

What is, and What might be

pp. 116-139

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Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs ECAD4009-C - Cycle 1 Core Studies: Learners, Schools and Communities: where am I teaching?

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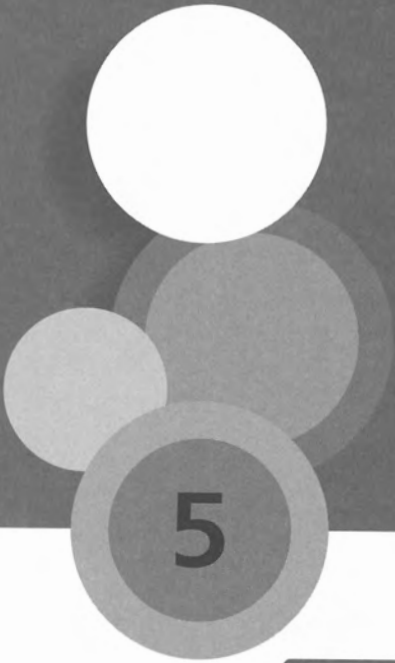
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Contexts

What is, and what might be?

5

Readings

5.1 C. Wright Mills

The sociological imagination (p. 118)

5.2 Andy Green and Jan Janmaat

Regimes of social cohesion (p. 121)

5.3 Stephen Ball

Schooling, social class and privilege (p. 124)

5.4 Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Disadvantage and low attainment (p. 128)

5.5 General Teaching Council for England (GTC E)

Accountability in teaching (p. 133)

These readings address the broad contexts in which teachers work.

The first draws from a classic text, in which Mills (4.1) analyses the relationship between individuals and society. He accounts for social change through the continuous interaction of biography and history. This analysis underpins a reflective and questioning attitude towards taken-for-granted structures, policies and assumptions: for 'personal troubles' can often be seen in relation to more enduring 'public issues'. In a related, later reading, Power (17.5) discusses the idea of 'the imaginative professional'.

Green and Janmaat (5.2) demonstrate how public policies vary in particular countries, and highlight the underlying assumptions upon which taken-for-granted thinking is based. International comparisons show how things can be thought about, and developed, in a variety of ways.

The readings from Ball (5.3) and a Government education department (5.4) highlight the influence of social class on education. Across the UK, this remains powerful and pervasive. These particular readings focus on how some families are able to benefit from their circumstances, and on policies and school practices which may enhance opportunities for more children and young people.

In a final reading, from the last days of the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) before its abolition, the case is made for a constructive and educationally sound model of accountability for schools and the profession.

The parallel chapter of *Reflective Teaching in Schools* engages with many additional issues. The 'social context' of education is analysed in terms of the concepts of ideology, culture, opportunity and accountability, as these influence schools in each country within the UK. Teachers, pupils and families are then considered, both as individuals and as groups, with particular attention to how they act within their circumstances.

Extensive 'Notes for Further Reading' on such factors are available on reflectiveteaching.co.uk. The social context within which teachers and pupils work is, after all, a topic with a great many avenues for exploration in sociology, economics, history, politics, cultural studies, anthropology, comparative education, etc. The available literature is very extensive indeed.

Whilst the selections in this chapter are heavily constrained by space, see also the readings in Chapter 17 of this book. For example, there are echoes of Mills' analysis in the reading by Power (17.5) and in the discussion of policy formation by Bowe and Ball (17.7).

Reading 5.1

The sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills

This reading comes from a classic sociological text. Wright Mills focused on the interaction between individuals and society, and thus on the intersection of biography and history. Teachers have particular responsibilities because, though acting in particular historical contexts, we shape the biographies of many children and thus help to create the future. Mills poses several questions which can be used to think about our society and the role of education in it.

How do you think what you do today, may influence what others may do in the future?

Edited from: Mills, C. W. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 111–13.

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him (sic) to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public studies.

The first fruit of this imagination – and the first lessons of the social science that embodies it – is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own changes in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. We do not know the limits of man's capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst. And it is the signal of what is best in contemporary studies of man and society.

No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society, has completed its intellectual journey. Whatever the specific problems of the classic social analysts, however limited or however broad the features of social reality they have examined, those who have been imaginatively aware of the promise of their work have consistently asked three sorts of questions:

- *What is the structure of this particular society as a whole?*

What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another?

Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?

- *Where does this society stand in human history?*

What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period – what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?

- *What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period?*

And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining?

Reading 5.2

Regimes of social cohesion

Andy Green and Jan Janmaat

This reading is based on analysis of data on inequality and social attitudes in over 25 developed countries. The study shows how educational inequality undermines key aspects of social cohesion, including trust in institutions, civic cooperation and the rule of law. The authors argue that more egalitarian education systems tend to promote both economic competitiveness *and* social cohesion. The work highlights the significance for social cohesion of the distribution of opportunities and the nature of the values that people acquire.

Through its work with young people, education influences the future and is infused with moral purpose. We must recognise 'What is', but may also ask 'What should be?'.

How do you feel that the policy context in which you work affects educational provision?

Edited from: Green, A. and Janmaat, J. G. (2011) *Education, Opportunity and Social Cohesion*. Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies. London: Institute of Education, 2–5.

Regimes of social cohesion

Different traditions of thought and policy on social cohesion have evolved within the western world. Comparative analysis identifies three distinctive types of social cohesion in contemporary states. These can be characterised as 'liberal', 'social market' or 'social democratic'. We refer to these as 'regimes of social cohesion' to emphasise their systemic properties, which are relatively durable over time.

