**Class and Educational Achievement - Internal**

The objective of this section is to examine the differential educational achievement by social class, with a particular emphasis on the internal factors that affect it. In the previous section, we explored the correlation between social class and educational attainment and noted that, in general, the working class underperforms compared to the middle class. We analysed the various external factors that impact educational achievement, grouping them into material deprivation, cultural deprivation, and cultural capital. However, some of these external factors, such as language codes and cultural capital, are also present in the internal practice of education.

The current section will focus on the roles and processes within education that influence educational achievement according to social class. While there are numerous factors that contribute to this, we have grouped them into three primary areas for ease of management. Firstly, we will examine teacher expectations, analysing the impact of classroom teachers and school processes on educational achievement by class. Secondly, we will delve into subcultures, examining both pro-school and anti-school subcultures and their connection to actual educational achievement by class. Finally, we will explore education policies, keeping in mind that internal factors refer to the education system as a whole, not individual schools.

It is important to note that our primary focus when analysing educational achievement is on GCSE and A-Level performance, rather than key stage two or lower.

**TEACHER EXPECTATION**

The first group of internal factors we will look at is teacher expectations. This is linked to the interactions between students and teachers in the classroom and around school.

**Labelling**

labelling theory posits that labels attached to students are influenced by a variety of factors. The labelling process is not an automatic self-fulfilling prophecy; rather, it involves several phases such as speculation, elaboration, negotiation, and stabilisation of the label. Hargreaves refers to preconceived ideas about students during the speculation phase, while the elaboration phase involves in-class behaviour. The internalisation phase leads to stabilisation of the label. Factors that create preconceived ideas include prior data, reputation of the student or family, and behaviour such as not turning up with equipment or incorrect uniform. Becker suggests that teacher-student interactions create an ideal pupil, which varies by school and subject.

Amelia Hempel Jorgensen's research has shown that the ideal pupil varies based on the socio-economic background of the school. Schools with disciplinary problems tend to prefer quiet, passive, and obedient students, while those in more affluent areas prefer students with personality, academic ability, and engagement in school activities. Labelling can also be linked to individual teacher expectations, with expectations differing across subjects and year levels.

The labelling of working-class students tends to be more negative than that of middle-class students because they do not fit the ideal pupil framework. This is linked to the external factor of subculture, where the behaviours of external subcultures that do not match the ideal pupil framework lead to symbolic violence. This violence can cause students to believe they are not good enough and destined to fail, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy and working-class underachievement.

**Setting and Streaming**

The concept of teacher expectations is closely tied to the practice of setting and streaming. As previously discussed in the roles and processes lecture, setting refers to grouping students by ability in individual subjects, whereas streaming refers to grouping students by ability across all subjects. For instance, students in the top set for English would also be placed in the top set for all other subjects. Conversely, setting allows for different ability groups in different subjects based on individual abilities. However, labelling can often result in students being placed in lower sets and streams if they fail to meet the expected standards or are deemed less capable.

When examining educational achievement by class, it is evident that working-class students are more likely to be placed in the lowest sets and streams. This can be attributed to various factors such as material deprivation, cultural deprivation, and lack of cultural capital, which limits their ability to access the curriculum efficiently. The absence of a frame of reference, for example, when studying Shakespeare or using examples in class, can lead to working-class students not fully engaging with the curriculum, resulting in being deemed less able and placed in lower sets and streams.

It is worth noting that external factors play a significant role in shaping these outcomes, and they can have a profound effect on students' internal beliefs and attitudes. Being placed in lower sets and streams can lead to low self-esteem, reduced motivation, and limited access to opportunities to prove their worth and improve. In conclusion, it is essential to recognize the impact of these external factors on educational outcomes and strive to minimize their effects on students' academic performance and self-worth. Sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein have conducted extensive research in this area and contributed significantly to our understanding of the role of social class in shaping educational achievement.

**Educational Triage**

Next is educational triage, which involves dividing students into three distinct groups based on their predicted academic outcomes. The first group consists of those who are likely to achieve success regardless of the level of support they receive. The second group consists of students who are not expected to achieve academic success, even with significant support. Finally, the third group comprises students who fall in the middle, and with adequate support, may be able to achieve a slightly higher level of academic success.

Schools often use educational triage as a means of allocating resources and support to students who fall into the third group, with the aim of boosting their academic performance. This approach is closely linked to the practice of setting and streaming students based on their academic ability, as well as labelling teachers and schools based on their performance in these areas.

