major cause of underachievement is poorly achieving schools. Conservative education policies however have been heavily criticised for increasing existing inequalities in education rather than reducing them.

New Labour policies reflected their efforts to reduce inequalities in education, although they too used marketisation as a way to try to drive up standards in education. Their policies were widely recognised as recognising not just class inequalities but also looking at ethnic and gender based differences.

The coalition government have made it clear that they wish to develop marketisation policies and return to a more traditional education system with less coursework and a narrower range of subjects which many believe will advantage middle class, male students who tend to do better in these subjects.

This Section looks at these policies in more detail.

GETTING YOU STARTED

Immigrants have little effect on school standards

There has been a policy of expanding the number of countries who have membership of the European Union. As levels of immigration have risen in recent years, so too has concern over the effects of an increase in non-native English speakers into British schools may have on standards. Yet new research suggests such worries may be misplaced.

A study by the London School of Economics examining the impact of east European immigrants has concluded there is no reason to be worried about the increase in the number of non-native speakers of English in primary schools. Although the research found that native English speakers did indeed perform worse at schools with more immigrants, the effects were minimal when other factors, such as poverty, were taken into account. According to the researchers, the proportion of non-native English speakers in primary schools increased by a third to about 12 per cent over the past 10 years.

The main conclusion of the study, which looked at results from 2003 to 2009, was that primary-aged students catch up in English proficiency at a fast rate meaning that they do not negatively affect the progress of those who speak English as their first language. East Europeans also improved maths performance in their schools, possibly because these families were found to influence other children or the classroom environment in a positive way. This could be because of their better behaviour or a stronger work ethos.

Adapted from the Financial Times, by Chris Cook March 18, 2012

Questions

1. According to this article, what is the effect of increasing numbers of immigrants on school standards?
2. What has happened to the number of non-native English speakers in primary schools over the past ten years?
3. What are the conclusions of the study?
4. What does this article reveal about the impact of broader social policies on education?
3.1 The impact of education policies

There have been many significant changes to education through social policies and this section examines the effects of these policies. This section examines the ways that education has been shaped by successive governments and examines the ways in which their ideas about the role of education have been communicated through policies. Policies inform students of the prevailing values of society, which they then absorb (Whitty and Young, 1976).

Educational policies before 1979

A working knowledge of some key historical education policies which have shaped ideas about the education system today will greatly improve your understanding of this topic. Some of these are briefly summarised below.

- 1870 Education Act – The first education act making a commitment to provide education national
- 1918 Education Act – The age was raised to 14
- 1944 Butler Act – Raised the age of compulsory education to 15 and provided compulsory free education. This act also introduced the tripartite system, or three types of school which were meant to suit different types of students:
  - Grammar schools
  - Secondary technical schools
  - Secondary modern schools
- 1965 – Expansion of comprehensive schools (schools with no entry requirements)

These policies have had the intended effect of widening participation in education and encouraging equality between different social groups. However they have had varying degrees of success. For example, despite setting out to provide a range of equally valued schools a ‘parity of esteem’ the Butler Act meant that Grammar schools became dominated by middle class students which in fact actually reinforced inequalities. Comprehensive schools, which sought to provide all students with an equal chance of opportunity, in fact also led to inequalities in education through processes inside the school such as streaming, where middle class students overwhelmingly occupy higher sets and achieve more highly.

Educational policies since 1979

In simple terms there are two views of education. These reflect broader left and right wing views about society. On the left, the role of education is to reduce social inequality and provide an education system that provides everyone with an equal chance of success and social mobility. On the right, the key principle is choice, an education system which offers a range of types of schools, where parental choice is central. These key ideas are summarised below.

Figure 2.9 Left and right views of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of education is to reduce inequalities</td>
<td>The role of education is to provide choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on underachieving groups</td>
<td>Different type of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In practice, these ideas frequently overlap, and when new political parties form a new government they often continue policies that were begun by the previous government.