Liberal (English-speaking countries, e.g. particularly the UK and the USA)

In liberal societies, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, social cohesion has traditionally relied on the triple foundations of market freedoms, an active civil society, and core beliefs in individual opportunities and rewards based on merit. A wider set of shared values has not been regarded as essential for a cohesive society – and nor, in the British case at least, has a tightly defined sense of national identity. The state was not, historically, considered the main guarantor of social cohesion, beyond its role in the maintenance of law and order.

Social Market (NW continental Europe, e.g. Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands)

The social market regime, by contrast, has relied on a strong institutional embedding of social cohesion. Solidarity has depended relatively more on the state and less on civil

society, and rates of civic participation have generally been lower. Trade union coverage and public spending on welfare and social protection are high. These factors, along with concerted and centralized trade union bargaining, have helped to reduce household income inequality. Maintaining a broad set of shared values – and a strong national identity – has also, historically, been considered important for holding societies together.

Social Democratic (The Nordic countries, e.g. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) The social democratic regime, like the social market regime, institutionalises social solidarity. However, here, egalitarian and solidaristic values make a greater contribution to social cohesion. Levels of social and political trust are also much higher. This cannot be attributed solely to greater ethnic homogeneity in these societies, although this may have once played a part in Denmark and Norway. Sweden is both ethnically diverse and highly trusting.

Social cohesion during economic crisis

Every country is affected by the challenges of globalisation and particularly so during periods of economic crisis. However, societies differ in what holds them together.

The core beliefs of liberal societies, such as the UK (e.g. active civil society and individual opportunities), are seen to be embodied in the ‘free market’ which has become more dominant under globalisation. However, social cohesion in such societies is likely to be undermined by the rapid erosion of people’s faith in individual opportunity and fairness.

The UK has high levels of income inequality and relatively low rates of social mobility. Inequality and lack of mobility are likely to grow due to the disproportionate effects of the economic crisis (in unemployment and public expenditure cuts, for example) on young people, women, the low paid and those in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. As the prospects of secure jobs and home ownership diminish for many people, belief in the core unifying values of opportunity, freedom and just rewards are likely to decrease, causing social and political trust to diminish further.

Education, inequality and social cohesion

Education systems play a key role in determining future life chances and in mitigating or exacerbating social inequalities. These have been linked with various negative health and social outcomes, including high rates of depression, low levels of trust and cooperation, and high levels of violent crime.

We found that education systems which select students to secondary schools by ability and make extensive use of ability grouping within schools tend to exhibit more unequal educational outcomes than non-selective comprehensive systems with mixed ability classes.

The four education systems in the UK perform somewhat differently. Those in Scotland

and Wales produce slightly more equal educational outcomes at 15 than those in England and Northern Ireland, according to the OECD Programme for International student Assessment (PISA).

The 2009 PISA study of literacy skills amongst 15 years olds shows that educational outcomes in the UK are more unequal than in most of the OECD countries where tests were conducted (Green and Janmaat, 2011).

The gap between the mean scores of UK students in the 90th and 10th percentiles was 246 points – the equivalent of six years of schooling on the average across OECD countries. PISA 2009 showed that the variance in scores in the UK have only reduced marginally since the 2000 survey. Amongst the 34 countries tested, the UK had the 11th highest total variance in scores.

The UK is also notable for degree to which the average performance within a school is influenced by the social characteristics of its intake. Across all OECD countries, on average, 57% of the performance difference between schools can be attributed to the social character of the intake. In the UK (and in Luxembourg, New Zealand and the USA) the social intake accounts for over 70% of performance difference between schools.

Skills distribution and social cohesion

Variation in performance among school students is one of the factors which, over time, determines the overall distribution of skills within the adult population. We found strong links between social cohesion and the distribution of adult skills.

The more unequal the skills distribution among adults, the higher the rates of violent crime and civic unrest, and the lower the levels of social trust and civil liberties. For several of the indicators, these correlations also hold over time, suggesting that the relationships may be causal. It seems likely that wide educational disparities generate cultural gaps and competition anxieties which undermine social bonds and trust.

Our research suggests that it is not so much the average level of education in a country which matters most for social cohesion, but rather how the skills acquired are spread around.

Education systems and civic competences

Civic competences are an important component of social cohesion. These refer to the knowledge, skills and values that people need to participate effectively in a liberal democratic society. We examined the links between education system characteristics and the levels and distributions of civic competences across countries.

When compared with comprehensive systems, selective education systems have:

- higher levels of social segregation across classrooms
- greater disparities in civic knowledge and skills and
- larger peer effects on civic knowledge and skills (meaning that the latter are

strongly affected by the social backgrounds and achievement levels of other students in the class).

Implications for policy

We urge policymakers in the UK to take account of the potentially negative impact that educational inequality can have on social cohesion.

Social cohesion in the UK has always depended on high levels of civic participation and a widespread belief in the availability of individual opportunities and rewards based on merit. In the current period of austerity, where opportunities for young people are substantially reduced, there is a serious danger that these shared beliefs will be eroded, thus weakening social bonds. In such circumstances it is particularly important that the education system is seen to offer opportunities for all students.

Reading 5.3

Schooling, social class and privilege

Stephen Ball

This reading illustrates and analyses how social class inequalities are reproduced, in part, by the strategies adopted by some families to secure educational advantage. It suggests that, behind arguments about the efficacy of quasi-markets and choice of school, there are significant social consequences which deepening inequalities within our societies. Ball suggests that parental investment in children by middle-class families, through broadening their experiences and understanding, creates 'abilities' which schools then develop further.

