

State schools: Funded by the government:

- Comprehensive schools (non-selective)
- Grammar schools (selective)
- Academies (usually part of chains)
- Local authority maintained (run by local council)
- Free schools (set up by an organisation or group)



Independent schools/private: Students pay fees to attend.

Public schools: The most exclusive private schools, e.g. Eton

Feminism & Education

Francis argues schools are patriarchal (they are structured to benefit men/boys).

Domination of space: Girls occupy far less time and space than boys in school – boys dominate the playing areas & science classrooms

Teacher-time: Boys attract more attention from teachers, usually for negative reasons

Interruptions: Girls are more likely to be interrupted by their peers, often being shouted down and silenced by boys.

Social control (double standards): Boys might try to police the behaviour of girls by demeaning girls who are sexually promiscuous, but praising boys who are the same!

Sexual harassment: School is the most common setting for sexual harassment and coercion of girls

Positions of power: Far more male head teachers than female

Expectations: Girls might be told off for 'boy' behaviour, e.g. being rowdy. Teachers accept 'lazy' work from boys

Gendered choices: Encouraged to take different subjects e.g. boys – DT; girls – HSC, art. Different sports offered

Functionalism & Education

Schools perform positive functions for most pupils

- Education is more 'work-focused' today
- Schooling is fairer than in previous generations
- Schools try to foster 'solidarity', e.g. PHSE

Emile Durkheim

Social solidarity & cohesion: Promotes sense of unity with others and strong bonds between members of society (e.g. through collective worship and school events).

Specialist skills/formal curriculum: teaches what students need to know to work later in life and support the economy.

Talcott parsons

Secondary socialisation: Schools take over socialisation from the family – children learn values at school that they might not be taught at home.

Universalistic values: The values that are important to everyone in society (might differ to values of individual families).

Status: Schools teach children how to achieve status, e.g. judging them on how clever they are, how hard they work, etc, and show the importance of hard work, e.g. trying out for a school sports team, auditioning for the school play, revising for exams, etc.

Davis & Moore

Schools are fair and reward ability and effort – everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Schools reward the most able, who then come out of school with the best exam results and go on to get the best jobs.

Role allocation: Schools select individuals for their future jobs or roles in society – so the top jobs in society are run by the people most capable of doing them well (i.e. with the best qualifications).

Evaluation

Meritocracy is a myth.

Society is no longer based on shared values and ideas.



Marxism & Education

The school system is rigged so that upper- and middle-class children succeed at the expense of the working-class children

- Argue that teachers are lying when they tell pupils that if they work hard they all have a chance to do well – and that meritocracy is a lie
- Argue that schools produce passive, obedient workers – who do exactly as they are instructed and do not question or argue, even though they are being exploited
- Argue that schools kill creativity

Bowles and Gintis – correspondence principle

Schools are run along lines that correspond to what is needed at work, and organised to achieve what the upper classes want.

Stage 1: Produce a subservient workforce of obedient and passive workers – grades related to perseverance, consistency and punctuality.

Stage 2: Encourage acceptance of hierarchy/ authority – pupils have little say over what they learn (and workers are expected to obey the authority of managers)

Stage 3: Motivate by external rewards, e.g. good grades at school and pay at work – not the joy of learning/working (so accept boring lessons/jobs)

Stage 4: Split subjects for pupils and tasks for workers – easier to control divided workers



Althusser – ISA

Schools are part of the 'ideological state apparatus' – the parts of society designed to shape our beliefs and ideas.

We are encouraged to be passive, blindly accept capitalism and maintain false class consciousness

Evaluation

Willis

Students are not always passive and obedient! The lads in his study knew they were never going to do well so were as disruptive as possible!

Interactionism & Education

Labelling: When teachers make quick judgements about students based on background, ability, behaviour, relationships with others, appearance, older siblings, etc. Over time these judgements become firmer.

Self-fulfilling prophecy: Prediction becomes the truth – if you are told you are no good you will give up trying. “What teachers believe, students achieve”

Howard Becker and labelling: Teachers build up ideas in their heads of what an ‘ideal student’ is like. Can affect confidence and lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where student accepts label.

Stephen Ball – effects of labelling: the effects of setting by ability. Link to social class: the higher your social-class the greater the chance you’ll be placed into a higher streams.

Perception of sets: Top sets = ‘high flyers’; bottom sets = ‘failures’.

Top sets: pushed’ or ‘warmed-up’. Behaviour is usually good. Achieve better grades and go onto university. Can enter higher tiers of qualifications

Lower sets: Low expectations – students ‘cooled down’. Allowed to talk more and were set less homework. Not given the depth of knowledge needed to achieve at a higher level even if they wanted to. Limited to lower grades on some papers, e.g. GCSE Maths foundation paper. Often have poor behaviour. Get fewer or ‘lesser’ qualifications (greater focus on vocational).



Gender & Attainment

Girls outperform boys at every level...

Socialisation: parents are often stricter on girls – leads to ‘bedroom culture’ (McRobbie). Boys can be over-confident about their abilities and might not try as they think they will be okay, whilst girls under-estimate theirs so work harder.

Literacy: girls more likely to read for pleasure and this unlocks their ability to read and write better at all levels of schooling.

Feminism: girls now have more careers and opportunities to aspire to so can see the point of working hard (Sharpe). Boys may be facing a crisis of masculinity as their traditional routes are disappearing.

Labelling: Teachers often have higher expectation of girls which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Feminisation of schools: Schools are more suited to the characteristics of girls e.g. coursework, neat presentation so they are rewarded more.

Laddish subcultures & status frustration: boys suffer from a lack of status in school so turn to their peer group/subculture for status instead. This is gained by being disruptive and unruly or being the ‘class clown’. This can lead to boys’ underachievement.



Social class & Attainment

White working class pupils on free school meals are lowest achievers (1/3 get 5+ good GCSEs, compared to 2/3s of all other pupils).

Douglas: Material factors/deprivation linked to poverty. Unable to afford revision resources. Unable to afford school trips. Poor housing conditions (i.e. not enough space). Pupils more likely to have part-time jobs or look after siblings. Poor diet affects concentration, but also health (time off school).

Sugarman: Cultural Deprivation. The WC don’t have the ‘right’ values to do well in school. E.g. they seek immediate gratification, fatalism etc.

Bourdieu: Cultural capital: Working class (WC) pupils less likely to watch documentaries or have knowledge of culture.

Social capital: WC pupils have less social networks (e.g. work experience opportunities).

Archer: WC students face ‘symbolic violence’ – they have to change to do well. So they form ‘Nike Identities’ and ‘hyper-heterosexual femininity to gain status instead.

Bernstein: Speech codes: WC may have less developed language skills so could struggle to decode exam questions or key texts.

Douglas: Parental involvement: Depends on parents’ own experience of school – some more able to support/ encourage than others



Ethnicity & Attainment

There is differential achievement amongst different ethnic groups.

Labelling: Some teachers have lower expectations for ethnic minority pupils

Institutional racism: Teachers don’t always support EAL pupils effectively or appreciate cultural needs.

Ethnocentric curriculum: Lessons are often focused on the achievements of white men – so pupils may not relate to it.

EAL: Some pupils speak English as an additional language – may have parents who can’t speak English so can’t support education effectively.

Poverty: Ethnic minority pupils are more likely to be affected by material factors.

Religion: Pupils may take time off to observe religious festivals, or fasting time may clash with final exams.

Parental aspirations: Parents from some cultures place a huge value on education and are heavily involved, e.g. Chinese pupils achieve very highly.

