

EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY

PRAXIS, PRODUCTS AND PALLIATIVES

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to

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of formal schooling in reproducing inequality in our society. It suggests that while schooling is presented as a neutral process it is in fact a political process.

The ideology which underlies the education system is part of a philosophy which promotes competitive individualism. In order to reveal the nature of the political process of Education it is necessary to reveal its ideological basis.

The concept of meritocracy which is central to our education system promotes inequality. Those who are powerful economically and politically can use their power to ensure that their values are the ones which are promoted in society. In this way such groups can maintain their power while apparently justifying it on a rational basis.

The fact that schooling does not value the culture of the working-class, or other minorities has serious consequences for many. It leads to many leaving school without the credentials which are used to obtain access

to the labour market and limits their life chances. This thesis examines this process and suggests that adult education rejects the philosophy which sees education as simply an aid to economic development. The holistic development of the human being involves much more than learning mechanical skills. It is about empowerment and developing critical thinking and awareness.

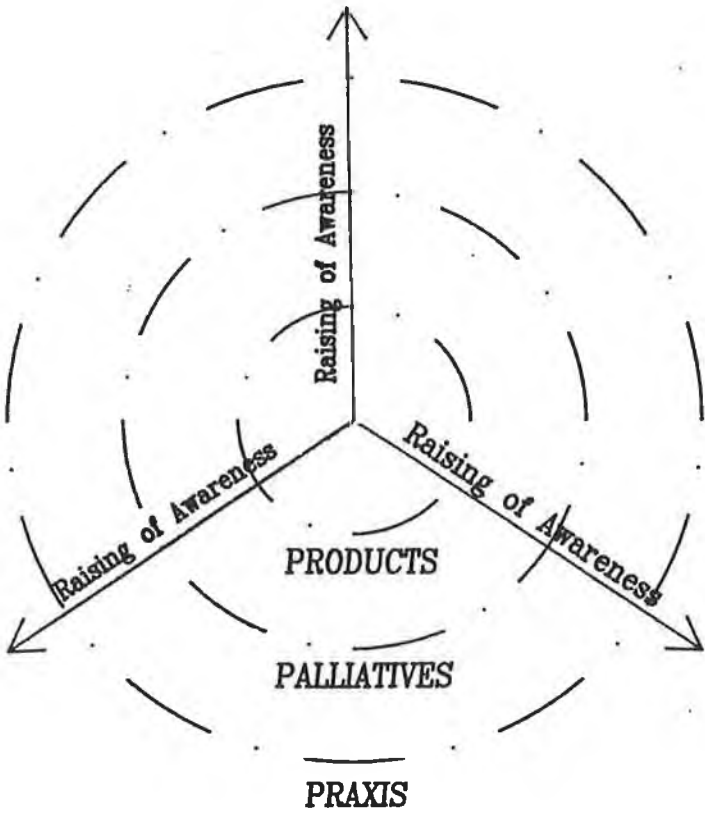
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.	
Title Page	i	
Acknowledgements	ii	
Abstract	iii	
Table of Content	v	
CHAPTER I	CONSENSUS OR CONFLICT	
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Research Methodology	6
1.3	Theories of Sociology of Education	8
1.4	Conclusion	29
CHAPTER II	IDEOLOGY	
2.1	Introduction	31
2.2	Ideology	32
2.3	Hegemony and Human Agency	40
2.4	Knowledge	50
2.5	Conclusion	52
CHAPTER III	LANGUAGE POWER AND SCHOOLING	53

CHAPTER IV	THE ECONOMY, SCHOOLING AND RESISTANCE	
4.1	A Deterministic View of Schooling	69
4.2	The Work of Michael Apple	74
4.3	The Lads	78
4.4	Some Implications for Adult Education	83
CHAPTER V	REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY IN THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM	
5.1	Introduction	88
5.2	Dominant Ideologies in Irish Education.	89
5.3	Class Credentials and Poverty	93
5.4	Second Level System in Ireland	102
5.5	How Particularism and Universalism in Irish Schools contributes to our understanding of the reproduction of inequalities.	110
5.6	Mediators of Educational Services in Ireland.	113
5.7	Gender and Schooling	118
5.8	What Past-pupils felt	128
5.9	Conclusion	132
CHAPTER VI	PRAXIS PRODUCTS AND PALLIATIVES	
	Conclusions	133
BIBLIOGRAPHY		155

To the memory of Carmel my mother and Raymond my father

# ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIES





## CHAPTER I

### CONSENSUS OR CONFLICT

#### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the role of schooling in reproducing the cultural values of the dominant classes and in society. It will aim to show that in valuing one culture more than others schooling will inevitably result in disillusionment for many who do not share the dominant ethos in our society. We will show that schooling assists in maintaining an unequal society. It is not alone working-class pupils who suffer from the effects of cultural reproduction. There has long been a gender bias in our education system, a patriarchy that works to the disadvantage of women generally. In examining education an attempt will be made to explore some of the hidden agendas of schooling. We shall then consider the implications of this analysis for adult education.

Central to this discussion is the question of power and domination. In a modern western democracy it may appear that society arrives at a consensus through genuinely involving all sectors of the population in

decision making. However, a deeper analysis reveals that many groups in society are effectively excluded.

As Lovett has said:

The working class with their value and culture by the very nature of the system are denied access to what are in fact minority controlled institutions and the strengths this could bring to the democracy are effectively blocked. (Lovett T. P. 152).

The process of legitimizing one culture starts at an early age in the school. In modern society cultural domination is achieved by a variety of sophisticated means in what Gramsci, the Italian Marxist called "civil society".

Liberal reformers see the education system as a great opportunity for the creation of a meritocratic society in which each person can fulfill his/her potential. Regrettably there is ample evidence to show that this view has underestimated many key factors most notably cultural issues. Increasingly the educational system is seen as an unequal competition between individuals. The inflation of credentials suggests that the dominant groups in society adapt new ways of maintaining their privileges if they are seriously threatened.

School facilitates the reproduction of the culture of those with power by legitimizing the culture of the dominant and penalizing those who have a different set of cultural values.

This thesis will commence by examining the main traditions in our education system primarily from a sociological point of view. The purpose of this examination is to place in context the views of those who have influenced the development of education and to offer criticism of their views. Chapter two will explore the important issue of ideology. An analysis of this concept facilitates an understanding how the dominant group in society can use education to sustain and legitimize their position. This Chapter also explores an issue of great importance to those involved in adult education, namely the ability of individuals to transform their position by engaging in reflection and transformative action. Chapter III explores the use of language in education to legitimize the position of the powerful and discredit the culture of others. Chapter IV explores conflict theories of schooling with some well known writers on this subject. Chapter V utilizes what has been explored in earlier Chapters to examine inequalities which are reproduced by education in the Irish education system. Finally, Chapter VI

will draw some conclusions for the practice of adult education based on the analysis of the shortfalls of formal schooling. In this Chapter different approaches to adult education will be discussed in the light of what has been discussed in earlier chapters.

In evaluating schooling, the author is informed by the experience of teaching in a community college where the vast majority of pupils are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It has been a disappointing experience for the author to see so many young students demoralized and defeated by the formal curriculum of second level education and by the hidden curriculum of the institution.

This thesis takes the view that any analysis of schooling must be linked to an understanding of society as a whole. Consequently, the author has drawn on a wide body of work, and in particular theorists who have examined the role of culture and ideologies in education.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is of great assistance in helping to develop an understanding of the school's role in legitimizing certain cultures. Bourdieu has also stressed the use of language in the education

system to legitimize a particular culture. Basil Bernstein has done a great deal of work in analysing the different cultural values of working class families and middle class families. His work has been wrongly attacked for suggesting that working class children are culturally deprived. In fact his thesis is that the school does not legitimize the culture of the working class children in the way that it legitimizes middle class culture. He is not suggesting that working class culture is inferior but that it is different.

Paul Willis has been to the fore in examining resistance theories. His studies are useful in understanding why working class pupils opt out of school and why paradoxically their resistance leads many to boring jobs or to unemployment. Kathleen Lynch has examined how the hidden curriculum in schools operates to the disadvantage of many. She has researched how women have been discriminated against by the formal curriculum and has written about the universalistic as well as the particularistic values that schools foster.

Bowles and Gintis have in their well known work Schooling in Capitalist America analysed the relationship between the economy and the school. This

work is a useful starting point for an analysis of schooling from a conflict theorist point of view.

Michael Apple has written extensively on education and he definitely belongs to the conflict theorist camp. This work has moved from being rather deterministic in its early days to having a more holistic view of how schooling works.

## 1.2 Research Methodology

In addressing the main questions which this thesis focuses on, the following research methods have been utilised. This is a qualitative and analytical work drawing on the work of many theorists and writers from a wide variety of disciplines. Educationalist, particularly those radical adult educators such as Freire, Lovett, and Horton have given this thesis its vision for a better world. Sociologists such as Lynch, Bernstein and Bourdieu have placed education in the wider context and examined its role in maintaining an unequal social order. Philosophers such as Gramsci and Althusser have contributed to this thesis by their analysis of ideology and its role in education.

Both primary and secondary sources of information have been utilised. A series of interview with Dr. Kathleen Lynch of the Equality Studies Centre and Anglea Crowley, Chairperson of the National Adult Literacy Agency were arranged for this thesis. Kathleen Lynch has written extensively on the inequalities which persist in Irish society and she has particularly focused on the role of education in maintaining inequality in the areas of class, gender and disadvantaged minorities. Angela Crowley is Chairperson of the NALA the National Adult Literacy Agency, an Organisation which is an outstanding example of radical adult education informed by the work of Freire. She has for many years been to the fore in organising work in this important field.

The staff and students of Bray Adult Education Centre assisted in the analysis of the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme by responding to interviews which facilitated in the formulating of conclusions in this thesis.

In addition to these primary sources of data a short questionnaire was administered to the parent of the first year students of two large but very different second level schools in the greater Dublin area. The

focus was on the parents' perception of their educational experience and the contrast between the two groups. The findings supported those of other more elaborate studies carried out by independent bodies.

A wide variety of secondary sources of information such as journals, papers, books, reports and data from various government departments was also used. In addition studies carried out in Ireland, mainly by the Economic and social Research Institute (ESRI) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) as well as relevant international material was also examined. The thesis is presented in a format which in line with adult educational thinking endeavours to enter into a dialogue between many theorists and writers who seek to advance social justice and equality for all.

### 1.3 A Review of Modern Theories of the Sociology of Education

A review of recent theories in the sociology of education is now carried out in order to facilitate an understanding of their impact in Western society. By examining these theories their ideological content is revealed. These theories which have become accepted and dominant views, reflect a particular ideology



that was not simply concerned with education, but with a view of how society should be structured.

The influence of the United States of America in the western world has led to an acceptance of many of the basic philosophies of that society becoming accepted as correct and valid in many countries in the West, including our own. This ideology involves an acceptance of a hierarchical structure of society. Therefore it is an ideology that attempts to justify inequality. It is interesting to see how it came about that schooling became part of the process of disseminating the ideology of inequality. As society has become more sophisticated, complex, and less homogeneous, it has become more necessary for the dominant elite in society to find more and more sophisticated means of achieving what Antonio Gramsci has referred to as hegemony, that is domination by ideological means of the subordinate classes.

#### **The Functionalist View**

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917) is often seen as one of the founders of sociology. His views on education and society should be viewed in relation to the historical context of his time. French

society underwent rapid change between the end of the Franco-Prussian war and World War One. War, industrialization and social unrest were characteristic of the period.

Undoubtedly Durkheim's experiences of war and social turbulence contributed to his belief in the need for a well-ordered homogeneous society. He wished to see an ordered society which was moral and harmonious.

For him the perfect society was an impossible dream but he did affirm the value of a state of society that was relatively harmonious and in which anomie was restricted to marginal proportions. (La Capra 1972 P.19).

Durkheim saw religion as an important force which could help create a harmonious society, but as society was becoming more secular he saw the role of education as becoming more important in maintaining and transmitting moral values.

Durkheim's search for an equally strong integrative force in modern society led him to see the public school system as the functional alternative to religion for the transmission of values in modern society. (Wallace & Wolfe P.24-25).

It is interesting to note how Durkheim's functionalism, as it was later developed in the United States, tended to emphasise the benefits to the individual of education. By the 1950's the dominance of the

capitalist system in the U.S.A. was undisputed. Educators and industrialists sought to persuade individuals that they could succeed within the system. More emphasis tended to be placed on the individual by American theorists than in Durkheim's Educational philosophy.

Durkheim rejected prevailing philosophies that gave precedence to the individual rather than to society.

In Durkheim's view society existed prior to the individual; it had to be seen as a moral order. Despite the plasticity of human nature, man only became so within and through participation in the social nexus. Even individuality itself is a social creation. (Sharp 1980 P.28).

Social cohesion and morality were therefore central issues for Durkheim and he saw education as being centrally important in transmitting these values.

Durkheim's ideological educational view point therefore can be described as promoting a homogenous society with a strong sense of right and wrong. He saw education as a key instrument in helping to maintain a shared ideological sense of values.

Durkheim's work can be described as the foundation for the structural functionalist approach to education. This approach is often described as a consensus theory to distinguish it from conflict theories that are influenced by Marx and Weber.

It was the publication of Talcott Parsons 'The Structure of Social Action' (1937) that brought Durkheim's work to a wider audience in America. Parsons (1902-1979) was an immensely influential sociologist. Structural functionalism is very much associated with Parsons and his famous graduates such as Robert Merton. After the second world war, the ideology of the United States was challenged by the ideology of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and the West were locked into a war of ideology.

Both countries therefore looked to their systems of education to produce an adequate flow of scientists and engineers, and this added to the traditional concern with 'human resources' which, at least in America dated from the Depression. (Karabel & Halsey 1977 P. 8).

By the 1950's the prevailing orthodoxy in the Sociology of Education in the United States and in many other western countries was structural functionalism. Its focus on social order and shared norms and values suited well the political mood of zealous patriotism in

the United States. Parsons argued that after primary socialisation within the family the school takes over as the main socializing agency. The school prepares the child for the adult world of work. In the family the child is judged in terms of particularistic standards. Parents judge their particular child by standards that they would not apply to everybody. According to Parsons in the world of work individuals are judged in terms of universalistic standards. These standards are applied to everyone. Status in adult life is achieved, rather than ascribed particularly in an advanced industrial society. The school prepares children for the transition from particularistic standards to universalistic standards, and from ascribed status to achieved status. The school is said to operate on a meritocratic principle and apply universalistic standards.

Two values are seen as particularly important in western society (1) Achievement (2) Equal Opportunity. These values have come to be corner stones of our educational system in Ireland.

Schooling facilitated the dissemination of the ideology that claimed to offer everyone equal opportunity of

success based on merit. Bowles and Gintis (1976) quote President Johnson:

... the answer for all our national problems comes down to a single word: education. (Bowles and Gintis 1976, P19).

By making such extravagant claims for education those in power could offer hope and comfort to society. In this way analysis of inequality was not encouraged. There was no need to question the inequalities in society because education would do away with them. If the individual failed to take advantage of education then he/she could only blame him/herself.

In 1962 the American Burton Clark published a book under the title Educating the Expert Society in which he put forward an account of what is sometimes called technological functionalism.

Clark declared that, "Our age demands army upon army of skilled technicians and professional experts, and to the task of preparing these men the educational system is increasingly dedicated" (1962:3). Seen in this light, the expansion and the increasing differentiation of the educational system were inevitable outcomes of technologically determined changes in occupational structure requiring even more intricate skills. (Karabet & Halsey 1979, P.9).

Parson's view that schooling should be based on the meritocratic principle encouraged the belief that the

individual should invest in education. Functionalism was now encouraging individuals to compete for the spoils of credentials. There was little questioning of the concepts of valid knowledge. The idea of meritocracy was seen as offering each person a fair chance to higher income and prosperity. The move towards an ideology of competitive individualism had progressed. Durkheims concern for social responsibility was no longer centre stage. Instead the ideology of achievement based on 'merit' meant individuals competing fiercely against each other. Individualism meant more competition in the name of achievement. Compassion for others would have to be diluted in order for the individual to achieve. Yet this was in keeping with functionalism in so far as it fitted an overall view of a homogeneous capitalist system. Schooling has a role to play in creating the hierarchy and so helps promote inequalities.