How does this analysis illuminate patterns of attendance and performance at schools you know?

Edited from: Ball, S. (2003) The More Things Change: Educational Research, Social Class and 'Interlocking' Inequalities. Professorial Inaugural Lecture, Institute of Education, University of London. 12 March.

I see sociological theories as a toolbox which provides levers and mechanisms for analysis and interpretation. This is particularly important, I think, in the understanding of social class.

I am interested in the pro-active tactics of certain families as a way of understanding 'success' rather than failure in education. This enables the construction of a theory of privilege rather than a theory of deficits – a distinction which is crucial to my endeavours here.

Class is never more potent and damaging than when inequality is no longer explained in its terms, when classed policy is naturalised, becomes common sense – when class policy is simply good policy. The naturalisation of policy makes possible the tracing back of social problems, and the allocating of blame, to social subjects. This kind of transference is centrally embedded in policies which allocate resources through systems of choice, within which families are expected to act as 'risk managers'. Such choice systems call for particular resources and skills which are unevenly distributed across the population.

If we want to understand the production of social inequalities in and through education we thus need to take families seriously. Greater attention has to be given to the ways in which inequalities are produced in the complex interactions between the cultural, social and material sites of home, school and policy – to the interlocking of inequalities.

Education policy, school choice and social practices

Choice policies and a market system of education, in the current socio-economic context, are a response to the current interest anxieties of the middle class.

In effect education policy is a focus of class struggles: very immediate and down-to-earth struggles for opportunity, advantage and closure, and over the distribution of scarce resources. The policies in play at any point in time bear the hallmarks of those struggles. They may be overt, through campaigns and interventions – particularly those articulated around curriculum, modes of instruction, student grouping and the distribution of rewards and success roles; or through the privileging of opportunity over and against equity; or through the mechanism of the market itself which values some qualities and some kinds of students and devalues others.

The anxieties, concerns and efforts which underlie these struggles are of an enduring nature, but the middle classes are particularly anxious and active. Current social and economic conditions have raised the stakes of competition for educational success; and moves to empower parents have given a specific legitimacy to diverse forms of intervention and participation. For these, middle-class parents possess the relevant skills and resources.

Additionally, there is an overlap of interests from the two sides of the market: parental consumers and school providers.

In a performative system of education, this process is also driven by the differential valuing of students by schools needing to compete within league tables of achievement and to reach exam and test targets. Middle-class students, on the whole, are cheaper and easier to teach in relation to achieving targets and performance improvements, and many schools will do whatever they can to woo them (Woods et al., 1998).

On the consumer side, it is interesting to note examples of the efforts of middle-class parents in socially diverse metropolitan settings to colonise and capture particular schools of choice. Butler and Robson (2001) note examples in their research into gentrification in six London settings. One is a 'success' story in Telegraph Hill, where they report a primary school which has been "'made" by the middle class and transformed'; the second, in Brixton, is, at least for the time being, a failure. Here, despite concerted efforts, 'the middle classes have not been successful in establishing hegemony over any particular primary school'. Ball, Vincent and Kemp (2003) found similar, and successful 'captures' of primary schools, as class 'enclaves', in Stoke Newington and Battersea.

Clearly, in all of this the most distinct and decisive strategy of choice is for private schooling. Private schools offer a cultural milieu which is coherent and undiluted, and constitutes a 'protected enclave for class formation' (Sedden, 2001: 134).

As I have noted already, middle-class families work hard and deploy their resources to establish a monopoly over routes of and locations of privilege, ensuring for their children high-status trajectories through the education system, and insulating them from the untoward influence of social 'others'. This is a process of drawing and maintaining lines of distinction, between and within schools: it is a process of social closure.

Loads of children there had special needs and they have lots of children who are refugees who really didn't speak English, and I just thought, it's not appropriate for a bright little girl who, you know, is going to need quite a lot of stimulation. (*Mrs Henry*)

I liked the fact that they catered specifically for children's abilities in subjects that I think are difficult to teach in a mixed-ability group.... It was one of the points we thought were positive.... They set in maths and languages straight off. (*Mrs McBain*)

The state school down the road would have been lovely, except that *nobody* sends their children there. (*Mrs Henry, my emphasis*)

The 'nobody' referred to in the final extract is striking and telling – the school in question, the 'state school down the road' has children in it, but it is full of 'nobodies', the point is here that 'nobody' is 'not us'. People like us do not send our children to a school like that. It is a school 'of' and 'for' 'others'. These sorts of cultural and calculative evaluations, and their concomitant recognitions and rejections, the 'us's' and 'others', are part of the parents' 'reading' of schools in the process of making choices between them.

Access to routes of privilege and success roles and their associated identities ensures the storing up of valuable cultural capital 'within' the student.

Parenting and investment in the child

Within the educational life of the middle-class family enormous effort is devoted to the assembly and maintenance of a well-adapted educational subject, a 'reasoning and reasonable' child, as Vincent puts it (2001). In a risk society the prudent family can no longer leave their child's fate to the state. This may be thought of as a process of investment in the child and involves the deployment of a range of capitals – economic, social, cultural and emotional – and 'the gratuitous expenditure of time, attention, care and concern' (Bourdieu, 1986b: 253). Let me offer some glimpses of these capitals at work.

