

EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

The information contained in this knowledge organiser pack is drawn from regularly-used research for the AQA A Level Sociology core topic of Education. The studies used in this pack align with the tutor2u Education checklist. This constitutes neither compulsory studies that students must know, nor an exhaustive list; students may wish to use alternative sources that they have learned.

These knowledge organisers cover material set out in the AQA A Level Sociology specification, that was first used for teaching in 2015 and reflects the following specification points:

3.1.1 Education

Students are expected to be familiar with sociological explanations of the following content:

- the role and functions of the education system, including its relationship to the economy and to class structure
- differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society
- relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/pupil relationships, pupil identities and subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning
- the significance of educational policies, including policies of selection, marketisation and privatisation, and policies to achieve greater equality of opportunity or outcome, for an understanding of the structure, role, impact and experience of and access to education; the impact of globalisation on educational policy.

The function and role of education refers to the different sociological perspectives on the role and functions of education. This incorporates functionalist, Marxist and New Right approaches to the purpose of education and how education serves the needs of the economy and its relationship to the social class structure

Functionalist Explanations

Émile Durkheim: Social Solidarity and Moral Education

Durkheim saw education as essential for promoting **social solidarity**—creating a shared sense of belonging and teaching the values, norms and skills necessary for functioning in society. Education also helps prepare individuals for their roles in the workforce through the **teaching of specialist skills**.

Talcott Parsons: Bridge Between Family and Society

Parsons believed that education acts as a bridge between the **particularistic values** taught by the family and the **universalistic values** needed in society. It teaches students to follow **meritocratic principles**—being judged on their performance, not personal relationships.

Davis and Moore: Role Allocation and Meritocracy

Davis and Moore emphasized that education **sifts and sorts** individuals into roles based on merit, ensuring that people are allocated positions in society according to their abilities. This supports **social mobility** and motivates individuals to develop their talents for the benefit of society.

Marxist Explanations

Louis Althusser: The Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)

Althusser argued that education is part of the **Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)**, a set of institutions (such as schools, churches, and media) that spread and **reinforce the ideology** of the ruling class. Through education, the capitalist ideology is embedded in students, making them accept their social position and the status quo. Althusser believed that the education system functions to produce workers who are **compliant and believe in meritocracy**, even though this system primarily **serves the interests of capitalists**.

Bowles and Gintis: The Correspondence Theory

Bowles and Gintis developed the **correspondence theory**, which suggests that the structure of the **education system mirrors the structure of the workplace**. Schools teach students to accept **authority, discipline, and hierarchy**, which are also central values in the workplace. They argue that education doesn't provide students with critical thinking skills but instead **trains them to be obedient workers**, reinforcing the capitalist system's need for a submissive labour force. The **hidden curriculum**, or the unwritten lessons learned through the school environment (such as obedience to authority), plays a key role in this process.

Paul Willis: Learning to Labour

Willis's study "Learning to Labour" focused on working-class boys who rejected the values of the education system and instead formed their own **counterculture**. While they resisted the school's formal curriculum, they still ended up in working-class jobs, demonstrating how education ultimately **reinforces class inequalities**. Willis argued that, while some students might resist the system, they are still socialised into roles that perpetuate the class structure.

New Right Explanations

Chubb and Moe: They criticised the U.S. education system for being inefficient and failing to meet students' needs. They argue that state-run schools operate as a monopoly, lacking **competition, accountability, and responsiveness to students and parents**. To improve education, they propose a **market-based approach**, where schools would compete for students, much like businesses compete for customers. This would empower parents to choose schools based on quality, encouraging schools to improve in order to attract students. Chubb and Moe's ideas are aligned with the New Right perspective, advocating for more **privatisation and competition** in education rather than state control.

How policies reinforce these functions: Promoting Social Solidarity (Durkheim)

- National Curriculum (1988)
- Curriculum Reforms to Teaching of History - Our Island Story (2015)

Supporting Meritocracy (Parsons & Davis and Moore)

- 11+ and Grammar Schools
- GCSEs and A-Levels

Promoting Social Mobility

- Policies such as Sure Start (1998) and Pupil Premium (2011), Tripartite System (1944)

External (out-of-school) factors that influence the educational achievement of different social classes can be organised into three broad explanations: material factors, cultural factors and cultural capital. Whilst these are not exclusive reasons (often material deprivation, cultural differences and cultural capital are linked) the research below highlights some of the explanations for underachievement of pupils on free school meals.

Material Factors

Douglas (1964) argued that **material factors** such as household economic resources and the quality of the living environment directly shape the level of support and cognitive stimulation children receive at home.

Halsey, Heath, and Ridge (1980) demonstrated that material factors—such as household income, housing quality, and resource availability—play a critical role in shaping educational achievement by influencing the learning environment and access to educational resources.