#### **Human Capital Theory**

The huge expansion of educational services after World War II was expensive and it involved large public expenditure. Theodore W. Schultz's Presidential address to the American Economic Association (1960) set

out the basic philosophy of many involved in educational issues at this time.

His message was a simple one: the process of acquiring skills and knowledge through education was not to be viewed as a form of consumption, but rather as a productive investment. (Karabet and Halasey 1977 p.12).

As Karabet and Halsey (1977) point out, the concept of education as an investment was in keeping with the political ethos of the time. Individuals could look forward to increasing their earning potential by increased education. Universities could justify their expansion by claiming that the economic development of the country required more graduates. Education was seen as a form of capital that would yield results for the individual and the economy. This theory of human capital was complementary to technological functionalism. On the one hand technological functionalism claimed to promote meritocracy and on the other the human capitalists promoted competitive spirit and combated under-investment.

In Ireland this view was expounded in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) supported Investment in Education Report (1966). As Lynch (1989) states:



The concept of meritocracy in fact became the guiding principle for educational change in the 1960's. (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984: 22-8). Equality of educational opportunity was defined in meritocratic terms by the policy makers themselves. The logic was: economic growth depends on educational investment; educational investment means developing the talented few; and the talented are those with narrowly defined intellectual abilities.

(Lynch 1989: P150)

While the individual is emphasised, in this theory the values that the individual is encouraged to pursue are consonant with the functionalists view of society.

#### Criticism of the Functionalist theory of Education and Human Capital Theory.

The functional theory of education is now seriously questioned. Many theorists criticise it for its basic belief that society is homogeneous and that universalistic standards are used to judge students. In a complex industrial society there are inevitably different interest groups. These groups often have very disparate values and needs. The suggestion that the education system should apply one set of universalistic standards means that the standards are inevitably culture bound and class-bound. The functionalists assume that the values and norms transmitted by schools are shared by all members of society rather than those of the dominant class.

Recent studies carried out by Bourdieu, Bernstein and Willis to name but a few challenge this assumption.

Randall Collins vigorously criticized the technical functional theory of education in an article entitled "Functional and Conflict theories of Educational Stratification" (1971). In this article Collins produces a great deal of evidence which challenges many of the major assumptions of technical-functionalism. Collins argues that the evidence at that time did not support the hypothesis that there was a big increase in the number of jobs requiring more skill as technical functionalists suggested. His evidence suggests that people were over educated for many jobs. He cites a study by Folger and Nom (1964) which showed that the bulk of educational upgrading had occurred within job categories. Once again in Ireland as in many western countries it is alleged that the workforce lack skills and hence are unemployable. (Culliton Report 1992). Yet many highly skilled graduates from universities cannot find work in Ireland.

Collins also challenges the view that more education will lead to a more productive workforce. He cites evidence summarized by Berg (1970) regarding the contribution of education to individual productivity.

It indicates that better educated employees are not generally more productive, and are in some cases less productive over a range of occupations sampled. With regard to vocational courses Collins cites evidence to suggest that "Vocational education in schools for manual positions is virtually independent of job fate." He also cites studies to show that skilled manual workers acquire their skills on the job (Clark and Sloan 1963;73).

Raftery and Hout (1993) have carried out a study of the effect of social origin on educational transitions for the 1908-1956 birth cohorts in Ireland. They found no necessary connection between meritocracy and equality among social classes. They found that class difference in education has reduced over the period but this was related to the huge increase in the capacity of Irish secondary schools.

The equality of outcomes increased not because merit replaced class in the selection of who got ahead, but because selection itself diminished. More pupils went on to secondary education under the same pattern of class selectivity as before, but by increasing a greater absolute number, the educational system gave rise to a greater equality among the social classes. (Raftery and Hout 1993 P.60).

Raftery and Hout conclude their study by referring to the fact that social class was still a substantial factor in educational attainment even after 1959.

Perhaps more importantly, the approach to equality was made without any increase in the importance of meritocratic selection at any of the crucial educational transitions. Irish education simply became less selective. In the process, the upper and middle classes lost some but not all their competitive advantage. (Ibid. P.61).

Westergaard and Reseer (1975, P324-6) have suggested that gains made by the widening of education as an avenue of ability have been counteracted by contraction in other traditional channels of mobility such as independent entrepreneurial bureaucratic hierarchies. Individualism is a feature of Human Capital Theory of Education. D. Hargreaves claims that

Our educational system is so deeply imbued with and obsessed by what I shall call the cult of individualism that the social functions of education have become trivialized. (Hargreaves, 1980 P.187, original emphasis).

Hargreaves is a follower of Durkheim and he shows his concern for solidarity within society. He believes that as humans we have moral responsibilities that relate to our membership of society.

Education should therefore emphasise our social responsibilities. He claims that because schools deny young people shared experiences they are forced to find them outside the school, sometimes in rebellious youth culture.

### Meritocracy

The work of 'equality empiricists' (i.e. those who undertook major empirical studies demonstrating the existence of educational inequalities) is often associated with meritocratic views of education. Equality empiricists carried out large research projects into educational inequality in the 1960's and 1970's. A basic assumption of these theorists was that inequality in education could be removed if resources were channelled into education, particularly education of the underprivileged. The view was that schooling would ensure the social mobility of those with 'talent'.

A feature of meritocracy is that it is based on a belief in I.Q. theories. Michael Young (1961) in his satirical book describes merit as the sum of I.Q.+ effort. (I.Q. + effort = Merit).

I.Q. theories have been discredited by a large number of studies which show these tests to be culture bound. To quote from Simon regarding these tests.

We have seen that these questions inevitably favour the middle-class child and that it is the questions and only the questions that determine and define the kind of "intelligence" that is being measured. (Simon B. 1978, P.64).

Attempts are made to develop 'common culture' tests but there is bound to be some degree of subjectivity in any selection for tests. Therefore as Simon states:

...the search for a culture-free test is obviously a chase after a will-o'-the-wisp. (Ibid. P.80).

Lynch (1985) argues that the 'effort' part of the above equation is also based on subjective ideas of assessing pupil behaviour and is therefore unsatisfactory.

Satisfactory classroom behaviour as judged by teachers is a highly subjective mode of assessing pupil effort; in particular it is likely to be a class biased measure. (Lynch K. 1985 P.85).

She goes on to criticise the idea of Meritocracy because it legitimizes the existence of social and economic hierarchies in our society. Meritocracy suggests that talent is scarce and that those who possess talent should be differentially rewarded in

order that they are motivated to do the difficult jobs that require these talents.

Of course, as it is those who are already in power in society (in educational institutions, professional associations, etc.) who define which jobs require special talents and what these talents actually are it is of no great surprise to find that the jobs that are defined as needing the scarce talents (and by implication which must be the most highly rewarded) are those which they already occupy themselves!. (Ibid. P.87).

As Lynch points out there is limited room at 'the top' of the hierarchy of occupations. Therefore it is illogical to suggest that, even if a person who has talent and makes the effort he/she can obtain a suitable job. She points out that a number of studies in Ireland in the 1980's have found that there is a high probability that children from the higher socioeconomic groups will get a disproportionate number of the more valuable (third level) credentials in the first place. This again highlights the importance of other factors such as the cultural background of the pupils.

These criticisms, supported by a wide body of evidence have undermined the theory that a meritocracy actually exists or indeed that the concept itself is just.

## Conflict Theories of Education

The roots of conflict theories of education can be traced back to Weber and Marx. This thesis will explore in detail many of the theories developed by neo-Marxist educators, as they appear to have developed theses which analyse how education and equality are related more thoroughly than other schools of thought. The advanced industrial economies are characterized by rapid change. This change is the result of innovation in technology and changing patterns of work and leisure. The great affluence of some sections of the population and the continuing poverty of other sections inevitably results in tensions. Society cannot be described as homogeneous now if it ever could be. Karabel and Halsey (1979) point to another reason why, since the 1960's, there has been such a large amount of research in this area.

...there was a yearning for a theory in the sense of a powerful and holistic principle capable of interpreting the complexity of a world that seemed everywhere to fail to realize its declared ideals. (Karabel and Halsey 1979; P.31).

In the 1960's the civil rights movement led to a reassessment of many previously accepted assumptions concerning the fairness of the American system. Many



minorities did not seem to be partaking in the system. Meritocracy did not seem to function when it came to many who could only hope to be at the bottom of the hierarchy of society.

It was the Coleman Report (1966) which helped start a debate about the underlying ideology of the education system. Coleman's report was a huge study and its findings caused a great deal of surprise. He found that many students particularly blacks and other economically disadvantaged groups were not benefiting from the investment in education despite the fact that there were plenty of resources invested in their schools. The question arises that if it is not a lack of monetary resources, then what is the reason for the lack of participation and success of many in the system? This immediately opens up the whole question of the ideological assumptions of meritocracy in education and society. If the basic ideological assumption regarding schooling was false then many are being misled into believing that the school could be their pathway to a better life.

Questioning the basic ideology of the system leads to questions concerning a system that does not value different types of cultures. It is time to acknowledge

the fact that cultural differences between groups have been used to legitimize injustices. In countries such as South Africa, ethnicity was used to justify the ideology of apartheid. In Ireland, the cultural differences of the travelling community are used for a variety of discriminatory practices. For this reason some individuals motivated by a genuine concern to combat right wing ideologies concerning superior cultures have tended to promote universalistic standards that seek to treat everyone as equal and deny cultural differences. But in education the culture of the school may well be more in keeping with the ideology of dominant groups. In such a situation to deny the existence of cultural differences can facilitate discrimination by ignoring the advantages that those of the dominant culture and ideology have over subordinate groups. The analysis of conflict theorists has shown the link between formal education and the cultural and social reproduction of society with all its inequalities and continuing injustices. For this reason these theories are invaluable in informing educators who seek to use education as an agency for the transformation of society.

These theories inevitably lead to the question of ideology and its role in the maintenance of society as

it currently exists. Conflict theories of education can inform those involved in education of both the possibilities of utilizing education as a means for creating a more just society and the danger of allowing education to become an institution that also helps to maintain what Gramsci calls the hegemony of the dominant class. As Apple states

... The overemphasis on the individual in our educational, emotional and social lives is ideally suited to both maintain a rather manipulative ethic of consumption and further the withering of political and economic sensitivity. (Apple, 1979; P.10).

Education is often claimed to be a neutral in political terms. Conflict theorists show this is just not true. The ideas that we take for granted regarding the 'neutral' content of the curriculum are part of the ideology of education that thereby legitimize, what Bourdieu calls 'symbolic violence.'

The failure of the education system to achieve many of its aims as set out by the functionalists has been highlighted in the large number of pupils who leave the system without completing second level education. Even the basic concept of meritocracy which in itself promotes inequality has not been achieved in practice. The inequalities which are ingrained in society cannot

be relieved by simply aiding disadvantaged pupils. The structural inequality of society inevitably leads to an analysis in terms of conflicting interests and social justice.

In recent times there is a new emphasis from those on the right on the need for education to tailor its curriculum to the needs of industry. There can be no doubt that in times of mass unemployment educators are under enormous pressure to succumb to the pressure of politicians who seek to blame the school for society's failure. Furthermore adult educators are under pressure to participate in programmes that are an extension of the formal education programme with its emphasis on individualism. This philosophy is one that views education as a commodity. Individualism is promoted with all its selfish acquisitive features. If the individual fails he/she is at fault.

Conflict theories of education help to strip off the facade of neutrality that the school portrays. These theories reveal that the school is part of a larger system rooted in an unequal and unjust economic order.

#### 1.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, the ideological bases of the dominant sociological views of education have been revealed. The notion that the education system is neutral and interested in only promoting neutral knowledge has been challenged. The meritocratic ideology of the West, combined with an extreme form of individualism is still dominant in our education system. We have seen that in the late 1960's this ideology was challenged and since then much useful insight into what actually happens in school has been gained by those who have denied the validity of a consensual theory of schooling. These theories insist that conflict and contestation occur in school. Those who are in control seek to deny the right of subordinate groups to validly contest the abuse of such power.

There has been a great deal of reference to ideology. In the next chapter we shall attempt to provide a more complete theoretical examination of concepts such as ideology, and hegemony. The important question of the individual's ability to take control of his/her reality and seek to change for the better his/her position. This means looking at philosophical issues concerning our ability to constitute our own reality. If as some

If as some suggest that our reality is dependent on our relationship with the economic system, can we as teachers and students engage in emancipatory pedagogic action? Central to the question of whether or not schooling helps to perpetuate and reproduce dominating ideologies is the issue of human agency. Exploring these issues will enable us to understand how schooling can act in ways which confirm the dominant ideology and it can offer insight into how education can become a force that will emancipate both those who are dominated and those who dominate.

## CHAPTER II

### IDEOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

Adult education cannot be looked at in isolation from the formal education system. Much of the work of adult educators is concerned with the 'failings' of the school system. We suggest here that the reason why so many people get little out of the formal education system is because of its ideological basis. This ideology is based on competitive individualism. Those who do not 'measure up' in the school are 'cooled out'.

An analysis of ideology will provide us with a conceptual framework by which we can evaluate our educational system and the theories and criticisms put forward by a variety of thinkers who are dissatisfied with the current paradigm. In order to develop strategies for emancipatory pedagogies, as adult educators, we need to be aware of what those who quit school early have been through.

## 2.2 Ideology

The term ideology is used in a variety of contexts. The word itself in its modern meanings originated during the French Revolution where a centre of revolutionary thought was founded and located in the Institut de France. To this group of people the term ideology was first applied.

We have seen in the previous chapter that educational policy has been shaped within the context of the social and political views that are dominant at a particular time. In this sense educational policy has been ideological. Indeed education is often seen as a crucial means of disseminating values. We have only to examine how the Catholic Church has fiercely resisted attempts to dilute its power in the Irish educational system to highlight the importance many attach to schooling as a means of maintaining power and influence. We may feel that as we mature we can reassess and even abandon the ideologies that have influenced us as students. We may decide to leave the church and develop new ways of seeing our reality. Yet in subtle ways the ideology we think we have abandoned can influence us. We may hear a church bell and recall something a priest said to us in school. We may pass a school and feel guilty about not fulfilling the



expectations that a teacher had for us. In many subtle ways old ideologies linger and become part of our common sense view of the world. An examination of what ideology is and how it operates is required to understand how it can influence us. The concepts we use influence how and with what degree of sophistication and innovativeness we comprehend reality and challenge ideas that empower a few but enfeeble the many.

It is Marx and the Neo-Marxists who have developed the concept of ideology most clearly.

Raymond Geuss states:

The very heart of the critical theory of society is its criticism of ideology. Their ideology is what prevents the agents in society from correctly perceiving their true situation and real interests; if they are to free themselves from social repression the agents must rid themselves of ideological illusion. (Geuss 1981 P.2-3).

The word ideology may be used in a descriptive sense.

As Geuss says:

In this broad and rather unspecific sense of ideology every human group has an ideology - the agents of any group will have some psychological dispositions, use some concepts, and have some beliefs. (Ibid. P.5).

In order to describe the group's ideology in this sense it is necessary to describe the areas of diversity and conflict as well as the shared values. This sense of ideology is non-evaluative and non-judgmental.

Yet another way of looking at agents' beliefs is attributed by Geuss to Habermas. Agents' beliefs can be subdivided into ideologies on the basis of their content e.g. religious or economic belief, and they can be classified according to their functions i.e. the way they influence action. Often there is a close relationship between these two senses but Geuss states that the distinction is important.

... It is important to retain the distinction because some of the most interesting cases will be ones in which there are significant differences between the manifest content of the beliefs in an ideology and their functional properties - a set of 'religious and philosophical' beliefs about the nature of the goods may actually serve to regulate economic and political transactions. (Ibid. P.9).

In schools religious beliefs can be used by teachers to maintain order and discipline. A teacher may have no belief in God but use symbols and religious beliefs to frighten and subdue pupils. In order to get pupil's attention it is common in some religious schools to start the class with a short prayer. This has the effect of quietening the pupils and at the same time it



appears to be a sincere expression of the religious ideology of the school.