Linking social policy and theoretical perspectives

The theoretical perspectives on the role and function of education are also useful for considering social policy. The following table illustrates this connection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social theory</th>
<th>View on educational policies</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionalism</td>
<td>Regard educational policies as benefiting the individual and society. They argue that policies are there to create a meritocratic education system, meaning that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.</td>
<td>There are persistent inequalities in results between different groups, which suggests that educational policies do not result in a meritocratic education system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Right</td>
<td>Reflected in many Conservative and Coalition Government policies, the New Right believe in policies which enable marketisation in education, selective schooling, increased parental choice and a focus on traditional style of learning.</td>
<td>Such policies are criticised for creating greater inequalities and benefiting the middle class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marxism</td>
<td>Marxists would argue that any of the mainstream political parties support capitalist economy and ideology. They would argue that the education system and the people creating educational policies are ruling class and therefore policies benefit the ruling class and maintain working class underachievement.</td>
<td>There are policies specifically targeting the poor and underachieving, such as compensatory education, which challenges Marxist ideas. Also policies do enable social mobility to occur for some.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>Liberal feminists argue that policy changes have resulted in the greater educational outcomes for girls at school. However Radical feminists argue that there needs to be a more substantial change to society to really eradicate patriarchy. They would point out that most policy writers in education are men, thus policies reflect patriarchal ideology.</td>
<td>There are still issues for girls despite equal opportunity legislation and policies. For example, although women are performing better in many areas of education, many still get paid less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretivism</td>
<td>Interpretivists would be interested in exploring the meaning attached to particular policies for example the impact of marketisation policies and the effects these might have on processes within the school such as labelling and the creation of subcultures.</td>
<td>This micro approach may overlook structural causes of inequalities in terms of the types of policy that are created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism</td>
<td>Postmodernists claim that policies reflect the greater choices and individualism in society. They also explore the ways in which learning now takes place as part of a life long process in a global context.</td>
<td>Postmodernists do not explain the inequalities which persist as a result of educational policy neither do they offer alternative suggestions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.X

Conservative government policies

In 1979 the Conservative party set out an agenda for changing the education system, which continued to 1997. Their most influential policy was the 1988 Education Reform Act. This brought in many significant changes, but the general principle behind the act was the introduction of market forces in education, or marketisation. This means that they applied business ideas to education, creating a market place of education. The act included various initiatives designed to help parents and guardians make consumer choices about their children’s education:

- League tables, making exam results visible – the idea was to make schools compete to get the best results a drive up standards. In fact another effect of league tables was to make well performing schools attract middle class students who are likely to do better at school, reinforcing their success while
Section 3: The significance of education policies

Schools with poorer results become less successful and less likely to attract students who are likely to do well, widening the gap between successful schools and less successful schools.

- The introduction of OFSTED, a government funded system of measuring the success of schools and other educational settings – this includes publishing the standard of education achieved by the school.
- Encouraging schools to ‘opt out’ of local educational authority control – this meant schools could manage their own finances, spending resources where they felt necessary to attract ‘customers’.
- The introduction of the National Curriculum – a standard curriculum which all students have to follow, decided by central government, standardising what parents were choosing between in terms of areas to be studied.
- Parents no longer have to send their children to their local school but could send them to a school of their choice. Sending a child to a school further away involves paying increased transport costs, which is more possible for the middle class.

The Education Reform Act had other effects, beyond just greater consumer choice. For example, the National Curriculum increased the amount of continuous assessment – assessment at which girls in particular succeed. This, along with other changes in society led to the closing of the gap in educational attainment and in many cases girls’ achievements eclipsing boys in many areas of education.

The National Curriculum also made it compulsory for girls and boys to take maths, English and science to 16. This meant that no students were able to ‘opt out’ of science and maths. This was particularly relevant to girls. Interestingly, this became part of the reason why girls began to perform better than boys. During the 1980s there were a number of policies designed to encourage girls into science and technology, these included GIST (Girls Into Science and Technology) and WISE (Women into Science and Technology).

The effects of marketisation were complex. For example, middle class parents can ‘play the system’ by paying to transport their children to better schools outside their area, or move to live in more desirable school districts. In fact, some argue that league tables and parental choice led to a polarisation of schools, with the high performing schools becoming more and more popular whilst the underperforming schools became ‘sink’ schools, thus increasing inequalities.

**Labour government policies 1997-2010**

When New Labour came into power in 1997, Tony Blair famously stated that his priority was ‘education, education, education’. Interestingly, New Labour continued many of the marketisation policies, for example through developing a greater range of types of schools, encouraging schools to develop specialisms in particular areas of the curriculum. Other key New Labour policies include:

- The introduction of ‘academies’ – a new type of school partially funded by local businesses to tackle underperforming schools.
- Free childcare for every preschool child – meaning that women could return to work and also helped ensure that all children start school from a level playing field.
- ‘Sure Start’ – introduced in 1999 as a means by which pre-school children living in the most deprived areas of Britain could receive early intervention and support. It was introduced as a form of compensatory education through...