Bull (1980) Hidden costs of schooling reveals that beyond tuition fees, there are significant additional expenditures—such as transportation, school materials, and extracurricular fees—that can create barriers to academic success.

Smith and Noble (1995) - Poverty Penalty Material deprivation leads to barriers to educational success such as inability to access good schools and educational resources

Howard (2001) - Impacts of poverty on nutrition. Material deprivation can lead to poor health as lack of nutrients can lead to disturbed concentration and absences.

Waldfoegel and Washbrook (2011) - Impacts of poverty on development - Lack of access to resources in early years can limit children's academic development.

Cultural Factors

Sugarman's (1970) Social Class Subcultures examined how working-class subcultures, with their distinctive values (**fatalism, immediate gratification, collectivism and present-time orientation**) can shape lower academic aspirations and achievement. In contrast, middle-class families promote values in line with those of the education system (**optimism, deferred gratification, individualism and future-orientation**) which leads to higher levels of achievement

Douglas (1964) examined how the distinct values, practices, and expectations of the home and school environments can create tensions for children, especially when the cultural norms of their home do not align with those of the school, particularly the **level of parental interest** in their children's education.

Feinstein (2003) found that cultural differences—such as variations in **family educational values, communication styles, and expectations**—play a crucial role in shaping children's academic trajectories. He argued that these differences affect how effectively families engage with and navigate the education system, thereby contributing to persistent educational inequalities.

Bernstein (1971) Language Codes - found that middle-class pupils were more proficient in the use of the **elaborated code** in schools which allowed them to access exams, text books and teachers, contributing to their success.

Evans (2006) Working-class parents do not lack aspirations for their children and suggests problems lie inside the school rather than at home

Reay (2009) - victim-blaming culture of using cultural differences as a form of differentiation between achievement of social classes

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1977, 1984) Impacts of Cultural Capital argues that middle-class families pass down knowledge, skills, and attitudes—such as language use, familiarity with academic culture, and access to cultural experiences—that align with the expectations of the education system. He contends that this gives middle-class children an advantage in school, while working-class students, whose cultural **habitus** is not acknowledged in the education system, face barriers to academic success, reinforcing social class differences in educational achievement.

Sullivan (2001) found that children of parents with cultural capital were more likely to succeed in education. Those who watched documentaries and read canonical literature achieved higher than those that did not.

Application and Analysis: The ability to make links between these external factors and in-school processes shows a sophisticated understanding of the issues surrounding pupil achievement. For example, pupils may be labelled based upon their linguistic skills, their appearance or their attention in class - demonstrating that **the home can impact on the school.**

External (out-of-school) factors that influence the educational achievement of different ethnic groups can intersect with some of the social-class explanations, such as cultural differences and material factors. However, in order to avoid writing a generic response to issues that impact differences in achievement, you should look to use research that focuses on **specific ethnic groups** and their experiences in wider society. Below are some of the reasons for both underachievement of some ethnic groups and why others achieve above the national average.

Material Deprivation:

Flannery (2004) found that high levels of poverty among some ethnic minority groups, particularly **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** families, led to higher rates of material deprivation, which affects school performance. Limited access to private tuition, internet resources, and extracurricular learning opportunities can further widen the achievement gap.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data highlights that ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience poverty and economic disadvantage, which negatively affects educational outcomes. Factors like overcrowded housing, lower family income, and less access to educational resources contribute to lower achievement levels among some ethnic groups.

Lupton (2004): Schools in poorer areas, often attended by Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, face greater challenges such as lack of funding, teacher shortages, and higher rates of disciplinary issues, negatively affecting achievement.

Barnard and Turner (2011) found that **systemic racism** in wider society disproportionately affects **black Caribbean, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi communities**, leading to higher levels of poverty and material deprivation.

Cultural Differences:

Basit (2013): Found that many **South Asian** parents strongly **value education** as a route to upward social mobility and are willing to make financial sacrifices to support their children's academic success.

Vincent et al. (2011): Black middle-class parents are highly involved in their children's education, often challenging schools to ensure their children receive equal opportunities. However, they still experience racial stereotyping, which limits their influence.

Modood (2004): High levels of **parental support** and strong cultural expectations around hard work help explain why **Indian and Chinese** students tend to perform well, even when facing economic disadvantages. Modood also suggested the concept of **residual cultural capital** from former and current occupations that is passed onto their children.

Bhatti (1999) found that **Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian** families placed a strong emphasis on education, but parental involvement was sometimes limited by language barriers and a lack of understanding of the school system.

Pilkington (2003) highlighted the importance of cultural factors in explaining differences in educational achievement among ethnic groups. He found that **Indian and Chinese** students tend to achieve higher results due to **strong parental support, high aspirations, and structured home environments** that prioritise education.