Using this view of ideology it is possible to see how a philosophy of education may serve economic interest in a functional manner. A group may also have an ideology in the sense of a 'world-view.' In this sense there are certain views that are widely shared among the agents and these views are of particular importance to the group.

In Chapter One, we saw how those who wrote about and controlled the education system had a 'world view.' Durkheim, Parsons, Merton and others had a definite view of what society should be like. Education was a means of achieving this world view. In general the world view that has been disseminated in America has been very influential in the West. Furthermore its emphasis on the freedom of the individual has been consistent with the views of Christian Churches which emphasise the importance of each individuals' salvation. Competitive individualism and meritocracy are ideological view points that are part of the capitalist world view.

It is, perhaps, ideology in the pejorative sense that we most often see used in Marxist theories. In this

sense agents are perceived as suffering from a state of false consciousness. They are deluded about their interests, their society and their position in it.

Geuss puts forward three situations which result in a form of false consciousness.

- a. A form of consciousness is ideologically false by virtue of some epistemic properties of the beliefs which are its constituents;
- b. A form of consciousness is ideologically false by virtue of its functional properties;
- c. A form of consciousness is ideologically false by virtue of some of its genetic properties.

There are many examples of forms of consciousness that can be described as ideological under category (a) above. If a value judgment is presented as a statement of fact it is ideological. Schools may for example insist that female pupils wear skirts and not trousers on the grounds that it would be less feminine if a girl wore trousers. This value judgment can be presented as

a fact to justify it, and would therefore be ideological. Again if the interest of a subgroup is presented as being the interest of the entire group then this is ideology. The use of self-fulfilling beliefs to justify action which would otherwise not happen is a form of false ideology.

Geuss describes forms of consciousness that are ideological by virtue of the function these play "in supporting, stabilizing or legitimizing certain kinds of social institutions or practices." The schools support for the ideology of meritocracy would be an example. This is similar to the view that Gramsci has of hegemony. Geuss also points to false forms of consciousness which serve to mark social contradictions an ideology.

The third category of false consciousness above is one that is false by virtue of its genetic properties. Geuss suggests this can occur where a person adopts a habit but the agent is unable to acknowledge the reasons or motives for the habit.

This presumably means if the agent had to recognise and acknowledge that these were the motives, they would thereby be no longer motivated as strongly as they were to continue to accept the ideology, but they would see that there was no reason for them to accept it. (Ibid. P.21).

A Career Guidance teacher might for example tend to encourage boys more than girls to take higher level mathematics without reflecting on the implications of this habit. These then are three categories of ideology in the pejorative sense by which we may criticise a form of consciousness because, as Geuss states;

...it incorporates beliefs that are false or because it functions in a reprehensible way or because it has a tainted origin. (Ibid. P.21).

It is in this pejorative sense that the term ideology is most often used in theorising on the link between education and society. Bowles and Gintis (1976) suggest education and society function in a deterministic fashion. The economic base and the individual's relationships to it determines what type of education the individual receives. Ironically the working-class are propping up a system that discriminates against them and their children. School helps to reproduce the system with its inequality. The failure of the working class to see this, is an example of what Marx means by the sense of false consciousness of the working class that is induced by the dominant ideology.

Althusser sees schools as performing a crucial role as part of the ideological repressive state apparatus. He identifies other crucial institutions to be the family, the legal system, the church and trade unions. All of these are utilized by the state to maintain the capitalist system. However in Althusser's view the individual is very passive. He denies that the individual can overcome the ideological values that have penetrated his/her consciousness.

More recent Neo-Marxist writers have emphasised the resistance of individuals and dominated groups to the dominant ideology. We shall examine their contribution to the understanding of what schooling does and its role in reproducing dominant ideologies. Michael Apple for example acknowledges the power of ideology but he warns that taking too great a deterministic view is in fact "an aspect of an effective dominant culture". (Apple 1979 P.161).

In the next section of this chapter we shall engage in a debate with many thinkers on the issue of whether or not the individual is a free agent capable of constructing his/her own reality or whether or not the individual is trapped in a world where super-structures and dominant ideologies mean that schooling will simply

maintain and legitimize the power of the dominant over the dominated.

### 2.3 Hegemony and Human Agency

It was the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who developed the concept of a dominant ideology. Marx had spoken of ideology as false consciousness.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every approach the ruling ideas; i.e the class that is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.. so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it...  
(Marx and Engles 1976 PP 59-60).

From this concept of a dominant ideology Gramsci developed his theory of hegemony.

The ruling class maintains its position in two ways, through domination/coercion and through intellectual leadership.

As Femia states:

Social control, in other words, takes two basic forms: besides influencing behaviour and choice externally through rewards and punishments, it also effects them internally by moulding personal convictions into a replica of prevailing norms. (Femia 1981 P.24)



Gramsci maintained that 'civil society' was the means through which hegemony was achieved. While there are various interests in society, it is possible for a dominant ideology to become so powerful that it can successfully counteract any disruption from conflicting interests. The ideas of the dominant class are disseminated by a wide variety of bodies such as schools, the media, the legal system etc. Gramsci was concerned with why people consented to accepted views that clearly were not in their interest.

Civil society then is the site where tensions between various subgroups, relating to economic, political and ideological matters are resolved. The relationships in civil society are ones of power just as much as are the more overtly coercive forces of the state.

Education is an important part of civil society and in Gramsci's view it is used to maintain an ideological control of the working class.

Louis Althusser believes that the individual is constituted by ideology. Abercrombie et al. point out.

For him, therefore, ideology works by constituting individuals as subjects of the social structure, as subjects that bear functions within that structure, while apparently giving a unique individuality to each subject: 'the individual is

interpellated as a free subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandment of the Subject i.e. in order that he shall freely accept his subjugation (Althusser, 1977, P.169 original emphasis). (Abercrombie et al P.22)

Althusser's view is that the individual is moulded by ideology which at the same time conceals this fact from the individual.

Althusser's work is a useful reminder of how difficult it is to bring about change. Education in his view will not bring about social change. Yet his analysis underestimates the struggle of individuals and groups everywhere to overcome harmful ideology and to advance social justice.

Humanist Marxists such as Gramsci, Lukacs and Sartre have a different view of the individual. Gramsci's view on the role of ideology greatly influenced Althusser. Both share common ground on the role of ideology in maintaining the capitalist system. But Gramsci's view of the individual as being capable of acting as a free agent is anathema to Althusser.

Gramsci's view of human nature therefore is essentially more optimistic and philosophical than Althusser's. He emphasises both the constituted and the constitutive aspects for human agencies of change in Marx's work.

Humanist Marxists are against any deterministic or functionalist account of the social world. As Femia states:

Underlying Gramsci's entire critique was his desire to restore the possibility of conscious, creative human activity in the historical process. On the most fundamental level, he took issue with the passive materialism of the scientific Marxists. For Gramsci the human mind is neither a mere network of physical components and a process nor an inert receptacle of sense impressions; it is an active, transforming agency. (Femia, 1981 P71).

Gramsci was very influenced by Marx's critique of Feurbach. In his "Eleventh Thesis on Feurbach" Marx states.

...the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it. (Cited in Gouldner 1980 P.33).

Gramsci, therefore, is a believer in praxis, that is reflection and action aimed at bringing about the revolutionary state.

The Marx that Gramsci emphasises is the Marx who emphasises the humanity of the individual, i.e. the ability of the individual to act freely.

Gramsci was very active in politics and clearly believed in struggling to win the support of the people

and to make the proletariat aware of the false ideology that was deceiving them.

It is the theory of Praxis which contributes to emancipation that Gramsci, Sartre and other humanist Marxists believe in. This is why Gramsci writes about education and the role of intellectuals. He sees education as an area in which the different interests of the classes can be contested. Gramsci places great emphasis on culture, ideology and politics. His concerns with these issues reflect his belief in the creative possibilities of the individual. This too is the concern of adult education.

Pierre Bourdieu the French Socialist was originally viewed as a structuralist but his work has advanced beyond this position. Certainly his analysis has moved from analytical models constructed from cultural rules that are said to govern our behaviour to "an emphasis upon the generation and pursuit by actors of strategies" (Jenkins P.45).

In his epistemology, both structuralism and existentialism (i.e. objectivism and subjectivism) have something positive to offer in our understanding of reality. Social life is too fluid to be governed in a deterministic way. Yet each of us is moulded by the

capitalist system which dominates our lives. It is wrong to view conscious intentions as a sufficient explanation for what people do.

It is this attempt to tread a dialectical middle way or third path between the theses and antitheses of objectivism and subjectivism that distinguishes Bourdieu's project. (Jenkins P.51).

Bourdieu focuses on the visible world of practice. He attempts to build a theoretical model of social practice and to take into account the wider patterns of social life. In Bourdieu's view while the practice of doing is not wholly organised it is not just random or accidental.

There are two sides to this practical sense the first of which is the necessity imminent in the social world. This can be interpreted-in-part as a restatement of Marx's adage that, although men make their own history they do not do so in circumstances of their own choosing. It is also, however, a comment upon the fact that actors do not just confront their current circumstances. They are an integral part of those circumstances. Within them they have grown up, learning and acquiring a set of practical cultural competencies, including a social identity, the sense of the position one occupies in social space - which renders them largely incapable of perceiving social reality in all of its arbitrariness, as anything other than the way things are, necessary to their own existence as who they are. (Jenkins P.70).

Generally, people take their social world for granted. Freire in this analysis of people's acceptance of their reality stated;

The peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realises that he is dependent. Until then, he goes along with the boss and says 'What can I do? I'm only a peasant. (Freire 1972 P.37).

Learning the practices of our culture begins in childhood, in the home and later in the school. Certain practices become 'second nature' to us. Gramsci also refers to the manner in which certain views are seen as "common sense". These views are seldom examined critically.

Individuals may flatter themselves that they are rational and in control of their world. This Bourdieu claims is an illusion. The individual is constrained by dispositions which he/she has learned consciously and unconsciously. He is very critical of the education system which he feels helps maintain the hegemony of the dominant class.

Bourdieu's emphasis on the use of language to create the subject is an important reminder for educators of the importance of language in validating each individuals' own self-esteem. Too often in school the culture of the dominant groups is the only culture

validated. Consequently those who are alienated turn to more extreme forms of culture to express their revolt. Often they turn to violence and nihilism as the only way they can express their anger at their isolation.

Michael Foucault is sometimes categorised as a post-structuralist. Unlike leading post-modernists such as Jacques Derrida, Foucault's position on the idea of the 'subject' and agency is more like that of humanists such as Freire or Habermas. In an interview he stated,

My role - and that is too emphatic a word - is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes that have been built up at certain moments during history and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people - that's the role of an intellectual. (Ball, s, 1992 P.2).

For Foucault the subject is dominated by structures, but with knowledge, it is possible to 'deconstruct' the power systems and the interests that lie behind them. Foucault recognises that for many it is very difficult to 'deconstruct' these structures because many people service their interests. We shall return to Foucault's concepts of power, discourse and language when we examine in some detail the way in which the school can act as a structure for cultural domination. His work

is consonant in this respect with the work of Bourdieu and Bernstein. Henry Giroux supports the view that human agency can act to create a more just society. He acknowledges the difficulties of countering a dominant culture but he feels radical teachers can engage in emancipatory pedagogic action.

It is precisely because there is room for struggle and contestation in schools around culture and ideological issues that pedagogues can be developed in the interest of critical thinking and civic courage. (Giroux and Aronowitz 1986 P.133).

Paulo Freire in his writing clearly sees the individual as being capable of transforming his/her reality through reflection and action. In Pedagogy of The Oppressed (1972) and in Cultural Action for Freedom (1970) he outlines his belief in the individual's ability to reason, reflect and to transform the world. In this sense Freire's view of people is, like Sartre's essentially optimistic. He would therefore profoundly disagree with Althusser's view of the individual.

To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without men (Sic) (Freire 1972 P.27).

Freire's view belongs to a philosophical, humanistic tradition. Like Foucault he believes that true knowledge can allow the subject to reveal the



oppressive forces of structures which dehumanise. Freire however does not underestimate the difficulty of transforming relationships that cause domination. Freire seeks through an educational process involving dialogue to transform the world. This involves the process of conscientization.

'Conscientization' is viable only because men's consciousness, although conditioned, can recognise that it is conditioned. This 'critical' dimension of consciousness accounts for the goals men assign to their transforming acts upon the world. (Freire 1972b P.54).

In this section we have engaged in a dialogue with philosophers who have divergent views concerning the individuals ability to transform his/her ability. There are those like Athusser who see education as a repressive force which helps the state maintain the existing hegemony. Others like Habermas, Gramsci and Freire believe that individuals can transform their world by reflection and action. Adult educators have a tradition of supporting the view that individuals and groups can transform their reality. This involves coming to a critical awareness of how their reality has been constructed and taking action based on this knowledge to bring about change.

The ideology of the formal school means that it is unlikely to be a site in which teachers and pupils will engage in the creation of a new more just consensus.

#### 2.4 Knowledge

The knowledge that is deemed valid by society is a powerful influence on our subjective interpretation of ourselves and society.

School knowledge is sanctioned and selected by those who control this system. Blum (1971) argues that if objective knowledge is taken to mean knowledge of a reality, independent of language or knowledge of the world which is independent of the observers procedure for finding and producing knowledge, then there is no such thing as independent knowledge. We can argue that all knowledge is socially constructed and ideological.

The individual student attempts to make sense of his/her objective reality by utilising the knowledge which is presented to him/her by the school curriculum as objectively true. If the 'legitimate' knowledge presented is uni-directional then it helps cement the existing ideology of the system. Whitty (1985) suggests that what teachers teach is not knowledge but 'preferred discourses'. He draws on the work of

Michael Foucault and suggest that the radical teacher should try "to denaturalise various discourses rather than to endlessly validate them by a complicity with the unspoken norms a powerful state". (Whitty 1985, P.37). Gorbutt (1972) calls for recognition of the social origin of all knowledge.

The work of Berger and Luckmann argues for the recognition of the social origin of all ideas. Knowledge at all levels, common sense, theoretical and scientific, thereby becomes thoroughly relativised and the possibility of absolute knowledge is denied.... Berger and Luckmann argue that all knowledge is socially constructed and ideological. (Gorbutt 1972. P.7).

What is defined as knowledge is therefore the subject of inquiry. Gorbutt outlines the implications of this.

It is not surprising that treating knowledge in this way has excited more than a ripple of interest, particularly amongst philosophers of education, for the worthwhileness of particular educational activities can no longer be justified in absolute terms once the social basis of such justification is recognised. The apparent self-evident justification for education into particular forms of knowledge is laid bare as an ideological statement. (Ibid. P.3)

We have seen earlier that presenting a value statement as if it was a fact is a form of ideology. Young (1971) suggests that those in positions of power will attempt to define what is to be taken as knowledge, how accessible to different groups any knowledge is, and

what are the accepted relationships between knowledge areas and between those who have access to them and make them available. Because there are so many value judgments in deciding on the school curriculum, it inevitably is ideological.

In subjects such as history, music, literature, the curriculum generally ignores the contribution of the working-class. The curriculum therefore is another means by which inequality is reproduced.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Chapter II has have examined the nature of ideology and questioned the ability of education to bring about just social change because of its ideological base. We have also engaged in a dialogue with many thinkers concerning the ability of human beings to transform their world, as radical educators would wish to see shaped. In the next chapter informed by this analysis of ideology, an analysis of how and why the school fails to value the culture of working class students and so helps to perpetuate inequality will commence.

## CHAPTER III

### LANGUAGE, POWER AND SCHOOLING

The limits of my language are the limits  
of my world.

Wittgenstein.

When I use a word, said Humpty Dumpty to  
Alice, it means whatever I say it means.

Lewis Carroll.

In this Chapter we shall commence our detailed analysis of how inequalities can be perpetuated through schooling. We shall start by looking at the role of language in cultural reproduction. We start with language because it is central to what it is to be human. Through language we can discover knowledge which can emancipate us from the chains of ideologies and the prejudices of the past and present.

Educators recognise that linguistic ability can bestow power on the individual. Of course history teaches us that because language bestows power it can also result in domination.