A couple of months ago I got a studies skills teacher and I started working, it's through my mum's friends, so I've been seeing this woman weekly, and she's helping me, you know, how to work, when to work and actually getting down and doing it [Anick wants to be a lawyer]. Neither of my parents are lawyers, we have lawyer friends but I mean at school, my parents just saw me, because I argue, they said that would just fit a lawyer.... I think I am going to America this summer. I've got the opportunity of working at McDonald's law firm in Chicago. Because one of my Dad's best friends is head lawyer at McDonalds. So I could go there for a couple of months. (*Anick: Hemsley Girls*)

.... yeah, but A level's beyond my field. A level maths. So sort of like, six months ago we got him a tutor anyway. And he was happy talking to him. So I think he sort of ... LAUGHS ... overcame a lot of the problems. He didn't have many, I must say, actually. But anything he did have, the tutor sorted out with him, and he felt happier doing that than actually speaking to them. And I said – do you want me to talk to them? And he said

no. So I thought I wouldn't interfere, especially as he seemed all right about it. (*Carl's mother; Maitland Union*)

Part of this process of social formation, the support and encouragement, the bought-in expertise and supplementary activities, the long-term sculpting of decision-making, is focused on the child's needs – but it also establishes for the child a sense of their best interests. They are made clear about what is important and possible, and what is not. 'Cultural scripts' are acted out with little scope for improvisation – and where improvisations do occur they can lead to family crises and thence to organised remediation. Again, at these points of crisis and potential failure the deployment of relevant capitals is crucial to the maintenance of trajectories. Emotional resources are particularly important at times of uncertainty (Devine, 1998: 33), but so too is the ability to 'buy in' specialist support or to lobby for special services.

These experiences develop in the child a particular orientation to schooling and develop certain skills and capabilities – a role readiness. They also work to constitute the child as able.

In this sense we can see 'ability' and 'achievement' partly at least as a social assembly achieved within the family, as a collective endeavour, which often extends beyond the family itself (through, for example, the employment of tutors) and requires various forms of capital investment in order to be maintained. This is a point made by Bourdieu: 'ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986b: 244). Viewed in this way ability and achievement can be understood as the composite productions of families, which at times involve enormous emotional exertions and capital expenditures – rather than either a natural or individual phenomenon.

Only a part of this activity is visible in the classroom: the middle-class child in the classroom is in part a cipher of attentive, surveillant, participant parenting – or, to borrow a phrase, 'intensive parenting' – or more often and more accurately 'intensive mothering'. The vast majority of the work of assembly and support is done in the vast majority of middle-class families by mothers. Responsibility weighs heavily on the mother in a whole variety of senses.

In such ways, the values and incentives of market policies being pursued and celebrated by the states of almost all western societies give legitimation and impetus to certain actions and commitments – enterprise, competition, excellence – and inhibit and de-legitimise others – social justice, equity, tolerance.

I am a sociologist and as such, for me, the task is 'to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed; to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such' (Foucault, 1988: 154). 'Thinking otherwise' is thus possible.

Reading 5.4

Disadvantage and low attainment

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

The government report on which this reading is based explores the links between disadvantage and low attainment.

Some of patterns are identified, of which the most salient is that home experiences in the early years lead to significant developmental differences. To avoid a 'continuing cycle of underperformance' it is necessary for teachers to try to offset and compensate for disadvantage – hence recommendations for deployment of the best teachers, maintaining high expectations, working to improve social and emotional skills and maintaining aspirations. Whilst teachers cannot ultimately compensate for society, they can make a difference to the life chances of some pupils, and this reading tries to show how.

Thinking of the children you teach, how might you contribute to closing attainment gaps?

Edited from: Breaking the Link between Disadvantage and Low Attainment, Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). Nottingham: DCSF, 17–23.

For most pupils school is a rich and rewarding experience, but it is an uncomfortable fact that at every ability level in the system, pupils from poor backgrounds achieve less well than their counterparts. The reasons are complex, and not purely linked to money. Of course, absolute levels of poverty may mean children suffer from poor housing or an inadequate diet. But, even in families above the poverty line, parents may be sceptical about the value of education and not see that success at school is important for their children.

There is much that can be done to support schools to address these issues. But real progress in breaking the link between deprivation and low educational attainment relies most of all on the leadership of every teacher in every school, and on their ability to transmit their own passion for transforming opportunity.