Application and Analysis:

The ability to make links between these external factors and in-school processes shows a sophisticated understanding of the issues surrounding pupil achievement. **For example, Archer and Francis (2007)** suggest that Chinese and Indian Pupils are perceived as model minorities due to being more present in Higher Education and higher status occupations. This impacts on how teachers perceive them and leads to more attention and higher aspirations. In contrast, pupils may also be labelled negatively due to teacher's racialised stereotypes (**e.g. Mirza 1992**) that are drawn, not from the pupils themselves, but from representations of different groups in the media. The ability to demonstrate these links between wider society and in-school-process shows a sophisticated knowledge of the 'big picture' in sociology.

External (out-of-school) factors that influence the educational achievement of genders illustrate how a positive impact on one group may have a detrimental impact on another. The ability to compare and contrast the experiences of boys and girls in wider society is useful in showing a more analytical approach to differences in educational achievement. Below are some of the main reasons for these differences, viewed through impacts on both girls and boys' achievements.

Gender Socialisation

Socialisation within the family, school and media shapes boys' and girls' attitudes toward education, with girls often socialised to be more focused on academic achievement and boys more likely to be encouraged towards physical activities or less academic pursuits.

Oakley (1974) argued that gender roles are socially constructed and reinforced through processes such as socialisation in the family.

Bedroom Culture

McRobbie (1991) introduced the concept of "**bedroom culture**," suggesting that girls tend to have more domestic, family-centered leisure activities, such as reading and socialising in the home, which contributes to their better academic performance. This contrasts with boys, who are often involved in more outdoor, less intellectual activities, leading to less academic engagement.

Crisis of Masculinity

Mac an Ghail (1994), argues that traditional male identities based on manual labour and economic power have weakened in the face of changing job markets. As many **industrial jobs have declined**, boys may feel a sense of disorientation or lack of purpose, leading to disengagement from education.

Changes to Employment Sectors

As the job market has shifted from manufacturing to service-based industries, young men, especially from working-class backgrounds, may struggle to adapt. This can affect their educational attainment as they may perceive fewer opportunities for success through education, especially if they lack role models or the motivation to succeed academically.

Literacy Skills

Girls tend to develop stronger literacy skills from a young age due to both socialisation and the types of activities they engage in (e.g. reading, writing, verbal communication). These early advantages often translate into higher academic achievement, as literacy skills are essential for success in most school subjects.

Role Models in Wider Society

The lack of positive male role models has been identified as a factor in boys' underachievement. In contrast, girls often have more positive female role models, both at home and in the wider community, encouraging them to pursue educational success and challenging traditional gender roles.

Note: Gender intersects with other social characteristics such as ethnicity and social class to explain educational differences

Impacts of Feminism

The feminist movement has had a significant impact on gender equality in education. As feminist ideas have pushed for more equal opportunities for women, girls have become more empowered and encouraged to strive for academic success, while challenging the traditional gender expectations that limited their educational aspirations.

Sharpe (1994) research into the changing aspirations of girls found that, in the 1970s, girls prioritised love, marriage, and family. By the 1990s, however, girls were more focused on careers and educational success, reflecting a significant shift in gender norms and a corresponding improvement in girls' academic achievement.

Jackson (2006) identified a "**ladette**" culture where some girls adopt traditionally masculine traits (e.g. assertiveness, rebelliousness). This shift in behavior has helped to explain why girls' academic performance has improved, as these "**ladettes**" challenge traditional gender roles while still achieving academically.

Wilkinson's (1994) research on the "**genderquake**" suggests that there has been a significant shift in women's attitudes towards education and careers, with women increasingly prioritising independence and professional success.

In school processes that impact on social class differences in educational achievement, centre on a variety of explanations. As stated on the AQA A level Sociology specification, the specific processes that students should focus on include teacher/pupil relationships, peer group relationships and the organisation of teaching and learning (including the impacts of the hidden curriculum).

Teacher/pupil relationships - labelling, internalisation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

Becker (1971) found that teachers often judge students based on how closely they fit the "**ideal pupil**" stereotype, which favours middle-class students. Working-class pupils were more likely to be negatively labelled, leading to lower expectations and **self-fulfilling prophecies** of failure.

Rist (1970) observed that teachers grouped children by perceived ability from an early age, often correlating ability with social class. Middle-class children were given more attention and encouragement, while working-class pupils were seen as less capable and placed in lower groups.

Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) conducted an experiment showing that when teachers were told certain students were "**high achievers**" (regardless of actual ability), those students performed better, demonstrating the power of teacher expectations.

Hargreaves (1967) identified that working-class boys in lower streams responded to negative labelling by forming anti-school subcultures, which reinforced their failure.