All kinds of power are directed mediated or resisted through language. For most everyday human purposes, power is exerted through verbal channels! Language is the vehicle for identifying, manipulating and

changing power relations between people.  
(Corson 1991 P.231)

Many adults suffer oppression simply because their language is deemed inappropriate. In a recent radio programme<sup>1</sup> a young travelling person told how she was able to get her hair styled in a particular hair salon because she could imitate the speech pattern of the settled community. When she later met her friends they asked her where she got her hair done. She told them and they went to the same shop. They were thrown out because the interviewee said they couldn't speak like settled people.

We shall see that in a modern capitalist democracy language is still used to differentiate and to help select those who will benefit from schooling.

Basil Bernstein has developed sociolinguistic theories over the last thirty years. As a teacher in the 1950's he was aware of the discrepancy between the form of communicative practice that was required by the school and the form of communication which working class pupils engaged in. Bernstein feels that working class pupils are at a disadvantage in school because the school does not accommodate the different codes of communication exhibited by working class pupils. He rejected the

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<sup>1</sup> Talking proper. The story of accents.  
Broadcast by RTE Radio 1 24.8.94

discredited IQ theory which he saw as being culture bound.

My first studies attempted to show that IQ was not responsible for these forms of communication. Accordingly I carried out a number of studies in which I compared the test results of so called non-verbal and verbal IQ tests given in a group situation to middle class and lower working-class boys (Bernstein, 1958, 1960). The results showed quite clearly that within the lower working-class group of boys the higher the scores on non-verbal test the greater the difference between the scores of the two tests. That is, the verbal scores tend to cluster around the mean of the the test, whereas the non-verbal scores were distributed across the full range of the non-verbal test, with a pronounced clustering at the higher scores. (Bernstein 1990 P.94-95).

Bernstein, therefore exposed the inconsistency of IQ tests that failed to take account of the different cultural background of the pupils. The theory that Bernstein has developed has also attracted a great deal of criticism. He claims his detractors have wrongly interpreted the theory. In developing his theory Bernstein has been influenced by Durkheim, Mead and Marx.

Although, initially the thesis appeared to be concerned with the problem of reducibility, the problem was embedded in and was stimulated by the wider question of the relationships between symbolic orders and social structure. The basic theoretical question ... was concerned with the fundamental structure and changes in the structure of cultural transmission. (Bernstein 1971, P.139).

Bernstein has been accused of being deterministic because of his reference to the economic base as the key factor in determining power relationships.

He differentiates between language and speech codes.

Language is a set of rules to which all speech codes must comply, but which speech codes are realised is a function of the culture acting through social relationships in specific contexts. (Ibid. P.141).

This quotation highlights a key concept of Bernstein's, namely the idea of speech codes. Bernstein argues that socialisation orientates children towards specific speech codes. Again in keeping with the Marxist theory he emphasises the formative influence that a person's social class has upon the procedures of socialisation.

The class structure influences work and educational roles and brings families into a special relationship with each other and deeply penetrates the structure of life experiences within the family. The class system has deeply marked the distribution of knowledge within society. (Ibid. P.149).

He argues that the class system has influenced the social distribution of knowledge. Most people he argues have not been socialised into 'knowledge at the level of the meta-language of control and innovation'. (Ibid. P.14)



In fact he argues that most people have been socialised into knowledge "at the level of context-tied operation".

Bernstein distinguishes between universalistic and particularistic orders of meaning. Universalistic meanings require principles to be made linguistically explicit. Particularistic orders of meaning are meanings in which principles are linguistically implicit. In terms of schooling, knowledge has universalistic meaning. As the term implies universalistic meaning is less tied to a given context whereas with particularistic meaning much of the meaning is embedded in the context. Bernstein suggests that only those who have shared a similar contextual history can understand fully the meanings. This contrasts with universalistic meanings.

Where meanings are universalistic they are in principle available to all because the principles and operations have been made explicit and so public. (Ibid. P142).

The central point of Bernstein's thesis is that forms of socialisation orient children towards speech codes which control access to meanings that are relatively context-tied or context-independent. Working class children are oriented towards speech codes which are relatively context-tied. Bernstein defines the term code.

A code is a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates relevant meanings, forms of realisations, and evoking contexts. (Bernstein 1990 P.101).

He is not concerned with differences in vocabulary or verbal skills. His interest is in the systematic ways of using language.

Restricted codes are more tied to a local social structure and have a reduced potential for change in principles. Where codes are elaborated, the socialised has more access to the grounds of his own socialisation, and so can enter into a reflexive relationship to the social order he has taken over. Where codes are restricted the socialised has less access to the grounds of his socialisation and this reflexiveness may be limited in range. One of the effects of the class system is to limit access to elaborated codes. (Bernstein 1971 P.143).

Bernstein argues that the speech of working-class children represents a restricted code. Many working class people live in communities that have a strong sense of shared values and norms which are taken for granted by those who grow up in this culture. It is unnecessary for working class children to verbalise why certain things happen in their community because everyone in the community understands why. If other people had access to the context, they too would understand the situation without the necessity of expressing it in universalistic terms. On the other hand middle class children tend to use an elaborated

The writer Roddy Doyle has captured this richness of Dublin working class language in his novels.

The consequence of the school's failure to acknowledge the culture of working class pupils inevitably means that many will find school an unhappy experience and leave it at an early stage.

David Corson states that language is essentially powerless on its own.

It is people who have power to use language in various ways; it is people who give discourse its form and make judgements about the status of various texts; and it is the situations in which people have power and are using language to serve some potent purpose that gives language a power that it lacks when it is without such precise contexts. (Corson 1991 p.234).

Corson makes the point that the powerful use language to legitimate their position. Popular television satires like 'Yes Minister' can reveal the pretensions of such powerful figures by placing their language into situations that are subtly removed from the settings that are normally powerful.

As Corson says.

In short the development of particular forms of language meets the needs of the powerful and depends upon a particular exercise of power through discourse practices. (Ibid. P.234).

For Corson language is the vehicle for power distribution through education. Schools have the power to decide what language is appropriate or legitimate. The school through its formal and hidden curriculum disseminates ideas about gender roles, status and legitimate knowledge etc. The school can use sanctions to support its cultural views.

This pervasive influence is institutionalised in education, it comes from the power that social institutions like education has to do things which individual human beings could never do. For instance, education has the power to enforce its linguistic demands by excluding dissenters, by rewarding conformity, by pillorying deviation and by sanctioning the 'legitimate'. (Corson 1991 P.236).

What Corson is saying is that schools can dominate and disempower individuals whose cultural norms are not in accord with those of the school's. Corson cites Ederman's (1984) observation that;

Human beings often rationalise and call this reasoning; they distort through language and call this creative and original description; and they repress others through language and call this 'being helpful'. The counselling profession seems especially adept at these practices. (Ibid. P.237).

Teachers often use pejorative 'labels' in school to describe students who are not in accord with the school's norms. Such use of language is an example of an exercise in power by empowered professionals.

When the professional teacher uses power in this fashion it serves to repress other individuals' values.

But in the hands of the empowered professionals the terms and the categories that they create become tools of power that shape and repress other people's destinies and legitimise professional value systems: the language becomes powerful in ways that the study of education itself still leaves untheorised. (Ibid. P237).

Bourdieu criticises traditional structuralist linguists because he claims they consider language as no more than 'an object of contemplation rather than as an instrument of action and power. (Bourdieu, 1991 P.37)

In agreement with Corson, he argues that the power of speech resides not in the language but in the social context of the language. Bourdieu develops his argument concerning the ideological use of language with his theory of cultural reproduction.

What is particularly remarkable about Bourdieu, besides the clarity and consistency of his criticism of the dominant tradition in language study, is that he proposes a coherent alternative approach....He proposes a new basis for the understanding of language as a means of symbolic power. He rigorously demonstrates the symbolic relationship between language and social life. (Goke-Pariola, 1993, P.221)

Bourdieu has developed a number of special terms to describe his theory such as Habitus and field.

helps to create'. (Goke-Pariola, 1993, P.222).

For Bourdieu linguistic signs are meant to be understood as signs of wealth, authority and 'intention to be believed and obeyed'.

Working class pupils must struggle to acquire the linguistic habitus of the school which is consonant with the habitus of the middle classes.

### Social Justice and Language

The analysis of Bernstein, Bourdieu and other post structuralists such as Foucault have given us a valuable insight into how language is used to maintain power and to deceive. Social justice is of prime importance to those who follow in the tradition of adult educators such as Freire, Horton and Cody. Many traditional accounts of social justice focus on the rights of the individual. David Corson argues that

Considerable room must be left for collectivist accounts in any discussion of social justice and language if we are to give sufficient recognition to the most obvious feature of language itself. Its essential role in allowing and promoting communicative interaction between social groups of two or more people. (Corson 1992 P.182-83).

Habermas's consensus theory of justice is a collectivist theory. Social arrangements are just in Habermas's view if all people with an interest,

under ideal conditions of debate and negotiation agree that they are just.

Communication only genuinely occurs where each of the parties not only gives meaning to their own behaviour but understands or seeks to understand the meaning the other gives. Each person places themselves in the position of the other person. Such sharing of meaning can only be accomplished where language develops to the point of prepositional or syntactic differentiation (Habermas 1987:5) and thus become truly symbolic in character. (Waters 1994, P.24).

Habermas is distrustful of social institutions. Even benign institutions can become dysfunctional. As society becomes more complex, systems of institutions steered by money and power develop. More people become involved with one another without sharing a common culture of the same "lifeworld". In order to function the 'lifeworld' must be made more and more rational. Only by rational discussion do we agree on how things should be carried out.

In the view of Corson.

Habermas formulates a theory of communicative competence as a basis for social analysis. He identifies the possibility of an ideal speech situation in which there are no external constraints preventing participants from assessing evidence and argument. (1992, P.190).

Under the ideal speech situation when one person says something to another, the second person is able to make the following claims:

1. What is said is offered as a meaning that can be understood.
2. That the facts offered are true.
3. The speaker is justified in saying what is said.
4. The speaker is sincere.

In this ideal situation abuse of power is eliminated as much as possible. Individuals are encouraged to take part in discussions.

The norms of the ideal speech situation create a setting of reciprocity, in that each participant has the right to claim that others take account of his or her interests while a reciprocal obligation exists for him or her to do likewise. The outcome is a conception of justice that expresses the interests of all to the extent that they are compatible with one another. (Corson 1992 P.190).

This ideal form of communication is a goal that all educators should aim for. It is particularly relevant to adult Educators who seek to identify with groups who traditionally have not been listened to, such as disabled people, women, unemployed people, and people trapped in poverty. In this system of education, mutuality should prevail and as Freire suggests the teacher also learns from the pupil.



Habermas is attempting to construct a consensus in which all can be a part. In such a consensus respect for other's culture and views is essential. This thesis takes the view that Habermas's theoretical framework is an important step forward in that it attempts to remove ideological view points from the process of reaching a consensus.

Michael Foucault places discourses at the centre of his analysis. For Foucault language itself is not the source of power, rather it is the context in which the words are used. Words have different meanings in different contexts and when used by different institutions.

As Ball states;

Discourses constrain the possibilities of thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations. However, in so far as discourses are constituted by exclusions as well as inclusions, by what cannot as well as what can be said, they stand in antagonistic relationship to other discourses, other possibilities of meaning, other claims, rights and positions. (Ball 1992 P. 2)

The power of the institution, of the school, can be seen in what it regards as legitimate. In the school the language of the teacher can be powerful in endorsing one culture or in denying legitimacy to a culture. The world is perceived differently from different discourses. As we shall see the history

and culture of the working class, women and other dominated groups continues to be largely ignored by the education system.

In the next chapter we shall continue our dialogue with conflict theorists but we shall broaden our analysis in an attempt to understand how schooling contributes to inequality in society. We shall enter the world of the school and examine the processes which occur within its walls. The analysis of these writers will further help us to understand why pupils leave school without qualifications and how inequalities are reproduced.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ECONOMY, SCHOOLING AND RESISTANCE

In this chapter we shall review some of the work of theorists who are concerned with the continuing plight of many disadvantaged groups in society. These theories can assist us in understanding why many pupils 'fail' in school. The psychological damage, impoverishment and despondency which can result from school failure must be a cause of concern for society. Adult education is particularly concerned with such issues. It is in adult life that the full impact of school 'failure' manifests itself.

#### 4.1 A Deterministic View of Schooling

Bowles' and Gintis' (1976) study Schooling in Capitalist America is one of the best known studies on schooling. The central point of their thesis is that there is a close relationship between schooling and the economic system. They are highly critical of the capitalist economic system and by implication the education system in America.

They argue that the external structure of economy determines the way the school operates. The capitalist system has specific needs from the workforce and the school plays an important role in preparing people for the world of work. The school is the site where the individuals' consciousness is moulded to suit the needs of business.

The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, we believe, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. (Bowles and Gintis 1976 P.131).

They attack the idea which the functionalists accepted that there must be a hierarchical structure of privilege and status. Bowles and Gintis describe such an economic structure as "formally totalitarian" because the vast majority are controlled by a few. They state;

The politics of education are better understood in terms of the need for social control in an unequal and rapidly changing economic order. (Ibid. P.27).

Bowles and Gintis used data from the U.S. Census Current Population Survey of 1962 to show that the number of years schooling a pupil gets depends on socio-economic background and not on IQ.

...even among children with identical IQ test scores at ages six and eight, those with

rich, well-educated high-status parents could expect a much higher level of schooling than those with less favoured origins. (Ibid. P32).

In the same way they showed from their data that family background was very significant in determining who went to college in the U.S.A.

They showed that earnings for women and racial minorities had not improved in line with their education.

From their data Bowles and Gintis showed that a meritocracy was not in fact being achieved. While there was a trend towards a more equal education in terms of number of years spent at school, the old inequalities in the economy persisted. Yet Bowles and Gintis point out;

On the one hand employers and other social elites have sought to use the schools for the legitimation of inequality through an ostensible meritocratic and rational mechanism for allocating individuals to economic positions; they have sought to use the schools for the reproduction of profitable types of workers' consciousness and behaviour through a correspondence between the social relationship of education and those of economic life. (Ibid. P101).

For Bowles and Gintis the facade of meritocracy hides the reality of an education system geared to the

reproduction of the Capitalist economic system. A key part of the school's function in preparing students for adult life is achieved by the "hidden school curriculum". The way the school is organised, that is the social relations between administration, teacher and pupils, mirrors the hierarchical division of labour in the economy. The student may receive different levels of education; lower, middle or higher, and these levels mould the individual into a corresponding type of work relationship.

...the lowest levels in the hierarchy of the enterprise emphasize rule following, middle levels, dependability and the capacity to operate without direct and continuous supervision while the higher levels stress the internalization of the norms of the enterprise. (Ibid. P.132).

This study brought a new insight into the discussion of schooling and its functions of socializing, selecting, integrating and legitimizing. They analyse the school as a part of a larger system rather than as a separate institution. This allowed them to focus on the social cultural and political issues which are important if we are to understand the role of schooling. Their study was also supported by a large body of empirical research. This research demonstrated that a meritocracy was not being achieved.

Other factors such as gender, race, and family background are important in determining the likely level of education and job opportunities of individuals. These factors also affect the type of school that students will attend.

The manner in which schools grade, stream and test pupils, the boring schoolwork, the type of characteristics approved of by teachers all tend to prepare students for the world of work. This confirmed for Bowles and Gintis the view that the economic system was directing the type of education which pupils received. They directed attention to the form of education that pupils received. Bowles and Gintis work therefore is significant and it contributed to a stimulating and critical inquiry into many widely held views on education.

Undoubtedly there are a number of defects in the study. The theory which they develop is one in which the school performs a very mechanistic function. This theory ignores the wide variety of actors who have an input into the school. Pupils are treated as too compliant as are the teachers. The advanced capitalist economy is complex. Within society there are many conflicting views and these are mirrored in the world

of education. It is not a simple equation. Bowles and Gintis fail to show how the correspondence between the economy actually occurs.

Their analyses ignores the fact that the institution of schooling has its own agenda and its own specific interest which need not mechanistically correspond with the world of private business. We shall see in our examination of Irish schooling how a wide body of interests mediate between the school and society.