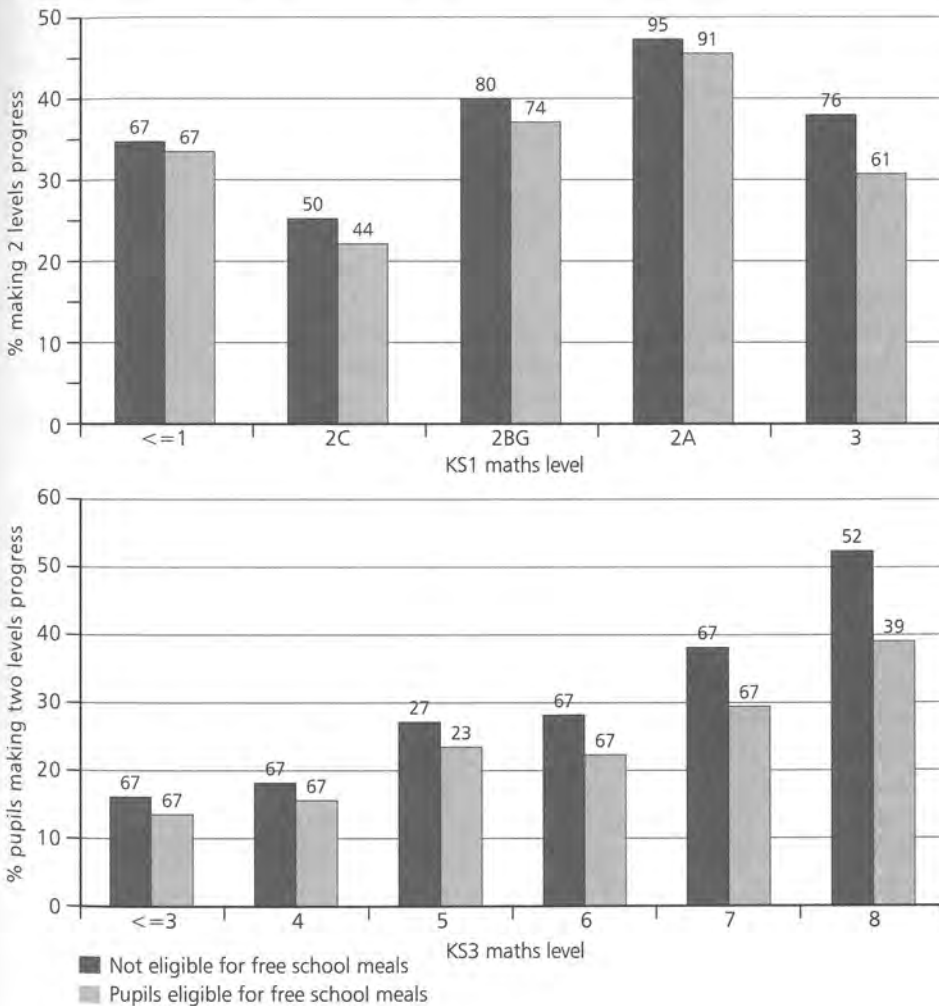
Early years and the home

Even when children are very young, the link between cognitive development and family deprivation is already apparent. For example, research (e.g. Feinstein, 2003) has identified significant gaps in developmental tasks have opened up at 22 months, and the Millennium Cohort Study shows lower vocabulary at age three for children from poorer households. Investment in early years services for children and families such as Sure Start and free nursery education will address these early gaps, and specific new interventions including "Every Child a Talker" are designed to tackle some of the key issues.

Nevertheless, children may not experience the benefits at home which more advantaged children take for granted, for example access to a wide range of books or educational software. Parents want to help their children succeed, but do not necessarily know the best way to do this. We are providing targeted support, for example through promoting family reading and seeking to help parents who may themselves have had a poor experience of schools not to pass on those negative perceptions to their children.

In the classroom

When children start school already behind their peers, this can set up a continuing cycle of underperformance. They find it hard to keep up and so may learn more slowly, hence falling even further behind. Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than others. No



matter what their starting point, disadvantaged pupils are less likely to make two levels of progress between key stages than their more advantaged peers with the same prior attainment. The size of the progress gap differs by prior attainment band. Low attaining disadvantaged pupils typically find it slightly harder to catch up if they fall behind; and high attaining ones typically find it *much* harder to excel. This is why the personalisation approach focuses so strongly on rates of progress, and on all pupils making good progress regardless of the level from which they start. Figure 5.4.1 illustrates this for progress in mathematics.

The best way to ensure that pupils progress regularly is to ensure they never fall behind.

Teachers

The most disadvantaged children need and deserve the best teachers. But this is not just about attracting new people into the profession, it is also about deployment of teachers within a school. Hobbs (2007) found that the quality of teaching and learning in bottom groups contributed to low achievement and low expectations. Where senior leaders are making a difference for all children, they ensure their strongest teachers spend most of their teaching time where they can have greatest impact – often in the lower sets. And they will make sure that practice in the classroom means that skilled teachers focus their efforts on accelerating the progress of those who are struggling.

Ofsted's report (2008), *Twelve Outstanding Secondary Schools: Excelling Against the Odds*, examines the elements that have contributed to their success. It is no surprise that they all have in common well-distributed leadership and outstanding teaching. They also tend to have stable staffing, being successful at attracting, recruiting and retaining staff. Ofsted note that the leaders are driven by a moral purpose, wanting to see other schools' pupils succeed as well as their own.

Behaviour

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) are seven times more likely to be permanently excluded from primary school than those who are not eligible, and three and a half times as likely to be permanently excluded from secondary school. Sir Alan Steer (2009) presented a report highlighting the need for school behaviour policies to be set in the context of policies on learning and teaching. The links between poor behaviour and low attainment are not straightforward, but if pupils are failing to keep up in lessons they can become bored and disruptive, preferring to gain notoriety amongst their friends than admit they do not understand something. Expressing emotion can be a cultural taboo, especially for boys. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds sometimes do not have the skills or self-confidence to deal with criticism or set-backs, which may make them more likely to express denial or to respond negatively and inappropriately when challenged. Programmes such as SEAL address this by helping pupils develop self-belief and to manage conflict.

Outside influences

Aspiration is a key issue: what do young people want to do with their lives, and do they understand how to achieve that? At puberty, the influence of peer groups becomes much stronger which can create a culture of it being “not cool to learn”. Recent research has shown a significant disparity in aspirations, with young people from traditional working-class communities showing less ambition than more recently arrived groups. An intergenerational pattern of worklessness can lead to insularity and low horizons. Schools can begin to change this by providing access to positive role-models from similar backgrounds with whom young people can identify. Schools can also provide a range of experiences, in arts, sport or community volunteering, which gives children a glimpse into other worlds and helps them to find something they can succeed at. And schools are making sure that they all have productive links to business and to Universities, so that young people learn early what is possible for them and are motivated to take advantage of the opportunities.