Dunne and Gazeley (2009) found that teachers normalised working-class underachievement, assuming that their home background was to blame.

Peer interactions and subcultural formation:

Willis (1977) studied working-class "lads" who formed an **anti-school subculture**, rejecting school values as a way to assert their masculinity and resistance to authority. This attitude led them to underachieve and enter low-paid, working-class jobs, reproducing class inequalities.

Mac an Ghail (1994) identified different subcultures within schools, including "**the macho lads**," who opposed school, and "**the academic achievers**," who valued education. He argued that working-class students were more likely to form anti-school identities due to their exclusion from middle-class norms.

Lacey (1970) found that schools use **differentiation** (treating students differently based on perceived ability) and **polarisation** (students responding to this differentiation by forming distinct subcultures). He argued that working-class students in lower sets were more likely to reject school values and disengage from learning.

Archer et al. (2007) explored how working-class students often felt school was "not for them" because of a **clash between their cultural identity and middle-class school norms**, reinforcing educational inequalities.

Note: Class intersects with gender and ethnicity allowing further research to be used.

Organisation of teaching and learning:

Ball (1981) found that working-class students were more likely to be placed in **lower sets and streams**, where they were given less challenging work and fewer opportunities for success. He argued that setting and streaming reinforced class inequalities by limiting the aspirations of working-class students.

Gillborn and Youdell (2001) found that schools operate a system of **educational triage**, where they prioritise students who are seen as likely to succeed in league tables. Working-class students, often placed in the "**hopeless cases**" category, receive fewer resources and less support, limiting their chances of academic success.

Boaler (1997) argued that this practice reproduces inequality by **systematically disadvantaging working-class pupils**, who are often not given the same educational opportunities as their middle-class peers.

Bourdieu (1984) argued that middle-class students possess more **cultural capital, meaning their attitudes, language, and values align with the education system**.

Keddie (1971) found that teachers provided lower-set students (mainly working-class) with less advanced knowledge, reinforcing class inequalities by restricting access to the high-status curriculum.

In-school processes can impact on the achievement of different ethnic groups. These can be organised based upon the specification to focus on teacher/pupil relationships, peer group relationships (including racism) and the organisation of teaching and learning (including the impacts of the hidden curriculum). As with external factors, students should focus on specific ethnic groups where applicable in order to show focused knowledge and understanding of the issues.

Teacher/pupil relationships:

Mirza (1992) categorised teachers into three types: **the colour-blind**, who claimed to treat all students equally but ignored racism; **the liberal chauvinists**, who had low expectations of Black students and saw them as disadvantaged; and the **overt racists**, who were openly discriminatory.

Archer and Francis (2007) found that Chinese students are often stereotyped as **model minorities** who achieve highly due to their work ethic and parental pressure.

Mac an Ghail (1994) studied **Black and Asian students** and found that negative teacher expectations did not always lead to underachievement. Some students rejected racist stereotypes and worked hard to succeed, showing that ethnic minority students are not passive victims of discrimination.

Demie and McClean (2017) found that **African heritage** students often perform well in primary school but fall behind in secondary education. They linked this to **low teacher expectations, lack of culturally inclusive teaching**, and negative experiences of discipline in schools.

Wright (1992) found that Asian pupils, particularly girls, were often overlooked by teachers and subject to subtle forms of racism, such as assumptions that they had poor English skills.

Peer group relationships:

Sewell (2009) suggested that the underachievement of Black Caribbean boys is influenced by peer groups that reject school values. He identified four responses to schooling among Black boys: **conformists, innovators, retreatists, and rebels**, with the rebellious group often reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Cline et al. (2002) found that racist bullying was a common experience for ethnic minority students in schools.

Shain (2003) identified different subcultures among Asian girls in schools, including **gang girls** who resisted school authority and **faith girls** who used religion to navigate school life. She argued that these different responses were shaped by experiences of racism and gender expectations.

Archer (2003) found that working-class Black and Asian boys often developed **hyper-masculine identities** in response to negative teacher stereotypes and racism, which sometimes led to conflict with school authority. These identities were shaped by peer group dynamics, media influences, and experiences of exclusion, reinforcing patterns of underachievement among some ethnic minority boys.

Note: Other theories of subcultural formation will intersect with different ethnic groups - e.g. laddish subcultures and pro and anti-school subcultures

Organisation of schooling and the curriculum

Gillborn (2008) argued that **institutional racism** within the education system systematically disadvantages **Black students**. He found that school policies, such as **setting and streaming**, often place Black students in lower ability groups, restricting their academic opportunities.

Gillborn and Youdell (2000) introduced the concept of the **A-to-C economy** where schools focus on students who are most likely to achieve good GCSEs to boost league table rankings. They found that **Black students were often placed in lower sets** due to teachers' racialised expectations, limiting their potential achievement.