#### 4.2 The Work of Michael Apple

Michael Apple has written a considerable amount on schooling and cultural reproduction. His early work is certainly deterministic but his work has progressed from a straightforward economic approach to one in which he examines the cultural/social relationships within the school in a less mechanistic fashion. His book Ideology and the Curriculum (1979) is very much influenced by his understanding of Gramsci's work on hegemony. He questions the "common sense" notions people have about their society.

Taking Gramsci as his guide he sees education as part of the hegemony of the dominant class. Apple sees the



curriculum of schools as being ideological in helping to maintain inequality and domination.

As the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci noted, a critical element in enhancing the ideological dominance of certain classes is the control of the knowledge preserving and producing institutions of a particular society. (Ibid. P.27).

The types of knowledge that are deemed legitimate by the school help to preserve the hegemony that Apple discusses. He suggests that the economy requires the production of this knowledge but distribution of this knowledge to the population in general is not required.

Within certain limits, what is actually required is not the widespread distribution of high status technical knowledge to the populace in general. What is needed more is to maximize its production. (Ibid. 1979 P.37).

It can be seen that Apple is following a quite deterministic line of thought here even though he has focused on the concept of ideology and hegemony to support his argument.

He claims that both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum have an ideological purpose. Much of

the formal curriculum he argues is dominated by a consensus ideology.

Two tacit assumptions seem to be prominent in teaching and in curricular materials. The first centres around a negative position on the nature and uses of conflict. The second focuses on men and women as recipients of values and institutions, not on men and women as creators and recreators of values and institutions. (Ibid. P.86).

In Apple's view pupils are not encouraged to ask analytical questions about why things are done in a particular fashion, rather they are encouraged to ask questions about how to do things and accomplish tasks.

The influence of resistance theories, particularly the work of Paul Willis, can be seen in Apple's book Education and Power (1985).

Apple no longer accepts the direct correspondence thesis put forward by Bowles and Gintis. He believes this idea fails in two respects. Firstly students are not "passive internalizers of pre-given social messages". Students may resist and may well reject the ideology of the school.

Secondly the correspondence principle fails to take account of the inherent contradictions within the capitalist system. Contradictory positions emerge

within institutions such as schools. Apple takes the view that schools have a degree of relative autonomy. For a dominant class to maintain its hegemony, it must continually engage in a struggle for peoples' minds. Apple believes that the curriculum of schools has been depoliticized and in developing a 'neutral' curriculum, curriculum specialists have assisted the non-neutral dominant economic group in society.

He sees the school as both engaged in producing culture as well as reproducing cultural and economic values. Using the analogy of the workplace where workers in subtle ways resist management, so too in school students resist and produce a counter-culture. While some students resist, other students comply with the ideology of the school. In this way culture is both reproduced and produced in the school.

The increasing influence of the state in the everyday lives of people is also commented upon by Apple. He sees the state as having developed a greater role in maintaining the capitalist economy through the following method:-

..sustaining capital accumulation, providing services, creating new markets and protecting old ones, and absorbing a large proportion of the surplus population into public employment (Ibid. P.54).

In the same way the state has become more involved in schooling. In particular Apple feels that the state supports and encourages schools in the production of technical/administrative knowledge. This type of knowledge is of value to a large body of people involved in administration and management. By responding to this need the school increases its credibility among this class.

Apple's work provides a valuable insight into the ideology of the curriculum both formal and hidden. His work raises many questions about the injustices of an educational system which does not value the culture of working class pupils.

#### 4.3 The Lads

Paul Willis has produced a renowned study on schooling and social and cultural reproduction. His study, "Learning to Labour" (1977) is an ethnographic study of a group of working class white students in an industrial town in the English midlands. His study set in an all boys working class school shows how some students resist the ideology of the school. The focus of Willis' study is a group known as "the lads". These pupils were highly disruptive within the school.

Willis also studied another group of working class boys in the school who complied with the school's ethos. In between these two extremes were the majority of students who exhibited varying degrees of compliance or rebellion depending on the circumstances.

It is the experiences of "the lads", their resistance to the school's ideology and their own group culture which is of greatest interest in this study. It is clear that "the lads" were an intelligent group, but they were highly disruptive. All of them intended to leave school at the earliest possible time to seek full time work. They showed no interest in continuing their education. By resisting the school the working-class pupils win a sort of victory but ultimately there is a sort of self-damnation in this victory.

Willis claims that some working class pupils

creatively develop, transform and finally reproduce aspects of the larger culture in their own praxis in such a way as to finally direct them to certain kinds of work. (Willis 1977 P.2).

Willis shows through his work that the lads are creative and intelligent. This group of 'deviants' come to understand how the power relations of the institution operates. Joey, the leader of the group

shows an understanding of the structure of the school and enjoys causing trouble for the system which he sees as doing nothing for him.

Willis recognises the ability of Joey.

It is worth noting that in his own terms and through the mediation of the group, Joey assumes complete mastery and understanding of the school year and its social landscape. (Ibid. P.16).

The 'lads' feel superior to the conformist group, known to them, contemptuously as, 'ear 'oles'. To Joey and 'the lads' the sacrifices the 'ear 'oles' make in order to comply are simply not worth it. Joey lists all the experiences 'the lads' have had; sex, drink, love, hatred, fighting and he compares this to the tedium of the 'ear oles' lives in the school. Joey and his friends can make the 'ear 'oles' laugh but they can't make him laugh.

Willis describes how 'the lads' got drunk during lunch time on the last day of term. It led to trouble and the police were called. Willis describes the reasons for 'the lads' actions.

Even sympathetic young staff find the incident 'surprising' and wondered why the lads had not waited until evening and then 'really done it proper'. The point is of

course that drinking had to be done at lunchtime and in defiance of the school. It is not done simply to mark a neutral transaction - a mere ritual. It is a decisive rejection and a closing off. (Ibid. P.21).

Loyalty to the group is very important to 'the lads'. Their culture is developed from within the group. Its values are masculine, racist, sexist, and violent. Yet their group culture helps them to survive school and give them power which they clearly enjoy.

In many ways 'the lads' set the agenda in the school. They know how to annoy teachers and how far to take resistance.

The lads specialise in a caged resentment which always stops just short of outright confrontation. Settled in class as near as a group as they can manage there is a continuous scarping of chairs, a bad tempered tut-tutting at the simplest request, and a continuous fidgeting about which explores every aspect of sitting or lying on a chair. (Ibid. P.13).

For the lads school is a 'laff'. It is a power game in which they engage with the teachers and for the most part win.

In the sense, that I argue that it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power we may say that there is an element of self damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western Capitalism. However, this damnation is

experienced paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation and as a form of resistance. (Ibid. P.3).

Willis suggests that the counter-school group partially penetrates or sees through the ideology of the school. 'The lads' make a decision not to pursue further education because they are deeply sceptical of certificates when others have higher qualifications ("what's the use doing CSE's when the others have got 'O' levels. P.126).

Willis views the objective of institutional qualifications as being to engage in social exclusion rather than to ensure equality of outcome. He feels that the refusal to compete is a radical act.

The refusal to compete, implicit in the counter-school culture is therefore in this sense a radical act: it refuses to collude in its own educational suppression.  
(Ibid. P.126)

In an article produced in 1981 Willis expanded on his views on resistance and social reproduction. He makes it clear that he believes a form of cultural production takes place in schools where various groups contest for control.

I would argue that cultural production amongst dominated groups of various kinds ensures that in schools a straightforward imprint of social requirements on students -



even if they were consistently defined - is anyway impossible (Willis 1981 P.53).

The work of Willis has been criticised for a number of reasons. As he acknowledged in his 1981 article his book does not look in detail at the sexist and racist culture of 'the lads'. He argues that his book is making a theoretic point about cultural production which also applies to other subordinate groups such as ethnic groups or female students. However, Willis does not explain why some pupils conform and other working class pupils rebel. Both conformist and non-conformist pupils are likely to seek similar jobs in the factory. Willis does not investigate the other cultures that are evident in the school.

Willis has focused research on what is going on inside the school and this is a valuable step in seeking to find ways to make the school more responsive to different needs.

#### 4.4 Some Implications of 'Student Resistance' for Adult Education

Willis, Apple, Jean Argon, Henry Gioux among others see the resistance of working class students as a helpful sign. For these writers it indicates that the hegemony of the dominant group has not completely deprived the

working class of their ability to have a different vision of society. Yet adult educators know that "the lads" in Willis' study are very unlikely to find the working class jobs that existed in the 1960's and 1970's. The reality for such students now is a life on welfare and perhaps part-time work.

For adult educators there is a dilemma. The state has developed a variety of schemes and courses for the unemployed. Adult educators are often very involved in organising such courses. Are such courses simply helping politicians avoid taking more radical steps which would involve taking-on the privileges of other classes? Despite the recession and high unemployment, many continue to enjoy lives of great affluence. A determined attempt to tackle poverty and unemployment would entail a redistribution of wealth which the politicians do not appear willing to do.

Radical adult educators would say that the role of adult education should not be to find ways to placate those who have been alienated. Rather our role as adult educators should be to raise the level of consciousness of the unemployed. It may be possible of course to help some individuals achieve a better life by taking part in such courses. Our argument is

that adult education should try and do more. The adult educator should try to utilize the resources of these schemes and courses to engage the pupils in a process of critical thinking so that the students can challenge the inequalities which have impeded their development. Gramsci has said "all men (sic) are intellectuals". It is possible then for every individual to critically examine their world and to challenge injustice. We are engaged in a struggle, a political struggle. We must not allow ourselves to be part of a system which blames the victim by saying the victim is lazy or uncooperative. Right wing politicians have often claimed that many unemployed would find work if they would only learn the necessary skills. We know that the economy as it is presently constituted is unable to provide the necessary jobs. Where inflation threatens investments of the elite, democratic governments are prepared to take steps to deflate the economy. Adult educators, therefore, when organising courses for the unemployed should see political education as an essential feature of real learning.

Jones (1986) writes that

Tension between adult education and government is, in its own small way, one of the necessary tensions of democracy. (Jones P.172).

By political education we mean that the learners question the reasons for their experiences.

To quote Mezirow;

Emancipatory education is about more than becoming aware of one's awareness. Its goal is to help learners move from a simple awareness of their experiencing to an awareness of the conditions of their experiencing (how they are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, acting - a reflection on process) and beyond this to an awareness of the reasons why they experience as they do and to action based upon these insights. (Mezirow 1991 P. 197).

Freire states that the educator should help learners arrive at an increasingly critical view of their reality. (1970;P36). The resistances that emerge in the formal school then can be a source of inspiration for a counter-hegemony which can lead to a more just society.

### Conclusion

We have reviewed some of the work of the neo-Marxist conflict theorists of adult education and we have looked at some implications for Adult Education that arises from the 'failings' of the school system. We will now proceed to examine in some detail the role of the education system in reproducing class inequalities in Ireland. Such an analysis will enable us as adult

educators to understand why many who have dropped out of the education system are reluctant to return to education later in life. It will also help us to understand the structural inequalities that exist in our society and the difficulties of those who are poor in overcoming these structural problems.

## CHAPTER V

### REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY IN THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

#### 5.1 Introduction

In our dialogue with various conflict theorists in the previous two chapters we have developed a framework by which we can examine and interpret what happens in Irish education. Drawing on the analysis of Chapters I and II we shall examine in detail the ideology of Irish education. We have defined this ideology as meritocratic individualism.

Having outlined how the state and leading academics have attempted to create a consensualist approach to Irish education we show how inequality is perpetuated by our system of education. We shall commence by highlighting the gross unequal representation of working class students at third level institutions in Ireland. As third level qualifications are a major means by which the middle class maintain their status, this is a key area in the reproduction of inequality in Irish society.

We will examine some of the characteristics of second level education which lead to the reproduction of inequality. In particular we will analyse how powerful mediators in Irish education counter-resist any resistances which emerge in the school.

## 5.2 Dominant Ideologies in Irish Education

Lynch (1987) identifies three main ideological standpoints in the literature of Irish Educationists. She describes these as

1. Consensualism
2. Essentialism
3. Meritocratic Individualism

By consensualism Lynch means that educationalists have generally not questioned what is often referred to as "the public interest" or the "collective interest". There is a tendency for society to be portrayed as a homogeneous whole. Lynch accepts that there are references to gender and class in some of the academic writings on Irish education, but these issues are not seen as central.

...When class or gender differences are discussed they are not represented as central dynamics or generative forces, within the social system. Conflicting class or gender interests are not represented as potent forces determining the direction of the educational system. (Lynch 1987 P.103).

Irish government funded reports and the published writings of individual academics have supported the consensus ideology paradigm. The recent Green Paper Education for A Changing World (1992) also implies that there is universal agreement as to the aims of the education system.

In a relatively homogeneous society such as Ireland's a reasonable consensus might be anticipated on the broad educational aims that would improve such a partnership, related to preparing each person for personal and family life, for working life and for a living community. (Dept. of Ed. 1992 P.33)

Lynch notes the consensualism evident in analytical documents issued by the Department of Education such as "Investment in Education" (1965).

Class differences tend to be subsumed into more general neutral terms such as "social differences".

The Green Paper (1992) suggests that education 'for an enterprise culture' is essential because we live in one (Dept. of Ed, 1992, P.85). It recommends the introduction of a new subject entitled "Enterprise and Technology Studies" which is in line with the recommendations of the Culliton Report. There is an attempt made to create a consensus on this issue by



suggesting that many young Irish people lack the skills required by an enterprise culture. (Ibid. P11).

There is an attempt to suggest problems such as unemployment are the individuals fault. This hides the fact that issues such as poverty and unemployment are structural faults.

Lynch is highly critical of the consensualism of academics who have written about Irish education. She points to a number of significant studies of the Irish education system which fail to highlight the inequalities which particular classes or groups suffer from.

The emphasis on consensual analysis means that the emphasis is placed on the individual rather than on a critical examination of society. This leads to an essentialist view of the individual. This view of the individual suggests he/she has a fixed nature. This in turn predetermines the level of education appropriate for the individual. Essentialism is an international view and many theorists have tended to explain differences in educational attainment in terms of the individual rather than in terms of structures.

In Lynch's view however consensualism has meant that there has been uniquely little critique of essentialism or meritocracy in Ireland.

A second feature of essentialism is that some educationalists are disposed to take the view that educational development is limited for some people. Because working class children tend to score lower on IQ tests such as the Drumcondra Verbal Reasoning Test there is a danger that the schools will treat working class children in a discriminatory fashion. Many schools use such tests to 'stream' their students and to make decisions about the choice of subjects offered to students. IQ tests have been shown to be culture bound and are not as scientific as they are suggested to be. There is a danger that they may be used to justify the failure of working-class pupils.

Essentialism as expressed in the fixed ability thesis therefore merely provides an ideological facade behind which policy makers and even practitioners can hide when they wish to eschew public accountability. (Lynch P.113).

#### Meritocratic Individualism in Ireland

This ideology is undoubtedly accepted as a facet of our educational system. The idea has gained great appeal because it is said to be more in keeping with

democratic principles. The basic principle is that merit is achieved by work and talent and not ascribed by virtue of one's birth. The concept therefore is consonant with individualism. Those who believe in meritocracy accept inequality. We have already examined some basic objectors to this concept in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

In the next section of this chapter we shall see how this ideology manifests itself in the under-representation of working class students in higher education in Ireland.

### 5.3 Class Credentials and Poverty

Nolan and Callan (1994) demonstrate the relationship that exists between those in Ireland who have failed to receive educational credentials and poverty in Ireland. Their research is revealing in that it highlights who is benefiting from higher education.

Table 1

Educational Qualifications by Class Origin

	Professional & Management	Intermediate Non-manual & Upper Petit- Bourgeois	Upper Working Class & Lower Peit- Bourgeois	Lower Working Class
	%	%	%	%
No Quals	9	40.0	55.8	68.2
Intermediate or Group Certificate	13.8	19.9	22.5	23.2
Leaving Certificate	38.1	21.0	12.4	5.1
Third Level	39.1	19.1	9.2	3.4

Nolan and Callan 1994 P.138)

Table 1 shows us the relationship between class of origin and educational achievement. This table shows that the largest group (39.1%) who achieved third level qualifications come from the higher socio-economic background. On the other hand those who came from lower working class made very little progress towards obtaining third level qualifications (3.4%). The majority of individuals with no qualifications originate in the lower working class category (68.2%).