Schools can make a much wider contribution to a community. For example, schools themselves can have a significant effect on local culture: those which succeed in the most disadvantaged areas respect the local community, employing local people wherever possible, but insisting upon high standards and expectations for everyone.

Schools cannot do this in isolation. We know that teachers, particularly in disadvantaged areas, often spend a lot of time dealing with pupils’ and parents’ wider problems. Extended services can make a big difference: having integrated health and social care on school sites means that problems getting in the way of children’s learning can be more easily dealt with.

Wider opportunities

Ensuring the curriculum is relevant and engaging is, of course, important for all pupils but especially those who have not been well served by the traditional curriculum. A mix of theoretical and practical learning gives an opportunity to motivate pupils and demonstrate the relevance of education to what they want to do in their lives. Many schools are exploring how to improve the match between the basic curriculum and the needs and aspirations of their pupils, extending the range of curricular pathways where possible. They also take every chance to celebrate success, so that pupils can see that they are making progress and have tangible, realistic goals to work towards.

Links to SEN and other additional needs

An FSM child is also more likely to have been identified with special educational needs (SEN). There is a very large overlap between FSM status and either having a statement of SEN. A child who is eligible for free school meals may also come from one of the

minority ethnic groups that underperform compared to the rest of the cohort. There is often an interaction effect between these factors. The interventions which will help a child to succeed are likely to be very similar in each case – a clear assessment of where they are starting from, personalised learning to make sure they have the basic educational and personal skills in place, a rigorous approach to tracking their progress, high aspirations and stretching, relevant targets.

All of this demonstrates why pupils from deprived backgrounds are likely to underperform, and explains why schools should identify and closely monitor the progress of their FSM pupils. The evidence is clear: given two pupils on the same level of attainment who are both performing below expectations, the child from the deprived background is more likely to fall behind.

Symptoms, issues and responses

The chart below summarises the main symptoms and causes of the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, and the strategies which schools and local authorities can adopt to address them:

Figure 5.4.2
The attainment gap: some causes and remedies

Why do disadvantaged children progress less well?	
Some symptoms and issues	School and local authority responses
Cognitive gaps already evident before age 5	Children's Centres, support for families and early reading
Weaker home learning environment	Schools working closely with parents
Lower prior attainment at each Key Stage	Personalisation, progress, 'keep up not catch-up'
Harder to recover from stalled learning	Tracking, early intervention, one-to-one tuition
Quality of teaching for children in lower sets	In-school teacher deployment, training
Behaviour, exclusion and absence issues	Policies on behaviour, exclusion and absence, SEAL, an engaging curriculum
Aspirations, peer influences, "not cool to learn"	Positive role-models, active information, advice and guidance policies
Weak family/community networks	School/cluster/LA action to compensate
Narrow experiences and opportunities	Broader curriculum; extended school services
SEN/disadvantage overlap	Ensure SEN policies focus on progress
Gaps are too often an "invisible issue"	Use new accountability framework

The effects of disadvantage are cumulative and pervasive because poor pupils typically make slower progress than pupils with similar attainment from more affluent backgrounds.

To weaken the link between disadvantage and achievement we must continue to raise attainment overall, *and* accelerate the rate of progress made by the lowest performers. And at the same time we must focus resources on children from disadvantaged backgrounds because without extra help and support they will fall even further behind.

This is not an impossible task. Schools can achieve impressive rates of improvement for children from deprived backgrounds. Nor does it require a whole new pedagogy or approach. Repeated examples show that what really makes a difference is the consistency with which schools engage all their pupils, always being determined to go the extra mile to help them to achieve.

Reading 5.5

Accountability in teaching

General Teaching Council for England (GTC E)

The General Teaching Councils (GTC) of Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland collaborate together and promote the profession in many ways. This reading derives from the swan-song of the English GTC, published just prior to abolition. The importance of school and teacher accountability is affirmed but, it is argued, must be fulfilled in ways which enhance the development of teaching quality rather than undermining it. As a contribution towards this, the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) proposes a 'new contact' between the government and the teaching profession. There are contemporary initiatives to create a Royal College of Teaching in England, and the issues raised in this reading would need to be faced.

What forms of professional representation do you feel are most appropriate in your country?

Edited from: Teaching Quality: Policy Papers, GTCE (2011). London: GTCE, 44–60.

Why does accountability matter?

Education and wider children's services provided by the state are taxpayer-funded; they are complex and require the exercise of both expertise and ethics; what they do is sensitive and can touch on issues of confidentiality and safeguarding. They are political in that they raise questions of entitlement, equity, justice and ideology, about the distribution of resources and the respective roles of the family and the state in influencing children's outcomes. For all these reasons accountability is appropriate, necessary, and highly political.

The case for change

We contend that there are three principal shortcomings of the *status quo* in accountability:

- there is too much of it;
- it does not focus enough on improving teaching quality; and
- it is inadequate to ensure the quality of teaching.

In this section, we will examine each of these in turn.

There is too much accountability

- Excessive accountability can obscure what matters most.
- Too much 'top-down' accountability can inhibit personal responsibility and professional initiative.
- An element of proportionality has been introduced, but not enough.
- The cost of accountability appears to outweigh the benefits, and this is not sustainable in the current economic climate.