Troyna and Williams (1986) argued that the education system **prioritises white culture** and language while marginalising ethnic minority perspectives. They highlighted how history and literature, often ignores or undermines the contributions of non-white cultures, reinforcing educational disadvantage.

Coard (1971) suggested that the **ethnocentric curriculum** in British schools presents Black culture as inferior, damaging the self-esteem of Black students. He argued that this leads to internalised racism and lower achievement among Black Caribbean pupils.

External (out-of-school) factors that influence the educational achievement of genders illustrate how a positive impact on one group may have a detrimental impact on another. The ability to compare and contrast the experiences of boys and girls in wider society is useful in showing a more analytical approach to differences in educational achievement. Below are some of the main reasons for these differences, viewed through impacts on both girls' and boys' achievements.

Teacher/pupil relationships:

Francis (2000) highlighted that the increasing presence of female teachers provides **strong role models for girls**, reinforcing the idea that education leads to career success. In contrast, the shortage of male teachers, particularly in primary schools, may leave boys without academic role models, contributing to lower engagement.

Francis and Skelton (2005) found that teachers tend to have **higher expectations for girls**, viewing them as more diligent and better behaved, while boys are often seen as disruptive. These expectations can create self-fulfilling prophecies, where girls work harder and boys disengage from learning.

Sewell (2006) suggested the lack of male teachers and role models in schools may contribute to boys' disengagement from education.

Swann (1998) found that boys tend to dominate class discussions, often through loud and competitive behavior, whereas girls prefer group work and cooperative learning. This aligns with teaching methods that favour communication skills, which may benefit girls more than boys.

Note: Gender intersects with other social characteristics such as ethnicity and social class to explain educational differences

Peer group interactions:

Willis (1977) study of "the lads" found that working-class boys actively resisted school, seeing it as irrelevant to their futures in manual work.

Ward (2015) found that some working-class boys are adapting, recognizing the need for qualifications but still struggling with traditional expectations of masculinity.

Epstein et al. (1999) found that working-class boys often form anti-school subcultures, where academic success is seen as "uncool" or "feminine." Fear of being labelled as "swots" leads boys to reject schoolwork, resulting in underachievement.

Mac an Ghail (1994) studied how different forms of masculinity develop within schools, particularly among working-class boys. He found that "laddish" subcultures, such as the "**Macho Lads**," rejected school authority and academic success, seeing education as unmasculine. These boys often engaged in anti-school behaviors to maintain their status among peers, reinforcing working-class, traditional notions of masculinity that contributed to underachievement. Mac an Ghail also identified different female subcultures in schools, including "**the girls who worked hard**" and "**the rebellious girls**" who rejected traditional expectations. Some working-class girls valued academic success but still conformed to traditional femininity, balancing schoolwork with social status.

Organisation of teaching and learning:

Mitsos and Browne (1998) found that changes in education, such as the introduction of coursework, benefited girls, as they tend to be more organised and better at meeting deadlines. Meanwhile, boys often struggle with sustained effort and attention to detail, leading to lower achievement levels.

Sewell (2006) argued that the education system has become "**feminised**," favouring traits such as attentiveness, discipline, and organisation, which benefit girls more than boys. He suggested that the decline of competitive, exam-based assessment and the rise of coursework disadvantaged boys, who tend to thrive in structured, high-pressure environments.

Spender (1983) suggested that the curriculum and school organisation historically favored male experiences and perspectives, although feminist educational reforms have worked to challenge this bias.

Paetcher (1998) explored how gendered subject choices are influenced by the organisation of teaching, showing that boys and girls are often subtly steered towards traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" subjects.

Note: Many of these explanations can be used to show how schools shape the identity of different pupils

On the AQA A level Sociology specification, it requires students to understand how in-school processes might shape the identities of pupils from different social backgrounds. Many of the ways that pupil identity is shaped can be linked into explanations for educational achievement as well. Below are some explanations of how in-school processes shape social class, gender and ethnic identities. Remember that identities can intersect - e.g. white working-class male, Black-Caribbean girls - so multiple sources can be used based upon the demands of the question.

Social Class and Pupil Identities

Labelling and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy (Becker, 1971; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968)

Working-class students may internalise negative labels, leading to low self-esteem and disengagement, while middle-class students develop positive learner identities that encourage academic success.

Streaming and Educational Triage (Gillborn and Youdell, 2001; Boaler, 1997)

Identity Formation: Being placed in lower sets reinforces a "failure identity," making pupils feel academically inferior, whereas middle-class pupils in higher sets develop a sense of intellectual superiority.

Formation of Anti-School Subcultures (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Lacey, 1970)

Identity Formation: Working-class boys construct an identity around resistance, seeing school as irrelevant and valuing peer approval over academic success.