These findings of course mirror similar findings throughout the western world. Bourdieu and others would claim that what is happening here is that

those who are in a dominant position to start with, are finding new ways to legitimize their hegemony. In an age when inherited wealth and influence may be questioned and attacked, it is useful for the dominant groups to be able to justify their position by claiming to merit it. Their credentials awarded by 'neutral' institutions such as a university is evidence of their merit.

Table 2 shows how poverty is related to class origin.

Table 2

Composition of the poor by social class and class origin

Social Class	Class Origin	
	Middle Class Percentage of the poor	Working Class Percentage of the poor
Profession and Management	0.5	1.0
Intermediate non- manual & upper petit-bourgeois	4.3	5.7
Upper working class & lower petit- bourgeois	6.5	51.5
Lower working class	1.0	29.3

(Nolan and Callan '94 P.139).

As Nolan and Callan point out

Over eight out of ten of the poor have been intergenerationally stable in the working class; 50% are located in the upper working class and lower petit-bourgeoisie, and 30% in the lower working class. In contrast fewer than one in twenty of the poor have been intergenerationally stable in the middle class. (Ibid. P. 136-137).

Whelan and Whelan (1984) point out that while the Irish education system dramatically expanded, during the 1970's, this did not mean meritocracy had been achieved. They found that participation in higher level jobs is closely linked with the individuals father's occupation. (Whelan & Whelan, 1984 P.153). In addition unemployment among young people aged 15-23 years was found to be very much related to social class. They found that in the case of "sons of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers" there was a 1 in 4 probability of being unemployed. This compared to a 1 in 14 chance in the case of sons of "professional managerial classes". This shifts our attention to equality of educational outcomes.

The recent government proposal to abolish fees for all third level courses will not assist lower socio-economic groups. Such a decision is likely to result in a transfer of resources to the middle class and away from funds which otherwise could be used to advantage in primary education where classes are overcrowded. If

third level education continues to remain substantially elitist then perhaps it is more like a private good and it could be argued that those who benefit should pay for it. Until third level education is more accessible to working class students, the abolition of all fees would appear to be a regressive taxation policy.

The writer discussed this issue with Dr. Kathleen Lynch of the Equality Studies Centre,<sup>1</sup> University College, Dublin. She stated that the abolition of third level fees would not benefit lower socio-economic groups in Ireland. However she supported the move because it was egalitarian in principle and she felt this was important. It would contribute to an atmosphere in which education was seen as a right. She did not welcome it as a move to help the working class, because she did not see it as having such an effect.

The large number of unemployed cannot however be blamed on the education system. What can be queried is whether or not the education system is assisting some classes to gain status and employment and penalising the working-class by not assisting working-class pupils. Whelan et al. 1991 suggest that schooling is

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<sup>1</sup> Interview 16.8.94

failing the working class and helping to reproduce a marginalised class.

So a marginalised class is being reproduced through the educational and training systems while being sustained by social welfare provisions. The creation of employment for members of this class was an option which was never seriously implemented. The consequences of this failure are shown in the fact... we find 40% of the members of this class are living in households which are experiencing poverty. (Whelan et al. P. 33).

Increased participation in the education system has shifted the debate from access, to attainment and specifically to class inequalities and attainment. The strategy of expanding access to second-level education has an implicit assumption that the existence of free schools eliminates the economic sources of inequality. This ignores the hidden costs to a family of keeping a child in school. The equality of attainment in any event has to do with other factors besides the economic cost. Factors such as home support, linguistic ability, teacher perceptions and bias, and school policies are also very relevant. The large number of pupils who leave school without certification are suddenly perceived to be a problem for society. The truth is that the problem can be addressed when the pupil is much younger, when he/she is four, or eight or ten.



To do this however, will require a much more determined effort than is currently the case. The trouble is that society questions the cost of such assistance at an early stage, and yet ends up paying for a multitude of schemes when the student leaves school and cannot find work. The concept of the education system treating students equally is inadequate to deal with the class inequalities which affect the educational chances of lower socio-economic groups.

In any event those in higher socio-economic groups can use the resources of the school and the system more effectively by virtue of their wealth and cultural capital. Large numbers of students are now repeating their Leaving Certificate examinations in order to secure the points needed for university entrance. Recent research (Dowling 1993) indicates that it is the higher socio-economic groups who are benefiting from this practice. To repeat the leaving certificate is a further expense which bears more heavily on those with little resources.

In addition those from the higher socio-economic group are increasingly making use of "grind schools" to gain a competitive edge. The success of these institutions

means that they are perceived as credible to those who can afford to pay the fees.

There are therefore a variety of ways by which the dominant groups in society can maintain their advantages and ensure that there is not equal consumption of educational services.

The work of Clancy (1988) highlights the lack of progress that has been made at making third level education more accessible to lower-economic groups. In 1965 at the time of the report Investment in Education the share of university places taken up by the least advantaged socio-economic groups was 11%. By 1986 the share of this group had increased to 14.8% (Clancy 1988).

When a comparison is made between the position of the most advantaged groups - higher and lower professionals, employers and managers, salaried employees and intermediate non manual workers, we see that their share of university places increased from 65% in 1965 (Investment in Education 1966) to 69.1% in 1986 (Clancy 1988). Lynch and Drudy (1993) point out that these figures indicate that over the period the inequalities in University participation between the

children of the most and least advantaged members of the labour force increased rather than diminished.

Clancy (1988) shows that when the university courses being taken are analysed the disparity between the social classes becomes even greater. Courses for the more 'prestigious' professions such as medicine, dentistry and law have very few participants from the lower socio-economic group. These results are supported by more recent research. Dowling (1991) carried out research on the courses pursued by first year entrants to University College Cork in 1989. She found that there were no participants from the lower social class in Law, Dentistry, Medicine and Commerce.

The evidence we have analysed shows that the increased participation in 2nd level schooling has not led to equal participation in third level. Third level degrees and qualifications are a powerful means of acquiring status. It is clear that the main beneficiaries of third level education are the existing dominant groups in society.

The most obvious inequality in educational outcomes are seen at third level. The time has come for the universities to do more to help remedy the situation.

Lynch in an interview with the writer suggested that quotas for those from deprived backgrounds should be introduced with the necessary backup that such a policy would entail. Such a system of quotas would help overcome the prerequisite of having the right 'cultural capital' for obtaining third level credentials.

#### 5.4 The Second Level System in Ireland

At present second level schools are divided into three broad categories. Secondary schools make up the largest section (60.1%). These schools are privately owned, for the most part, by the churches and are denominational. This section tends to cater for middle class families although some religious orders traditionally have catered for working-class and the lower middle-class. Vocational schools form the next largest group (31.3%). These schools are non-denominational and are administered by the Vocational Education Committees (V.E.C.s). They have a high proportion of working class students and have an emphasis on technical subjects. The third category of schools in this sector are the community/comprehensive schools. These schools are denominational. Their development began in the 1970's as part of a plan to

unify the second level system rather than continue with a bi-partite system.

The recent Green Paper (1992) proposes that all second level schools be called secondary schools with teachers employed by a board of management.

#### **Universalistic and Particularistic Features of Second Level Education**

To understand how education has helped reproduce inequality in society requires an analysis of the interplay between features which are universal to all second level schools and those which are particular to individual schools.

In a democratic system if the education system was purely particularistic (that is discriminatory) it would face a crisis of legitimacy. Consequently, the schooling system has an outer coating of universalistic features which help legitimize it's role.

#### **Universalistic Features of Second Level Education**

The content of the formal curriculum, that is the knowledge that is organised, evaluated and distributed in Irish second-level schools is centrally controlled.

It is therefore universalistic in character. The content of the curriculum is to a great extent centered around the Leaving Certificate and the Junior Certificate examinations. As the Leaving Certificate is used by third level institutions for selecting intake and by many employers, teachers are constrained to follow the prescribed matter.

At Leaving Certificate level Lynch (1989) found that six subjects out of a choice of more than thirty were provided by 80% of all schools, while six others were absent from 80% of all schools. Of the remaining 19 subjects available she found their provision varied greatly depending on the type of school. Both Lynch and Hannan et al. (1983) found that particularism was more a feature at Leaving Certificate level than at Junior Certificate level. There is evidence therefore of universalism and particularism in the provision of subjects in schools.

We can identify a number of other characteristics which contribute to the universalistic character of second-level education. The influence of the universities and other third level colleges is a factor. These colleges tend to require a number of core subjects such as mathematics, English, Irish and sometimes a science or

business subject. This powerful influence tends to give the curriculum a universalistic character.

The Department of Education maintains control over the daily organisation of learning within the school by means of a stream of circulars and memoranda. Schools are obliged to adhere to these regulations in order to receive funding from the department. Overall therefore there is a certain universality of experience for all pupils in second level schools. The common syllabi, the use of similar texts, the common teacher qualifications, the pupil teacher ratio, and the same length of school year all contribute to an equalising effect on the quality of experience which are available to all pupils. Where there is tight state regulation there tends to be less discriminatory practices regarding social class or gender.

#### **Particularistic Features of Second-Level Schools**

One of the most obvious examples of a particularistic practice is the manner in which knowledge is distributed by 'streaming' or ability grouping in Irish Schools.

Hannan and Boyle (1987) found that a majority of second level schools in Ireland practice some sort of "streaming". Streaming involves classifying children of the same age or similar age into two or more groups on the basis of some measure of ability such as school tests or external intelligence tests, or on the teacher's personal assessment. These groups are then used as the basis of the teaching unit for most if not all subjects.

While the majority of schools were found to practice streaming some 40% practiced rigid streaming for the Junior Certificate and only one in four had mixed ability classes. One of the consequences was that for many pupils there was little choice available in the selection of subjects particularly for pupils in the lower streams or bands. Even where the subject choices were present, Hannan and Boyle found that subject teachers or parents were not usually involved in the decision. The process according to Hannan and Boyle (P.167) is usually organised by school "management".

The reason given by most schools to Hannan and Boyle for streaming was that there was wide variance in ability and this forced the school to differentiate between pupils. Hannan and Boyle found "no support" in



their study for this proposition from their analysis of the facts. They found that factors such as;

The medium social class level of the pupil intake, the sex of the pupil body and the type and identity of the school authority are the main variables predicting variation in the extent of differentiation of the schooling process applied. (Hannan and Boyle 1987 P. 169).

Both Lynch (1989) and Hannan and Boyle found that streaming was most likely in boys' secondary schools and schools with large cohorts of working-class or lower middle-class pupils. Hannan and Boyle (1987) suggest that boys' secondary schools which stream tend to have moderate to high "drop-out" rates of pupils. Their findings echo Willis' view that "low achievers" are "cooled out", and socialised for 'failure'.

Girls schools particularly middle class girls schools were found to be least likely to differentiate their schooling process. (Hannan and Boyle P.169).

Lynch and Drudy (1993) suggest that these girls schools do not see their role as that of a social mobility agent for the selection of a female elite, where as there is a strong tradition of this in boys' schools. (P.247).

Both Lynch and Drudy, and Hannan and Boyle make it clear that schools make a policy decision on whether or not to stream. Some working class schools have rejected it as a policy.

The decision to stream appears to be based on a view that it will allow an easier schooling solution than mixed ability teaching. The end result according to Hannan and Boyle is that a small elite benefit while those in the lower streams pay the price.

There are many ways in which schools operate features that are particular to their traditions. In the curriculum there is a choice of subjects available. Hannan et al. (1983) show how vocational schools are likely to offer practical-technical subjects such as wood-work and metal-work much more so than secondary schools.

Secondary schools are more likely than vocational schools to offer certain intellectual technical subjects such as applied maths, physics and chemistry. Breen (1984) has shown that the pupils in vocational schools are more likely to be from working class families. In secondary schools they are likely to be from middle class families. Thus there is

particularism in the curriculum chosen and this is likely to be reflected in the class and gender of the pupils.

Particularism is not only a feature of the formal curriculum provision but is also a feature of the non-examination curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Lynch in her research found that extra-curricular provision for aesthetic interests in fee-paying secondary schools was higher than in state funded schools. Pupils in these schools were exposed to much more aesthetically oriented extra-curricular experiences than those in either public schools or non-fee-paying secondary schools. Lynch also found gross inequalities existing between fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools in the availability of fields for games.

It has been demonstrated that there are both particularistic and universalistic factors operating in Irish education which contributes to the reproduction of inequalities in society. We are now in a position to assess how powerful interests in Irish education maintain and counter, threats to their influence.

5.5 How Particularism and Universalism in Irish Schools  
Contributes to our Understanding of the reproduction of  
inequalities.

It has been shown that Irish schools are highly controlled by the state. Parents, pupils, teachers have little say in the development of the curriculum or the administration of schools. However, because the educational system is so vast the government cannot centralise all control. In addition the historical development of the educational system means that the Churches in Ireland and in particular the Roman Catholic Church exercise great influence in the field of education. Other bodies also have considerable power and influence such as the teacher unions and the Vocational Education Committees.

Lynch (1988) states;

The balance of power that exists within the educational site is historically and culturally conditioned; state managers must negotiate with the reigning power brokers in the exercise of their authority (Lynch 1988 P.161).

We have seen how resistance to the ideology of the school can occur among working-class pupils from the work of Wills and others. Lynch points out that resistances emerging from the school-floor are

processed and counter-resisted by an array of powerful interest groups in Irish education.

State control in education is maintained by state managers be they elected or appointed. They have the task of implementing universalistic practices in schools. The state managers have a dual role in education. Firstly they ensure that the conditions necessary for capital accumulation are reproduced. Lynch (1990) makes the point that educational credentials, are particularly important to the new middle-class in Ireland as a means of legitimising their position.

Reproducing the conditions necessary for cultural capital accumulation is especially significant for those property-less white collar and skilled blue collar workers whose status and income differentials are largely contingent on their educational credentials. (Lynch 1990 P.7)

Secondly the state managers must also ensure that the state educational system is seen to treat all pupils fairly. They must prevent gross inequalities developing which might jeopardise the whole system and thereby affect their own position.

Lynch (1988) suggests that the reason why state managers of education are unwilling to extend their

intervention is because of their fear that it would prejudice their own power. If more resources were to be expended to ensure that working class pupils developed linguistic and general educational skills comparable to those of the middle classes, it would threaten the interests of the middle class and the bourgeoisie.

As Lynch remarks concerning the middle-class in Ireland.

As a power group the middle classes are well positioned to have their interests defined as the public interest in education. In particular they are in a position to hold the elected state managers to political account because they are politically numerous, highly articulate and strategically located within the state machinery itself. (Ibid. P.9).

Rather than make radical changes the state then develops adaptive strategies to counter resistance. This has led to the development of vocation preparation and training courses and the development of a Senior Certificate in place of the traditional Leaving Certificate.

However by offering an educational palliative to the alienated they pre-empt the development of rebellion (especially of working class rebellion) and thereby reproduce existing relations of educational consumption. By siphoning off resistances they enable the mainstream to proceed in its

traditional reproductive role. (Lynch 1990 P.10).

## 5.6 Mediators of Educational Services in Ireland

We have noted how the state managers of education are influenced by both democratic conditions and by pressures for accumulation of capital. However, the state is also very mindful of the role of mediators in Irish education such as the Churches, the V.E.Cs, the teachers' unions and parents' associations. We shall examine how in Ireland these mediators can act as a force of counter-resistance to the emerging resistances of subordinate groups.

### The Teacher Unions

The teacher unions are powerful mediators of educational services. The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI), the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) and the Irish National Teachers' organisation (INTO) are all consulted by state managers in formulating policy. The teachers have specific class interests. They form part of the large property-less middle class. Their status depends on maintaining a traditional hierarchical structure that distinguishes between mental and manual labour.

As Lynch (1990) states;

If intellectual labour were no longer defined as superior to manual labour then the whole basis of teacher's differential that distances them from manual workers would not be legitimated. There is no reason, therefore why teachers would try to utilise pupil resistance to generate a crisis in education that might result in a redefinition of what is valuable knowledge. (Ibid. P.11)

The teacher unions have often resisted changes which they feel might erode their status. In general they have vested interests in maintaining a stratified society.