'High stakes' institutional inspection may have been a justifiable model at a time when the state lacked comprehensive data on each school and thereby a picture of the performance and range of 'the system'. Although elements of proportionality have been introduced to inspections, there are few substantial changes, in the shape of additional freedoms or opportunities for those schools routinely deemed good or outstanding, or a varied menu of support and challenge for those schools struggling to improve. The economic climate suggests a more nuanced approach is needed, targeting accountability resources carefully in the public interest. The Coalition government has already taken steps in this direction.

The Government is encouraging greater diversity among schools, and the Secretary of State acknowledges that the *quid pro quo* is improved accountability. He also asserts that there will be greater autonomy and more opportunity for the exercise of professional judgement by teachers. If the profession is to respond creatively to these circumstances it needs to feel entrusted and empowered.

But teaching has been caught in what Onora O'Neill termed 'the accountability paradox': the more we want professionalism, the more requirements and systems we pile on a service to 'ensure' standards of practice, the less likely are practitioners to feel and take professional responsibility, as they do not believe they are trusted to deliver appropriately without surveillance and micromanagement. This is but one of the perverse consequences of overlaying new accountability requirements upon old. The accountability to which schools are subject takes many forms and focuses on a very wide range of activities. Typically, new themes are added (community cohesion, healthy lifestyles, partnership working etc) without consolidating them with existing themes. The practice of layering new expectations upon old makes it harder for account-holders (inspectors, School Improvement Partners, line managers) to focus their attention squarely on teaching quality.

Accountability does not focus enough on improving teaching quality

- It does not encourage improvement-focused behaviour – e.g. collaboration.
- It does not contribute as much as it might to the generation of improvement-focused knowledge.

Collaborative work between schools is increasingly important (e.g. delivering a comprehensive 14–19 offer within a locality), as is schools' work with other children's services (e.g. safeguarding, team around the child work). Other developments, including academies and the new teaching schools, depend on partnership in different ways. Collaboration is predicated on transparency; on a willingness to open the doors on one's own practice and be receptive to learning from the practice of others. Institutional accountability is at odds with these developments.

Research into school improvement and effective teacher development emphasises the importance of knowledge transfer between schools, and of learning across schools, as well as within them. Without external links and benchmarks, a school's perspectives on matters such as standards and methods can become parochial and limited. And teachers need to engage with evidence about effective practice that is generated beyond as well as within their schools. For these reasons accountability mechanisms need to support knowledge transfer and system improvement, as well as assuring acceptable standards of teaching, learning and leadership.

Accountability is inadequate to ensure the quality of teaching

- Teachers are not sufficiently required or supported to account for the quality of teaching.
- Accountability is too heavily focused on institutional accountability as distinct from teaching accountability, despite what is known about the extent of in-school variation in teaching standards.
- Successive administrations have tinkered with the scope, frequency and manner of inspection and performance management, suggesting dissatisfaction with the resulting insights into teaching quality.
- Parents and pupils have an insufficient stake in teaching quality.

This set of concerns is at the heart of the GTCE's public interest remit and concern for teaching quality. We therefore now explore more fully stakeholder perceptions of accountability.

Teacher accountability

'Accountability without adequate support and development opportunities serves to undermine teacher confidence and professionalism'.

Teachers as professionals accept the legitimacy of and necessity for being accountable for the results of their teaching. In 2009 the GTCE sought to explore teachers' attitudes to and experiences of accountability through its annual survey of teachers. We found that there was a high degree of support for accountability from teachers.

These responses demonstrate that teachers understand and accept accountability for their work and its outcomes. But school accountability discussions in the media over the last couple of decades, involving teachers, their representatives, successive governments, and at times HMCI, suggest otherwise. Moreover, our research suggests that teachers' first associations with the term 'accountability' tend to be mainly negative: they associate it with sanctions, burdens, centralisation, and mistrust.

It is important to distinguish between the principle of accountability and the practice of specific accountability mechanisms. Doing so provides a more constructive starting point for the negotiation of a new 'contract' between the teaching profession and its stakeholders about accountability. Teachers accept the need for accountability. The question is, what forms of accountability are most likely to realise stakeholders' legitimate aspirations – assurance of standards and conduct, support for improvement, information on pupil outcomes, or guaranteeing proper use of public funds?

Below, we review various mechanisms through which accountability can be realised.

Performance management

As performance management is the principal means by which individual teachers are held to account for their teaching and their pupils' learning in the employment setting, the 2010 GTCE survey asked how teachers experienced performance management. 49 per cent agreed that performance management was an effective way of holding teachers to account for the quality of their teaching, and 32 per cent disagreed. 18 per cent said they neither agreed nor disagreed. School leaders are much more likely than other teachers to believe that performance management is effective for teaching accountability (71 per cent of head teachers, and 60 per cent of deputy/assistant head teachers and Advanced Skills Teachers).

We contend that improving performance management is a priority for ensuring teaching quality and upholding the public interest in teaching.

School self-evaluation

The survey revealed more support for school self-evaluation. 77 per cent of teachers agreed that school self-evaluation was useful, and only nine per cent disagreed that it was a useful tool for improvement as well as accountability.

Agreement was particularly high among heads (91 per cent) and deputy/assistant heads (89 per cent), who have most involvement with school self-evaluation. The Coalition

government has announced an end to the use of a standardised self-evaluation format as part of the inspection process.

