

Marketisation of education



Some sociologists suggest that the best way to improve standards within school is to encourage competition. This may be competition between two schools, grades or also facilities. When labour came into power they kept some of the conservative educational policies. They allow for businesses to take over a failing school and take care of the finances of the school.

This can promote equal opportunities if they actually turn the school around. This in turn would increase pupil's chances and results. However, if a business man took over he could influence the pupils because of his viewpoints and this could help to recycle class inequalities. Therefore, I feel that this is not a good thing as they are not specialised in running schools they just see it as an investment.

Another policy that is still in place is league tables and the notion of parental choice. I think in theory it is a successful concept however middle class parents are more likely to get their children into the best school leaving less choice for working class kids. In addition, the league tables do encourage marketization between schools but it may cause people not to be entered for exams if they are predicted low grades. I think this undermines the Marxist view as they are taking away the chance for the student to get qualifications even if they are poor and so most of the time replicates the same class boundaries as previous generations. Another suggestion was to pay clever students to attend to make the league tables look better however the brainiest students are most likely to be middle class and they don't really need the money if they come from a wealthy background. That money could be spent on poorer schools and helping them raise standards so I feel that this would undermine the Marxist view.

Schools have been promoting vocational routes for school leavers. This does promote equal opportunities as the working class are more likely to stay on and get qualifications. However, the New Right are afraid that this will diminish the “ gold standard” associated with A-levels. I think this policy supports the Marxist view of the educational system because it is producing more workers that are skilled in more different areas. Also, by them being in education it will ensure the workers are obedient and hard-working. The national curriculum and testing has changed a lot.

Everyone is now taught the same thing so that everyone is given the same chance of succeeding but the tests favour the middle class. This could be things like in a simple IQ test adding composer’s names that the working class are not likely to know. By everyone learning the same things it helps the teachers not to be confused as they know what they are supposed to teach and it raises standards of teaching. Since 1988 teachers have been pushing pupils more and exam results have gone up. This shows that although all grades are going up there is still an equality gap between classes. OFSTED has been a big factor in education.

They have now reduced the warning times of a visit so that teachers and the school have to keep standards high all the time. It also helps the working class schools because it kicks them into shape and then in turn helps the school to be more equal. I think that OFSTED has increased equality and standards and if there is a higher standard then the child is expected to get better results and ready for work. Therefore I feel OFSTED has not undermined the Marxist view.

From sociological research it is apparent that private schools undermine Marxism. They make sure that they have top standards for their middle class pupils but this causes working class to miss out as they are in comprehensives with less funding and generally poorer quality teachers. This shows a big inequality between classes because it gives them a “ head start. ” They are more likely to be accepted to Oxbridge if they went to a private school. Only 7% of the population go to a private school but 50-60% take up the Oxford and Cambridge places. This massively undermines the Marxist view as a state school pupil could be clever but be denied a chance just because of where they were educated.

Another issue within state schools is there are the well-able students that are there to learn and just one or two selfish individuals disrupt the whole class affecting their learning. It reduces social cohesion as it may cause problems such as resentment that they weren't able to learn. Therefore, I feel that this undermines the Marxist view as it makes the workers less obedient if they are used to messing around at school. Overall, I feel that the present educational system and the policies alongside it do help raise standards but in most cases does not raise equal opportunities. This shows that class is replicated and shows that in the world of work you are not very likely to progress further than your parents.

Generally I feel that the Marxist view of the education system is undermined and to a great extent in some areas of schools and further education.