**The Churches as Mediators.**

The Roman Catholic Church has an almost unique degree of influence in education in Ireland when compared to most other western countries. The Church having obtained such a powerful role has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Like teachers most religious personnel come from middle class backgrounds. The Church has often acted as an agent of counter-resistance.

When vocational schools were set up by the state in the 1930's the church sought and received an assurance from the state that these schools would not provide "general education" (Coolahan 1981 p.97). These



schools were devoted to practical subjects and so far over thirty years, the mainly working class and small farmers' children who attended these schools were denied access to academic subjects that were available to the middle class in the mainly church controlled secondary schools. Clancy (1983 P15-17) has observed that the church because of its high moral standing and high status in Irish society has brought an aura of moral legitimacy to the educational process. The Church has little to gain by supporting resistances that develop within the school. In fact it has much to lose and is therefore unlikely to encourage education rebellion among subordinate classes.

#### The Vocational Education Committees (VECs) as Mediators

The VECs are the bodies that administer vocational schools in Ireland. They are highly politicised and are important mediators in Irish education. The VECs have their own interests to protect. They are now competing with the most prestigious secondary schools and therefore they have little to gain by supporting resistance's in their schools.

The VECs are dominated by representatives of local authorities. Chubb (1982, P91) has noted that local

authorities are dominated by representatives of the middle class. It is very unlikely that representatives of the middle classes would encourage changes that would alter educational outcome so that subordinate classes would threaten the educational privileges of the middle classes.

Because the VEC's are mainly composed of elected representatives they give the impression of being highly democratic. This impression also lends the educational system a facade of legitimacy.

Bourdieu suggests that competition in the field of education between vested interest groups can paradoxically strengthen the institutions' powers. Lynch (1990) suggests that the competition between the mediators of education also strengthens and stabilises the education system. Should, for example, the church decide not to reproduce the capitalist culture in the form required by the state, then the state can withdraw its financial support from church run schools and encourage vocational schools. (Lynch 1990 P.15), In this way tension between the mediators helps to stabilise the system because it is not in the interest of the mediators to encourage resistances that would threaten their own power basis.

In concluding this section then we can say that the Irish educational system is not solely determined by the capitalist economic system. It is of course an important factor. However the state has taken account of both practical and organic limits to its control over education. The practical limits are imposed by the size of the system. The organic limits have to do with the historical development of educational institutions in Ireland and our emergence as an independent state. The property-less middle classes have utilised the educational system most effectively to gain credentials that differentiate them from the working class. This group is particularly powerful in Ireland because they are numerous, articulate and well organised. Lynch (1990) suggests that the possibilities of resistances leading to radical changes in Irish education are very limited for three reasons. Firstly credentialised knowledge plays a key role in producing and distributing privileges in Ireland. Secondly the middle class are highly successful at utilising the education system in maintaining their privileges and has limited alternative means for reproducing their class power. Thirdly powerful mediating groups in Ireland can identify possible resistances at an early stage. They can siphon off this resistance into alternative educational products

that they feel are desirable. In this way the rebellious are tamed by being offered alternative educational palliatives.

## 5.7 Gender and Schooling

In our theoretical discussion and analysis we have concentrated on the issue of class thus far. However, we wish to make it clear that the issue of Patriarchy and schooling in Ireland is a vital issue which has not been fully faced up to as yet. Most of the theoretical analysis regarding class inequalities and reproduction is applicable to issues concerning gender and racial discrimination in schooling. Because the issue is of such importance we must address certain issues regarding gender inequalities here, although our analysis does not claim to be comprehensive. Hannon et al. 1983 found that gender stereotyping commenced at an early age in schooling.

This sex role differentiation extends back to the early learning and socialisation experiences of male and female infants and it is also clearly represented in the cultural assumptions shared by the main educational institutions in their provision and allocation of subjects. (Hannon et al 1983 P.285).

## Participation in Education

Gender differences are manifest in the participation rates of boys and girls in the education system. Girls have a higher participation rate at second level than boys. At third level however boys slightly outnumber girls but in recent years the rate of girls participation in third level has been growing steadily.

## Curriculum Options

All primary pupils pursue the same curriculum. However as the research of Daly (1993) shows there is clearly bias in the presentation of gender roles in the text books used in primary school. The early learning experiences that girls and boys have may help to reinforce cultural barriers that later in life discourage pupils from choosing non-traditional subjects for their gender. The official guidelines of the Department The Teachers Handbook (1971) contains explicit evidence of sex-stereotyping. For example the handbooks guidelines on singing suggest certain songs are suitable for boys, others such as lullabies, spinning songs and songs tender in content and expression are said to be more suited to girls.

It is at second level that the issue of curriculum options becomes significant. Hannon et al. (1983) found that there are broadly two types of subject displaying sex biases in rates of take up.

Firstly they found that certain subjects tended to be taken by boys and others by girls. Maths, applied maths, and physics were found to be male subjects. German, home economics, music and art were found to be female subjects in terms of take-up.

The second type of bias they found was dependent on the type of school. In vocational schools business subjects tended to be taken by more girls than boys. The reverse was the case in secondary schools. The reason for this was, in the view of Hannon, to do with time tabling options. In vocational schools, commerce was often timetabled as an alternative to "boys" technical subjects.

Because of the way schools timetable subjects, girls are seldom offered technical subjects such as engineering and construction studies. Boys are rarely given the option of doing home economics. Breen (1986) found that home economics is taken mainly by working-class girls.

In recent years there has been a considerable improvement in the situation concerning the provision of higher mathematics and the sciences in girls schools. In 1989/90. 89.4% of girls schools offered higher course mathematics and 73.9% offered physics. This compares with 73.9% and 34.8% respectively nine years earlier in 1980/81. Girls schools now match boys schools in the provision of chemistry. However, Lynch and Drudy (1993) point out that while girls have now the option of taking many subjects which traditionally were offered mainly to boys, it appears girls are still choosing to take traditional choices rather than sciences. Boys predominate in the sciences except for biology. Girls predominate in art, music and European languages.

Hanafin (1991) examines a number of studies in an attempt to explain why girls might be reluctant to choose science subjects. She discusses a number of studies which suggest that teachers may be inclined to encourage boys more than girls to do these subjects. Kelly (1981) reporting on the U.K. project "Get Girls into Science and Technology" suggests that teachers were biased in their teaching of science.

In the practical lesson the teacher spent a lot more time helping the girls appearing in some cases to set up the apparatus for them

rather than letting them do it themselves. This was in sharp contrast to the question and answer part of the lesson where boys were far more likely to be chosen to answer a question than girls were. Kelly writes that "the distinct impression from their lesson was that the boys knew the answers and the girls couldn't do the practical". (Hanafin 1991. P44)

Goddard-Spear (1987) found that for identical written work teachers awarded higher marks to boys than to girls. The teachers appeared to overrate the scientific work of a boy compared to that of a girl. (Cited in Hanafin 1991).

Overcoming the cultural barriers that discourage pupils from choosing non-traditional subjects is therefore a major task in order to eliminate inequalities which arise from subject choice. The subject choice which pupils make will often direct them towards careers which they will pursue for their working life.

#### **The Influence of Text Books on Stereo-Typing**

It may well be that girls are not encouraged from an early age to think of breaking out of stereo-type roles. Recent research by Daly (1993) suggests that the new English reader series for primary schools introduced in 1992 are very patriarchal.



She has examined two new sets of graded English language programme readers for primary schools. They include 14 readers in the "Springboard Language Programme" or "Reading Scheme" published by The Educational Company of Ireland and 13 readers in the "Sunbeam Programme" published by C.J. Fallon. The Springboard series has 192 stories in total while the Sunbeam readers have a total of 216 stories.

The following table is a summary of Daly's findings.

**Representation of Female and Male Characters in the Text of Fiction and Non-Fiction stories in the Readers.**

**SPRINGBOARD SERIES**

No. of Texts	Stories	Characters	Female	Male
14	192	762	31.6%	68.4%

**SUNBEAM SERIES**

No. of Texts	Stories	Characters	Female	Male
13	216	881	38.9%	61.0%

Source Daly 1993)

In both sets of readers there is a significantly higher number of male characters than female characters. In the case of the Springboard readers the bias is more than 2 to 1 in favour of male characters. Daly also found that as one moves to the readers that are suitable for use in the senior classes of the primary

schools, the difference increases in favour of the male. This was true for both sets of readers.

Because of the bias in the gender of the characters there were obviously many more adult occupational roles for males depicted in the readers than for female.

Adult Occupational Roles in the Texts

In Springboard Readers

Female only	Male Only	Both Sexes
15	60	5

In Sunbeam Readers

Female only	Male Only	Both Sexes
14	45	12

(Source Daly 1993)

Again there is a significant bias in favour of males in description of occupations. In the case of the Springboard series it is 4 to 1.

Daly also highlights other biases in the depiction of the characters along gender lines. For example she analyses the incidence of the characters who are shown to be brave or to show fear and cowardice.

**Activities of Female and Male Characters in the Texts.**

Activity	Sunbeam Text			Springboard Text		
	Incidence	Female	Male	Incidence	Female	Male
Showing Bravery	15	3	12	21	6	15
Showing Fear or Cowardice	13	9	4	17	8	9
Nurturance or Domesticity	18	15	3	37	35	2

(Source Daly 1993)

She found that in the Springboard readers the female world oriented almost entirely around domesticity and childcare. In the 192 stories of the Springboard reader there was only one story where it was clearly indicated in the text that the mother of one of the child characters was working outside the home. The working mother is a widow who works on the family farm.

The Sunbeam readers have six stories where it is clearly indicated that the mothers depicted have jobs outside the home (Daly P.84). This represents a stereotyping that is far worse than in real life.

## The Ethos of the School and Gender.

It is sometimes argued that because girls get better grades in the Leaving Certificate on average than boys that schools are egalitarian in gender terms.

However, as Lynch and Drudy (1993) point out the overall figures hide various inequalities. We have seen how girls are often not given the opportunity of taking technological subjects. In addition working class girls have the lowest participation rates at third level. (Clancy 1988 P.73). Lynch and Drudy (1993) describe much of the curriculum as being patriarchal in both form and substance. No effort has been made to incorporate new courses into the Leaving Certificate which might address this such as media studies, women's studies, or equality studies. The hidden curriculum of the school is often very different for boys and girls. Lynch (1989; 1989b) carried out a study on the hidden curriculum of Irish schools. She found boys and girls schools differ considerably in their social climates.

Lynch found that girls' schools placed more emphasis on "the aesthetic, moral-religious and socio-personal development of pupils". (Lynch and Drudy 1993, P.183).

There was also more emphasis on qualities such as "caring for others, sincerity, gentleness, 'refinement' and self-control". (Ibid. P. 183). Boys' schools emphasized the development of physical powers and skills. Lynch found however, that girls' schools had a strong academic achievement ethos. Girls are it seems presented with a somewhat contradictory set of values. On the one hand they are educated to compete and succeed, on the other hand they are to be guardians of the moral order and be kind.

Lynch found that boys are not presented with dichotomous models at least not to the same degree as girls. Girls are constantly reminded of their obligations outside of paid employment. Boys however, are more directed towards the world of paid employment.

While there has been an improvement in educational participation of women in Irish Education this study shows that there continues to be a male bias in the curriculum and that the ethos of some schools encourages women to accept subordination.

## 5.8 What Past Pupils Felt

As part of our investigation into whether or not schooling tends to reproduce inequalities the author carried out an investigation into the school experiences of the parents of pupils currently in the first year of two large second level schools in the great South Dublin region. The two schools were close to one another but had a very different type of pupils. One school was a girls convent secondary school which had a middle class type of pupil. The other school was a co-educational vocational school where most pupils are from a working class background.

The purpose of the study was to see if the parents of the pupils in the two schools had different experiences of schooling. The questionnaire was deliberately kept very simple and short in order to get as many responses as possible. The parents choice of answers was kept to a minimum in order to prevent confusion as to their meaning. There were 150 students in the first year of the girls convent school. The corresponding number in the vocational school was 113. Replies were received from 103 parents of the secondary school and 113 from parents in the vocational school.

THIS IS A CONFIDENTIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE YOU ARE ASKED TO COMPLETE IT. YOUR HELP IS MUCH APPRECIATED.

1. Indicate with ticks which of the following best describes your experience of National School.
  - a. Happy
  - b. Unhappy
  - c. Neither
  
2. How would you describe your teachers in National School?
  - a. Fair/unfair/neither
  
3. What type of Second Level School (Secondary) did you attend.
  - a. None?
  - b. Vocational School (technical School)?
  - c. Girls' Convent School?
  - d. Boys' Secondary School-(Run by Religious)?
  - e. Community School?
  - f. Comprehensive School?
  - g. Community College?
  - h. Other? Specify.....
  
4. Was your school fee paying? Yes/No
  
5. Which of the following best describes your experiences in second level school?
  - a. Happy?
  - b. Unhappy?
  - c. Neither?
  
6. How would you describe your teachers in your second level school overall?
  - a. Fair/unfair/neither?
  
7. Have you ever sat
  - a. The Group Cert?
  - b. The Inter Cert?
  - c. The Leaving Cert?
  
8. Did you ever go to third level education?  
Yes/No  
If Yes Where?.....
  
9. Your age is?.....Your sex is Male/Female?

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS  
(in %)**

<b>QUESTION 1</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>Unhappy</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Vocational	43	22.5	28	6.5
Secondary	57	18.5	22.5	2.0
<b>QUESTION 2</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Unfair</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Vocational	56	16	10	18
Secondary	60	13	19	8
<b>QUESTION 3</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Voc.Sch</b>	<b>Girls.Conv</b>	<b>Boys.Sec</b>
Vocational	27.5	38.5	15.5	11.0
Secondary	10.0	31.0	32.0	24.5
<b>QUESTION 4</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
Vocational	3	97		
Secondary	48	52		
<b>QUESTION 5</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>Unhappy</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Vocational	59	10	26	5
Secondary	81	6	12	1
<b>QUESTION 6</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Unfair</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Vocational	64	10.0	13.5	12.5
Secondary	78	1.0	10.	11.0
<b>QUESTION 7</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Inter</b>	<b>Leaving</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Vocational	24	18	20	38
Secondary	24	24	47	5
<b>QUESTION 8</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
Vocational	5.5	94.5		
Secondary	17.0	83.0		

N/A = Not Answered



We can see from the results that the parents who have children in the vocational school have in general had a less happy experience of schooling than the parents who sent their children to the more academic secondary school. In addition parents of the children in the convent school have a better education than the parent of the children in the vocational school.

In fact the vast majority of parents of children in the vocational school either never went to second level schooling or went to the vocational school often for a very short time.

The principal of the vocational school told the author of this thesis that of the present first year pupils about 40% would do the Leaving Certificate in his opinion. In the girls convent school the principal expected practically 100% to complete the Leaving Certificate. Therefore it appears that a pattern of unequal educational outcome is repeating itself. In addition the dissatisfaction shown in the study by people generally with their experiences in the education system is confirmed by the findings of Hannan and Shortall (1991).

## 5.9 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that inequalities in Irish society tend to be reproduced by the formal schooling system. This contributes to the continuing alienation of many groups. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, the implications of these findings for adult education will be examined.

## CHAPTER VI

### PRAXIS PRODUCTS AND PALLIATIVES

#### The Humanist's Sonnet

By Anthony Rudolf

I am determined by my class  
I am determined by my sex  
I am determined by my God  
I am determined by my genes  
I am determined by my uncounscious  
I am determined by my childhood  
I am determined by my death  
I am determined by my climate  
I am determined by my homeland  
I am determined by my work  
I am determined by my newspaper  
I am determined by my linguistic structures  
I am determined by my etcetera  
I am determined to be free

In the Chapters which have preceded this it has been demonstrated how the ideological basis of the formal education system fails to value or empower many people. What are the implications of this for adult education? Is adult education simply a continuation of the same system? There are those who say yes (See Keddie 1980). Is the role of adult education simply to apply a few bandages to the sores of the formal education system? Radical adult educators would claim that it should do more. Can it?