Clash of Cultural Habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Archer et al., 2010; Reay, 1998)

Identity Formation: Working-class students may feel like "fish out of water" in academic spaces, leading to self-exclusion from higher education and a belief that university is "not for people like them."

Gender and Pupil Identities

The Feminisation of Education (Sewell, 2006; Mitsos and Browne, 1998)

Identity Formation: Girls develop a positive academic identity, seeing education as a path to success, while boys may feel alienated, leading to disengagement and anti-school attitudes.

Laddish Subcultures (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Willis, 1977; Epstein et al., 1998)

Identity Formation: Boys construct "laddish" identities by acting tough, disrupting lessons, and devaluing education, reinforcing ideas that academic success is "uncool."

Impact of Gender Role Models (Francis, 2000; Francis and Skelton, 2005)

Identity Formation: Boys may disengage from learning, believing academic success is not part of male identity, while girls feel encouraged to excel.

Gendered Subject Choices (Paetcher, 1998; Lobban, 1974; Kelly, 1987)

Identity Formation: Girls who enter male-dominated subjects may feel out of place, while boys avoid subjects like English due to fears of being perceived as feminine.

The Male Gaze (Mac an Ghail, 1994)

Identity Formation: Girls construct their identities around appearance and attractiveness, rather than academic ability, shaping their self-worth in schools.

Ethnicity and Pupil Identities

Teacher Expectations and Labelling (Gillborn, 2008; Wright, 1992; Bhatti, 1999)

Identity Formation: Black boys may adopt "resistant" identities, either rebelling against the system or withdrawing from participation, while Asian students develop passive learner identities, feeling their voices are unheard.

Institutional Racism and Ethnocentric Curriculum (Coard, 1971; Troyna and Williams, 1986)

Identity Formation: Minority students may feel invisible or excluded, leading to a weaker sense of belonging in the school system.

Responses to Racism (Sewell, 1997; Mirza, 1992; Mac an Ghail, 1994)

Identity Formation: Those who rebel may develop hyper-masculine "gang" identities, rejecting school values, while those who conform create hardworking but isolated identities, limiting their school engagement.

Educational Triage and Marketisation (Gillborn and Youdell, 2001; Ball, 1994)

Schools, under market-driven pressures, are more likely to neglect Black working-class pupils in favour of middle-class and white students.

Identity Formation: Black students may develop low self-worth, seeing themselves as "hopeless cases," while middle-class students see themselves as worthy of investment.

Understanding the social context of educational policies is important for understanding how effective the policy was and whether it is still implemented in the education system in England and Wales. Below are a series of policies organised by the government that introduced them, with their primary aim and impacts.

1979–1997: Marketisation and Neoliberal Reforms (Conservative Governments)

Education Reform Act (1988)

Aim: Introduced marketisation policies such as:

- **league tables**
- **open enrolment**
- **formula funding**
- **National Curriculum to raise standards**
- **Introduced GCSEs, SATs, and coursework**

Impacts:

- Led to parentocracy and competition between schools, but also increased inequalities, as middle-class parents could use their cultural capital to navigate the system. **(Gewirtz et al)**
- Encouraged "teaching to the test" and led to cream-skimming (schools selecting the best pupils) and silt-shifting (rejecting lower-performing students). **(Bartlett)**
- Popular schools improved while failing schools lost funding, widening inequalities.
- Increased exam pressure and reinforced gender gaps, as girls performed better in coursework.
- Middle-class families gained the most from this policy, as they could move to better catchment areas.

Creation of OFSTED (1992)

Aim: Set up independent school inspections to monitor teaching quality and performance.

Impact: Increased accountability, but led to teaching to the test and high stress among teachers.

1997–2010: New Labour's Educational Reforms (Labour Governments)

Sure Start (1998)

Aim: Provided early years support (e.g. childcare, health services, and parenting advice) in disadvantaged areas.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (1999)

Aim: Financial support for low-income students to stay in education post-16.

Impact: Increased A-level participation among working-class students, but later scrapped by Conservatives in 2010.

City Centre Academies (2002)

Aim: Allowed private sponsors to take over failing schools in urban areas to improve standards.

Impact: Some improvement in exam results, but concerns over privatisation and selection policies.

Specialist Schools (2000s)

Aim: Allowed schools to focus on a specific subject (e.g. technology, languages) and receive extra funding.

Impact: Created more diversity but led to covert selection, as middle-class parents targeted the best schools.

Expansion of Faith Schools (1990s-2000s)

Aim: Allowed more religious schools to open within the state system.

Impact: Increased school diversity, but some faith schools were accused of social selection.