External observation of teaching

Research in 2008 suggested that only 25 per cent of teachers were regularly observed – the current picture is not known. The GTCE survey found only 24 per cent of teachers agreed that external observation of teaching should be part of public accountability via inspection. 51 per cent disagreed and 22 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. Younger and newer teachers were less likely to disagree with this proposition.

Providing an account to parents

26 per cent of teachers agree that teachers do not have sufficient opportunity to give parents a full and rounded account of their children's learning. Agreement rises to 31 per cent among secondary school teachers, and to 32 per cent among teachers at schools working with socioeconomic or linguistic challenges. Younger teachers (40 per cent) and those newest to teaching (33 per cent) are also more likely to agree.

Exercising professional judgement

86 per cent of teachers agreed that they needed more opportunities to exercise their professional judgement.

Accountability for professional development

The GTCE's 2010 Survey was conducted at a time when the previous government was considering the introduction of a licence to practise for teachers. The licence was intended to ensure that teachers upheld and enhanced their teaching standards throughout their careers in order to remain registered professionals.

The survey gauged teachers' responses to the proposition that teachers should be accountable for their continuing professional development (CPD) in order to be permitted to practise. 57 per cent agreed and 25 per cent disagreed. Agreement among heads and assistant/deputy heads was stronger (80 per cent and 69 per cent respectively). These responses to the *principle* of revalidation or licensing were more positive than the reception that teachers' organisations gave the specific proposals advanced by the then Government.

The survey found a strong correlation between support for this proposition and environmental factors such as strong opportunities for or engagement with CPD, and good evaluation of CPD impact. This suggests that teachers' views about a licence to practise are likely to be more positive if their access to high quality, good impact CPD is improved. Schools' engagement with CPD – effective or otherwise – is known to be variable.

Here we offer some propositions for the reform of accountability for schools in general

and for teaching in particular. Movement is needed – not only on the part of the government but also on the part of the profession and its stakeholders – in order to arrive at a system *and a culture* of intelligent accountability. School accountability should be a process that provides an authoritative and credible account of teaching quality, and it should result in improvements in children's educational and wider outcomes. What is needed to get there? We make three core propositions, and examine each below.

1 *A new 'contract'*

A new contract needs to be negotiated between the state (or government) representing the community of interest in teaching and the teaching profession. This would not be a contract in the employment sense, but a published memorandum of understanding, governing what stakeholders can expect of teachers and what teachers can expect from their stakeholders.

The contract needs to underpin a more productive, respectful and creative relationship, and an understanding about accountability needs to be at its heart. As we have argued, if the relationship between the state and the profession is not right – for example, if it is overly concerned with compliance, even with regard to demonstrably healthy institutions – accountability is contaminated and ineffective. Reform of accountability means also addressing wider issues of understanding and respect. Teachers have a responsibility to accept accountability, and the state has a responsibility to devise an accountability system that meets the needs of all stakeholders, including teachers.

2 *Teachers should have better opportunities to give an account of their teaching practice*

Teachers should have better opportunities to give an account of their teaching practice, and account-giving should be seen as a right and a responsibility of a professional teacher.

Although many teachers say they experience accountability as a significant burden, many are seldom asked to give an account of their practice – to explain why they opted for one intervention over another, or to describe the thinking behind a particular goal or the steps taken to reach it. We have argued elsewhere for improving the status and quality of pedagogy, or the discipline of teaching. Pedagogic language and dialogue should be a stronger part of teaching accountability. Fine judgements about teaching quality need to be made and should inform improvements in teaching practice.

Performance management and any future system of professional revalidation need to be recast as opportunities for account-giving using pedagogic dialogue. Schools might also want to think about how the routine conversations that occur around progress-checking and target-setting could be recast as opportunities for pedagogic account-giving. In some schools performance management is described as an annual encounter, and something borne by teachers. It needs to be more like supervision at its best in other disciplines. If accountability exposes poor teaching quality, the steps to remedial support and, where necessary, capability procedures

need to be fair but swift. Teacher training needs to develop new entrants with these skills. Conversations between school leaders and SIPs, or between inspectors and teachers, should also have this character.

In terms of the relational nature of accountability, teachers are currently held accountable by proxy through mechanisms that purport to uphold their interests. It is arguable that teachers should be engaged in account giving directly with their primary stakeholders. This notion can raise concerns, conjuring fears of teachers having to justify their practice to those who are insufficiently skilled to make much of the experience, or too partisan to evaluate the account fairly. On balance we believe there is more to be gained than risked by improving face-to-face account giving in appropriate circumstances between teachers and parents or pupils, though the processes and conditions for this would require sensitive design. This implies that the language of pedagogy needs to be accessible to service users (and other children's practitioners), otherwise it risks reinforcing traditional hierarchies and impeding public accountability.

3 *Recasting the stake held by parents and pupils*

The stake held in education by parents and pupils needs to be recast, to improve their opportunities for hearing an account, and their capacity to be productive stakeholders. There are rights and responsibilities associated with being a stakeholder, and sometimes the responsibilities are overlooked. While it is not possible to guarantee that parents and pupils will always use their stake responsibly, it should be possible to devise accountability processes that encourage and support responsible account-holding. The bottom line is that parents' and pupils' stake in teaching is a right, whether or not they hold that stake responsibly. This is the fundamental difference between accountability and responsiveness, the latter being the mode in which many schools conduct their everyday relationships with parents. Responsiveness might be described as meeting the needs of those parents who press for more or different information or engagement. Accountability is what all parents are due regardless of their receptiveness, skill or inclination.