

Explain how the hidden curriculum and processes within schools help to produce inequalities between children of different social classes.

Through many different researches, it has been shown that working class students are underachieving compared to that of their middle class peers. Middle class pupils are obtaining better grades, and more of them are staying on in education past the compulsory age. The difference that is noticeable is that they are from different social class backgrounds, and therefore they are socialised differently. In order to find out more about this, we need to discuss the reasons for differences between the ways in which the different social classes are taught in schools.

The hidden curriculum could be defined as the values that are taught through the attitudes and ideas of the teachers and other students. Often, teachers have a subconscious concept about children from different social backgrounds. This can affect the ways in which the pupils are taught, and their thoughts and motivations about schooling.

Douglas carried out research in 1962, and he came to a conclusion that parental interest was one main factor in the educational attainment of children. He said that if parents were interested in their child's schooling, the child would be encouraged to achieve higher. It was shown; by a process of counting the number of times the parents visit the school to discuss their child's progress, that middle class parents had greater interest in their children's education than working class parents. Middle class parents encouraged their children to work hard and stay on at Post-16. They taught their children things from a very young age, and this included reading and speaking, as well as childhood games and table manners. However, it is suggested that there are reasons why working class parents seem less interested in their children's education. It could be that they are interested, but have more important work commitments; therefore they don't have time to visit the school. Also, the parents may be put off from visiting the school due to the ways in which the teachers interact with them. Teachers are more likely to have a better attitude to parents of middle class than working class, and this may

be putting the parents off visiting the school and paying attention to their child's education.

Many schools have a system where classes are divided into different ability groups. This is known as 'streaming.' Peter Woods is a sociologist, whose research found that, in general, middle class students were placed in higher ability groups, and working class students were in lower groups. Most teachers admitted to having a preference of teaching the higher sets, because the students were better behaved. When educating the lower groups, the teacher often spent more time controlling behaviour, rather than teaching. The lower groups often had an anti-school subculture, in which breaking school rules was regarded as 'cool' by some students. Due to this anti-school subculture and poor behaviour of the lower ability students, the teachers often expected less from them. This led to the students being deprived of higher knowledge and skills that would help them to achieve better grades. They would be placed in lower level exam tiers, making it impossible for them to strive to get higher results. Teachers would begin to have specific ideas about working class students. They would perceive them as bad workers and problem children. This labelling of the students would affect the way in which the teachers act around the students. If one working class student were badly behaved, the teachers would sometimes label any working class student as the same. Often, as a result of this labelling by the teachers, the students began to live a self-fulfilling prophecy. The teachers regarded them as ill mannered and badly behaved. Therefore, the children would believe that this is how they are, thus they act upon it, even if they aren't poor learners.

There is a clear difference between middle and working class jobs. Middle class jobs are usually constantly offering promotions. This means that there is a lot of room for advancements. Also, middle class jobs have regular training sessions, where new skills are frequently taught. On the other hand, working class jobs have no promotions or advancements. Working class children are brought up to be aware of this difference. This leads to them aspiring for different things. They will look for immediate gratification after compulsory education, as they feel that there is no need to stay on. There is no point in staying on if the jobs they will acquire don't involve any upgrades.

There are many reasons for the difference in educational attainment between middle class and working class students. The hidden curriculum and other processes within schools do contribute to this. In particular, teachers' attitudes and the system of streaming are

probably the main school points that significantly make a difference in social class education. However, it is unfair to just limit the reasons to school factors. To make a reasonable conclusion, other factors need to be considered. Some examples are home and living conditions, and the cultures that the student is brought up with. These other aspects also play a part in the difference between the two social classes, and their education.