2010–2024: Coalition and Conservative Education Reforms

Pupil Premium (2011 – Coalition)

Aim: Extra funding for schools based on number of disadvantaged pupils to close the attainment gap.

Impact: Helped schools in poorer areas, but some evidence suggests it was not always spent well.

Progress 8 (2016 – Conservative)

Aim: New school performance measure focusing on pupil progress rather than raw exam results.

Impact: Reduced focus on headline grades, but made it harder to compare schools.

Expansion of Academies (2010s – Conservative)

Aim: Encouraged all schools to become academies, moving away from local authority control.

Impact: Increased privatisation, with mixed results in improving school performance.

Creation of Free Schools (2010 – Conservative)

Aim: Allowed parents, charities, and businesses to set up schools outside local authority control.

Impact: Created more school choices, but many were established in middle-class areas

Reforms to Curriculum and Assessment (2015-Conservative)

Aim: Introduced linear exams, removed coursework, and made maths & English compulsory until 18.

Impact: Increased academic rigour, but also increased exam pressure and stress.

Selection policies refers to the ways in which schools or governments will allow a percentage or all of their students to be chosen by the school, either through overt methods (such as entrance exams) or covert selection (marketing to specific areas, uniform costs). These can be internal or external. Marketisation and privatisation policies are based upon giving parents and pupils more choice and allowing school to compete for pupils, whilst privatisation policies allow private companies to run education services or establishments. These are categorised below- some fit into more than one category.

Selection Policies

These policies encouraged selection of students based on certain criteria, typically aimed at determining the best-fit school for students.

- **Tripartite System (1944 Education Act)**
 - Introduced the 11+ exam, categorising students into grammar, secondary modern, and technical schools.
- **Creation of Faith Schools (1990s-2000s)**
 - Increased the number of faith-based schools, which can result in selection based on religious beliefs.
- **Specialist Schools (2000s)**
 - Allowed schools to focus on a specific subject, often creating selective entry based on subject specialism.
- **Setting and Streaming (Internal Selection)**
 - Allows schools to select ability groups for pupils based upon academic ability

Evaluating the effectiveness of these policies: In 30 mark essays on educational policies you will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of these policies. This can be done through using sociological research (e.g. Gewirtz et al, Tough and Brooks, Ball) or through making a judgement on how effective the policy was at achieving its stated aims.

Marketisation of Education

These policies introduced a market-based approach to education, focusing on competition, parental choice, and accountability.

- **Education Reform Act (1988)**
 - Introduced league tables, open enrolment, OFSTED inspections, and a National Curriculum, creating a competitive education system.
- **League Tables (1988)**
 - Ranked schools based on exam results, contributing to a competitive marketplace.
- **Formula Funding (1988)**
 - Schools received funding based on student numbers, encouraging schools to compete to attract the most students.
- **City Centre Academies (2002 – Labour)**
 - Encouraged competition among schools in urban areas
- **Creation of Free Schools (2010)**
 - Created schools free from local authority control, allowing for greater competition in the educational market.
- **Expansion of Academies (2010)**
 - Encouraged more schools to convert to academies, competing for funding and students in an increasingly market-driven system.
- **Progress 8 (2016)**
 - Introduced a new school performance measure based on student progress, driving competition between schools.

Privatisation of Education

These policies promoted the privatisation of education, often by involving private sector companies or allowing greater autonomy for schools and educational providers.

- **Endogenous and Exogenous Privatisation (1980s onwards)**
 - The increasing involvement of the private sector in the provision of educational services, such as academy chains, outsourced services, and education technology companies.
- **Multi-Academy Trusts (2010)**
 - Allowed groups of schools to be managed by private organisations, leading to privatisation within the education sector.
- **Creation of Free Schools (2010)**
 - Allowed private entities, including businesses and charities, to set up and manage schools, thus promoting privatisation in education.
- **Expansion of Academies (2010s)**
 - Increased the number of academies, which are often run by private organisations, further privatising the education system.

A word on privatisation and marketisation: Whilst many of these policies create both an education market and introduce private companies into education, you must focus on the demands of the question and not drift into tangential material.

Many government policies have the primary aim of reducing inequalities in education. This could be class, gender or ethnic inequality. While these are often associated with Labour governments, there are examples from the Conservative and coalition governments too. Sociologists often talk about “compensatory policies” - policies that seek to compensate specific social groups for entrenched disadvantages that they face. This can be through additional learning, schemes to encourage participation or additional, targeted funding.