Typically, educational triage is carried out at the level of the school, rather than at the level of individual teachers. Teachers and administrators identify so-called "borderline students" and focus resources and support on those students with the intention of helping them achieve a slightly higher level of academic success. This often involves moving a student from a grade four to a five or a five to a six, or from a C to a B.

Given that working-class students are more likely to be placed in the lower ability groups, they are more likely to fall into the group of students who are not expected to achieve academic success, regardless of the level of support they receive. As a result, they are more likely to underachieve compared to their middle-class peers who are more likely to fall into the middle group, and therefore receive more resources and support to achieve academic success.

**EVALUATION**

he notion of teacher expectations explores the roles and processes we previously discussed and how they are specifically linked to working-class underachievement. This can be attributed to labelling theory, which centres on the ideal pupil. However, this theory is flawed because there is no single cause for educational achievement, especially in relation to social class. Thus, a perfect solution is not possible, and policies and procedures can only mitigate the issue. It is essential to note that this theory is deterministic and removes agency from students, suggesting that they must conform to the label of underachieving. However, Margaret Fuller's 1984 study of black working-class girls in London in a comprehensive school demonstrates that students can reject the label and achieve academic success.

The theory of teacher expectations empowers teachers, implying that they shape student identities and the labels assigned to them, ultimately impacting their academic success. Specifically, teachers from middle-class backgrounds tend to view working-class students more negatively. Furthermore, setting and streaming can aid students by providing targeted support and challenging higher ability groups. With mixed-ability groups, teachers may struggle to balance the needs of all students. Teacher training now addresses labelling and unconscious biases, making individuals aware of these issues to mitigate their impact on education.

**SUBCULTURES**

subcultures are a key factor in understanding trends in class and educational achievement. Specifically, we will explore the anti-school and pro-school subcultures and their relationship to social class. As we have previously discussed, the anti-school subculture rejects the values and norms of the educational institution, while the pro-school subculture embraces them. Studies have shown that working-class students are more likely to adopt an anti-school subculture because they struggle to achieve status through academic ability and participation in wider school activities. This is in contrast to middle-class students, who have more opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities and gain status through academic achievement.

Working-class students are more likely to seek immediate gratification and reject the deferred gratification values of the school, which can lead to the formation of an anti-school subculture. Conversely, middle-class students are more likely to adopt a pro-school subculture due to their commitment to school values and greater access to extracurricular activities.

However, it is important to note that not all students join subcultures, and the school population cannot be neatly divided into pro- and anti-school groups. Therefore, attributing working-class underachievement solely to membership in an anti-school subculture overlooks the complexity of the issue. It is also important to consider Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which suggests that working-class students may have a different cultural background that does not align with the values of the school. Thus, schools may need to re-examine their approach to education and consider ways to address symbolic violence against working-class students.

**EDUCATION POLICIES**

The final factor contributing to the internal reasons for educational achievement among working class students pertains to school policies, particularly the implementation of marketization policies. These policies aim to foster competition among schools, enhance academic standards, and ultimately promote educational equality. However, research has shown that these policies do not necessarily achieve their intended outcomes. Rather, they tend to create a systemic disadvantage for working class students. This disadvantage arises due to the absence of free choice in school selection and enrolment. Working class students often face various constraints that limit their access to certain schools, including distance and uniform requirements. This factor relates to the external issue of material deprivation.

Additionally, marketization policies compel schools to prioritize league table rankings. Consequently, schools tend to favour middle class students who conform to the ideals of an ideal student. Such students are more likely to achieve the high grades that elevate a school's ranking, attract more students, and secure more funding. Therefore, marketization policies, which aim to improve the education system, tend to disadvantage working class students. By not providing equal opportunities for all students, these policies reflect the institutionalized middle-class nature of the education system. This contradiction illustrates that the education system, despite claiming to be a means of promoting equality, is, in reality, not an equitable institution for all students.

**EVALUATION**

Compensatory education policies have been developed to mitigate the detrimental effects of external factors, including material and cultural deprivation, on academic attainment among working-class students. These policies, such as Pupil Premium free school meals, education action zones, and educational maintenance allowance, aim to address internal factors that impede educational success. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the need for compensatory education policies, including the provision of laptops and internet access for remote learning, as well as the National tutoring programme. Despite uncertainty over the longevity of these policies, it is evident that they serve as a means to facilitate working-class students' academic progress and maximize their potential. Furthermore, the education system may be viewed as a middle-class construct designed by and for the middle class, which may account for the obstacles faced by working-class students. However, there are indications that changes are occurring in this regard.