Policies to tackle social class inequalities

- **Sure Start (1998 – Labour)**
 - Targeted at disadvantaged children from low-income families, aiming to improve early years education, health, and parenting support. Focused on reducing the impact of social class on children's early development and educational outcomes.
- **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (2004 – Labour)**
 - Provided financial support to low-income students staying in further education, ensuring that students from working-class backgrounds had equal access to post-16 education and reduced the financial barriers to education.
- **Pupil Premium (2011 – Conservative/Coalition)**
 - Allocated additional funding to schools for each pupil from a disadvantaged background, aiming to close the achievement gap between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (1998 Labour)**
 - Aimed at improving literacy and numeracy levels among students, particularly in areas with high social class deprivation to ensure all students received a solid foundation in essential skills.

Policies to tackle gender inequalities

- **GIST/WISE (Girls Into Science and Technology / Women in Science and Engineering) (1980s – Government initiative)**
 - Encouraged girls to pursue STEM subjects, where they were traditionally underrepresented, aiming to reduce gender inequalities in these fields.
- **Widening Participation in Higher Education (2000s-2010s – Labour/Conservative)**
 - Focused on encouraging female students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend universities, aiming to improve gender equality in higher education.
- **Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (1998 – Labour)**
 - Aimed at improving basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly for boys, who were found to be underachieving in these areas.
- **National Strategy for Boys' Achievement (2003 – Labour)**
 - Focused on addressing the underachievement of boys in schools, particularly in literacy and writing. Encouraged schools to adopt specific teaching strategies and create a learning environment that engaged boys more effectively, focusing on male role models and active learning methods.

Policies to tackle ethnic inequalities

- **Multicultural Education (1980s-1990s – Government initiatives)**
 - Focused on incorporating ethnic minority cultures into the curriculum and addressing the underachievement of ethnic minorities through inclusive education.
- **Aim High and Aiming Higher (2004 – Labour)**
 - These programmes targeted ethnic minorities, especially Pakistani and Black Caribbean students, helping raise their aspirations and providing additional resources to encourage higher education participation.
- **Sure Start (1998 – Labour)**
 - Worked with ethnic minority families in disadvantaged areas to promote equal opportunities for young children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
- **Pupil Premium (2011 – Conservative/Coalition)**
 - While focused on social class, this funding also aimed to close the achievement gap for ethnic minority students, particularly those from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Black Caribbean backgrounds.
- **Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (2000 – Labour)**
 - Aimed at addressing the underachievement of ethnic minority students, particularly in urban areas.

Globalisation has impacted on all aspects of social life, including education. On the AQA A level specification, students need to know how globalisation has influenced educational policies (both in schools and the wider education system). This includes types of schools, design of the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies and the involvement of private global education companies.

Introduction of Academies and Free Schools

Influence of Globalisation:

- The introduction of academies and free schools in the UK reflects a global trend towards school autonomy and the **decentralisation of educational control**. The push for more **privately managed schools** with increased freedoms mirrors policies in countries such as the **US and Sweden**, where private sector involvement in education is prominent.
- Academies and free schools were designed to foster innovation in teaching and learning, promoting a more flexible and diverse educational landscape that could better respond to global educational and economic demands.

Global Rankings and Accountability Measures

Influence of Globalisation:

- The use of international student performance rankings like **PISA** has encouraged the UK to implement policies aimed at improving educational standards in response to global comparisons.
- The focus is on improving educational outcomes in a global context, driving policies that improve performance in areas where the UK may be lagging behind other nations.

International Collaboration and Teacher Training

Influence of Globalisation:

- The globalisation of education has led to increased collaboration between UK schools and international institutions. Policies focused on teacher professional development often draw from global practices, improving UK teaching methods and learning strategies.
- **Teach First** and other teacher training initiatives have borrowed ideas from international teacher training programmes, adapting global best practices to the UK context.

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

Influence of Globalisation:

- The introduction of the EBacc reflects the global trend of emphasising certain academic subjects (e.g., English, maths, science, languages, and humanities) that are seen as essential for future success in a globalised world.
- The policy was designed to promote a well-rounded academic education, in line with global education standards.
- Schools were encouraged to offer a curriculum that aligns with the EBacc subjects, with a focus on preparing students for global job markets.

Changes to Curriculum - Focus on 21st Century Skills

Influence of Globalisation:

- In response to the demands of a global economy, the UK education system has increasingly focused on teaching students the 21st-century skills that are needed to succeed in a globalized job market.
- A move towards a broader curriculum, which includes global citizenship, entrepreneurship, and foreign languages, preparing students to engage with a global community.

The Adoption of STEM Focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)

Influence of Globalisation:

- A key aspect of the global economy is the growing demand for a skilled workforce in STEM fields. The UK government, influenced by global trends, began placing **significant emphasis on STEM education**.
- International competition for skilled workers in technological and scientific fields led to policies promoting STEM education to meet both national and **global demand**.
- **STEM Agenda:** Encouraged increased funding for STEM subjects, the development of STEM schools, and initiatives to improve students' performance in science and technology.