First let us examine some basic facts. Those who are formally appointed as adult education organisers are appointed by the state. They are employed by the V.E.C's who we have seen are powerful mediators in Irish education. It has been demonstrated how the V.E.C's have a vested interest in countering resistance in the education system. In many community schools and colleges the organisers of adult education are teachers who hold posts of responsibility for organising evening classes. They are unlikely to be radicals for the reasons we have already examined. If one goes to any community school and views the students attending evening classes, it is likely that very few working-class or minority groups such as travellers will be found there. (See Mac Gréil (1990). There are likely to be classes full of middle class people.

Many officials involved in adult education fall into the trap of playing the 'numbers game' that is so typical of the formal school. The philosophy seems to be to fill the school and prove there is a demand for education seven nights a week. One of the purposes of such an exercise is to advance the prestige of the institution and the careers of the organisers. Undoubtedly this is the downside of adult education.

Who then is to speak up on behalf of those who are demeaned by formal education? Every movement needs its leaders. Fortunately adult education has a strong and vibrant tradition of seeking social justice for those who have been alienated by the system. The adult education organisor often has to skillfully negotiate for resources from the state and other educational mediators while at the same time showing solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged. Vital adult educators are found working with the poor and for these adult educators their work is a vocation rather than a career.

The issues which have emerged from this study include the lack of respect which is given to individuals and groups because they are poor or because their values are not those which the school legitimizes. Adult educators must therefore start with basic respect for each person.

The subtitle of this thesis, refers to three possible scenarios for adult education. This thesis takes the view that adult educators should seek to develop critical thinkers who can then act to change their world. This is the praxis that this thesis suggests adult education should strive for. Yet adult educators must make use of all resources available to them to

bring about political awareness and social transformation. To this end adult educators may well have to offer those who are alienated and often despondent and bitter, both palliatives and educational products. What is being suggested here is that in order to encourage adult learners who have been alienated by the formal school, it is often necessary to offer them concrete benefits and incentives. Such educational products and palliatives may be the starting point for real learning.

No doubt most of us have at one time or other suffered rejection in our lives. The adult educator needs to be aware that many have suffered continuous rejection from an early age in the education system. The very words adult education can therefore be a 'turn off' for many potential learners.

If we are to start by respecting all possible learners, we must put aside preconceived ideological notions of what is knowledge or respectable. We must be prepared to accept that we may not have the answers.

Earlier the use of palliatives, in a pejorative sense was referred to in this thesis. In this sense it is a means to placate and induce acquiescence but we can as adult educators use this word in a more positive sense.

We can speak of a palliative as something which initiates or alleviates pain and suffering. In a time of high unemployment adult educators will have to devote considerable attention to combating the worst psychological effects of this evil. When there is little chance of full employment it is necessary to find other means of making people feel valued. This means finding ways of allowing people to be creative. In the sense that government schemes such as the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) or the Community Employment Scheme can offer individuals some opportunity and space to recover their sense of worth then they are worthwhile. Collins (1991) has referred to the problem of the 'availability principle' by which the unemployed are effectively barred from a wide range of socially and personally useful activities because it might mean that they are not available for work.

"So the unemployed must be available for unavailable employment" (P.26).

To some extent schemes such as VTOS and the Community Employment Scheme alleviate this problem. It is not possible to describe the VTOS as a radical adult education programme. The vast majority of the students who pursue this two year full time course are usually doing Leaving Certificate subjects. However, the atmosphere of the VTOS centre in Bray with which the writer is very familiar is extremely positive. The

students gain a great deal from extra-curricular activities.

While it is true that most individuals join the VTOS for an educational product there is also an opportunity for radical adult education to take place. Generally speaking it will not happen in the class room but the centre provides plenty of opportunity for discussion and debate which can lead to a genuine raising of consciousness. In this setting there is no authoritative figure demeaning the views of rebellious students. The Bray centre provides a library stocked with books on political issues such as unemployment equality, and gender studies.

There is of course the danger that students will not succeed in their examinations and have a second bad experience of the education system. The Bray Centre provided a counselling service this year for students. Regrettably this is a pilot service and is not a feature of other VTOS centres. When we consider the many disadvantages that these students have to overcome a counselling service is an essential requirement of such a scheme. A feature of VTOS is that centres provide courses in basic education which assist the most disadvantaged who have returned to learning.



Discussing the issue of credentials with Kathleen Lynch she addressed the need for adult education to provide credible educational credentials for those who are unemployed. In the world of work today educational credentials are a requirement. Education for its own sake is an ideal. The unemployed may need a more concrete incentive, especially if they have had bad experiences in school. Those who have left school early, before they receive a valued credential, have been deprived of the educational currency which is necessary for entry to most paid jobs.

If adult educators are going to try to encourage the unemployed to return to education then we must provide credible certificates which link into third level education, otherwise the view that Willis found among "the lads" is going to prevail i.e. the certificate being offered is an insult to the intelligence of the student. Many of the certificates offered by adult education to the unemployed are perceived as not providing credibility by the unemployed. Perhaps this is why very often it is not the unemployed who avail of the courses offered by the community schools and colleges to adults. This is why the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) can be of such importance in that it can offer credible courses in a centre which provides a friendly atmosphere. For this

reason VTOS has succeeded in attracting many men and women who are unemployed into education again.

The emphasis that VTOS has put on the Leaving Certificate course is often in response to the students' demand. However the writer believes that VTOS could achieve a great deal more if the organisers negotiated with some of employer's organisations for job placement even on a temporary basis. In addition more could be done in the area of linking VTOS with many of the professional institutes such as the Institute of Accounting Technicians. If adult students spend two years on a course which links directly into an area of potential employment this may be a better strategy than spending the two years in VTOS doing the Leaving Certificate usually at the lower level. Hannan and Shortall (1991) found that school leavers who had taken a general Leaving Certificate at lower level were the most dissatisfied group when asked to rate the quality and relevance of their education to adult life. There is a danger therefore that some of the vitality of VTOS could be dissipated in copying the mistakes of the traditional schools albeit in a genuine attempt to help adults get a credible certificate. As Helen Keogh (1994) the National Coordinator of VTOS notes:

The reality however is that much adult education, particularly when it becomes

institutionalized and more mainstream, is conservative....VTOS with some notable exceptions, appears to conform to this reality. (Keogh 1994 P.7)

Keogh warns that because VTOS is a second chance type education scheme it may tend more towards "adult schooling" than adult education and thereby exclude opportunities for developing critical capacity. It is of course easy for those of us who already hold higher level credentials to suggest that the unemployed should be more concerned with political issues rather than acquiring credentials. It is argued here that the adult educator must provide educational products and palliatives in order to encourage learners to return to education. Once students have engaged in education then it may be possible to encourage critical thinking and genuine emancipation from irrational ideologies.

Keogh (1994) has pointed out that many adult students particularly those who are unemployed display traditional ideas about how the teacher and students should behave. The concept of student participation often causes confusion and resentment because of the students' reluctance to overcome their fear and their sense of how things must be done. To quote Keogh "students have to be led to autonomy". This of course requires skillful teaching and great human and financial resources.

There is then often a perceived need by adult learners for educational products. Of course the term "needs" is problematic in that it can be used to end debate and analysis. Nonetheless adult educators must accept that those without educational credentials have a genuine need and we can start education from that point.

Many women are now participating in adult education courses. As has been demonstrated in Chapter V, the formal school is still encouraging women to accept a subordinate role in society.

In terms of needs, many women may require from adult education both educational product and palliatives. Cathleen O'Neill (1991) has written a moving account of her frustrating experiences as an adult learner. Speaking about a group of working class women she states:

After spending almost a decade taking one course after another we find ourselves without any accreditation or qualification. Without accreditation our training becomes useless when applying for a job. (O'Neill, 1991, P16).

Cathleen remembers women friends who were damaged by the frustrating experience of trying to take control of their lives.

I remember them even as I continue to bang my head against the glass ceiling of academia; or should I say the class ceiling of academia. (Ibid. P16).

For women like Cathleen O'Neill meaningful accreditation is necessary so that, she and others like her, can develop their talents. Without the necessary credentials many women who have trained as group facilitators or in other important community skills find their paths to higher education blocked.

As Lynch (1992) has said these women have passed through the confidence barrier and now want to develop a career. Other women may need adult education to help establish their sense of identity or to escape loneliness which women who work in the home may feel. Many women's groups have developed all over Ireland in response to women's needs. These groups are providing education which is accessible, relevant and empowering.

Adult education all over Ireland has seen a phenomenal growth in courses which are encouraging women to break out of stereotyped roles. Women are returning to education in order to establish their own identity. Local women's groups are now engaged in genuine emancipatory education. They are providing education which is accessible, relevant and empowering.

The needs of women who continue to be oppressed must be high on the list of priority areas of any adult education scheme. Yet the Green Paper (1992) does not refer to women's education in the Chapter on adult education.

Another issue raised in this thesis concerns the language of the classroom. Adult educators must be particularly careful not to cause adult students to feel intimidated or embarrassed by speaking a language which is intimidating to students. Teachers can easily fail to understand that their academic training can remove them from the world of the experiences of working class people. Ira Shor says of his teaching

The verbal density of an overtrained intellectual can easily silence the verbal expression of students, especially working class ones. (Shor & Freire 1987, P.145)

Shor advocates creating a classroom discourse where people 'open up'. In this way the adult students can reveal what they know in their own words. The teacher can learn from this experience. In order to have such a discourse there must be respect. To quote Shor:

They won't cooperate in teaching me unless the classroom treats them as respected human beings in an important project of learning. The verbal milieu of the classroom is one key to this opening. It lets students know if this class is going to be a repeat of the alienating classes of the past or if a creative venture is possible. (Ibid. P.145).

There is therefore a great deal at stake in the way the adult educator speaks to the students. The teacher must avoid imposing his/her language as the only valued one and yet it is important that the teacher avoids being patronizing. The teacher must not start from the position that the learners are inferior, but that they are our equal. To quote Freire

We have to be simple but simplicity does not mean to caricature the students as simpletons. To be simple is to treat the object of study with seriousness, with radicality, with depth but in an easy way to be grasped... (Shore & Freire 1987 P.154).

The teacher must learn to invite students gradually to conceptualize. This involves starting with the concrete world of experience and gradually students learn to use more abstract concepts and words. The purpose is to facilitate a deeper understanding by the student of his/her reality.

As was mentioned earlier, it has been observed in VTOS that adult students are often afraid of participation because they have never been encouraged to do so in school. The adult student may feel it is safer to be silent than take risks. The adult educator must encourage students to take risks. This is a slow process of building confidence.

A central issue which was raised in Chapter II is the concern that the individual is so moulded by structures and ideologies that he/she is incapable of transforming his/her reality. Adult education must take the positive view put forward by Gramsci and Freire rather than the deterministic view of Althusser. Adult educators should see their role as one which "humanizes the world". (Freire 1972).

To this end we must have a dream or a vision of the world we wish to create. We started by saying that education is not a neutral process. Educators make choices about the direction they will lead their courses. Adult educators have perhaps more freedom than other teachers to make such choices. Choosing goals make it impossible to be neutral. When we ask certain questions and by the discussions we hold in class, we are expressing political choices.

Freire believes that the teacher must be clear in what he/she wishes to achieve. There is, in his view, a moment when the educator cannot wait for students to initiate their own forward progression into critical awareness. He calls this 'the inductive moment' (Ibid. P157). The liberating educator must look for ways to invite the students to go on to a more critical dialogue. This is the difference between a liberating



educator and a domesticating educator who acts as if he/she has all the answers and power. Adult educators must avoid the notion of complete dependency between the learner and teacher. By encouraging the learner to reflect the learner is encouraged to take control of his/her life. According to Mezirow (1991) adulthood is the time for reassessing the assumptions of our formative years. Adult education can provide in many often unexpected ways opportunities for such reassessment. Mezirow gives an interesting example:

Our meaning schemes may be transformed through reflection upon anomalies. For example, a housewife goes to secretarial school in the evening and finds to her amazement that other women do not rush home to cook dinner for their husbands as she does. Perspective transformations may occur through an accretion of such transformed meaning schemes. (Mezirow 1991 P.13).

Mezirow believes that the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection. Critical reflection is not concerned with "how-to do action but with the way, the reasons for and consequences of what we do"(Ibid. P13). This is the basis of emancipation pedagogy. The adult has because of his/her maturity and life experiences the possibility of reflecting upon experiences and from this reflection learn to take control of his/her life. This type of learning is distinguished from the type of learning typical of school which is what Freire calls

'the banking method'. By the banking method Freire means that the pupils memorise data without reflection.

The ideology of meritocratic individualism was raised in this thesis. Adult education emphasises needs rather than achievement. In this respect it can be said that it is opposed to the ideology of meritocracy. Yet it has to be accepted that there is a danger that adult education in focusing on individuals who suffer from disadvantages may also be promoting individualism. It must be bore in mind that the difficulties that many of these individuals endure are the result of discrimination and poverty. These are structural problems and should not be seen as something lacking in the individual.

Regrettably the Green Paper (1992) still sees disadvantages as the individual's problem. We live in a country in which there are many poor people and yet our country is one of the richest in the world. The problem is that the structures in place and the institutions which support these structures are based on ideology which is one of selfish individualism. Adult educators must reject the notion that it is the fault of the education system that there is large scale unemployment.

The Green Paper with its emphasis on enterprise sees education including adult education as simply an economic device rather than an enriching personal experience. These criticisms were made by many contributors at the National Education Convention which was held to discuss the issues raised by the Green Paper (1992). Coolahan (1994) states:

Many reactions to the Green Paper were critical of what was perceived by its utilitarian, instrumentalised view of education, which appeared to be led by economic considerations. (Coolahan 1994, P.75).

For adult educators this view of education has little to offer. Adult education tries to push us beyond the goal of compensation towards reorganizing, sharing and empowering. In Chapter IV of this thesis the 'deficit' orientation of the school towards working class students has alerted us to the way in which this view affects teachers perceptions of working class students. It tends to create rigid teacher student relations. There is no possibility of establishing trust or sharing knowledge. Adult education has a different vision.

There is a strong tradition in adult education of communitarian ethics based on sharing and encouraging each individual to participate at some level in the

community. Of course the word community is problematic in that if it is used to define a region it may mask the various oppressed groups with a region. A good definition of community is that of T.R. Young.

The world in which human beings have a social (i.e. intended reified) reaction to each other. In a community all persons have standing. Standing entails the right and responsibility to produce culture in its manifold forms. A person shares community with another when the person cannot disengage from his (sic) social relationship with the other. (Thompson, 1980 P.68).

It is clear that for a variety of reasons many of which have been highlighted in this thesis, community values are not taught in our schools. Very often it is in response to a threat that concerned individuals within a community seek to galvanise support from within their community. However, the most vulnerable sections of the community face constant threats be they poverty or discrimination. For this reason adult educators need to engage in training leaders who can become key people in local communities. By forming a network of key people around which community action can be planned on an ongoing basis the communities level of awareness can be raised. Gramsci has spoken of the need for the working class to develop its own intellectuals.

Adult education should aim to fill this role from within the community so that a powerful network of like minded people can speak out on behalf of the poor.

When the poor speak with a united voice politicians may be forced to actually take action to change the structures which dominate people.

In many ways the women's movement is an example of what can be achieved when people who share a common course join in a community of interest.

An example of radical adult education in Ireland is the work being undertaken by the National Adult Literacy Agency. (NALA). Angela Crowley the Chairperson of the agency in an interview with the author<sup>1</sup> declared that she regarded much of the work of NALA as political in the sense that at both local and national level it was vital to bring to the public's attention the plight of many thousands of people who have literacy problems. It is a constant struggle to get funds made available for this work. The fact that the President of Ireland Mary Robinson is the patron of the organisation has helped raise the profile of the issue. NALA works with the Combat Poverty Agency and the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed to highlight the extent of poverty in Ireland and the fact that many people have left school without basic reading skills.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with author 20.8.94.

Attempts are made locally and nationally to make the community aware of the extent of this social problem. This year for example local literacy schemes are producing community dramas about their difficulties.

Angela Cragley states that local organisations rely greatly on the support of the VEC's. In Bray the local scheme has organised seventy two unpaid volunteers who give one to one tuition. Angela points out that in Bray they cannot advertise their work as they are fully stretched as it is. Whenever there is a radio or television programme on the issue of literacy, the local organisations are swamped with requests for help. Nationally there are about 5000 people receiving tuition. NALA estimates that about sixteen percent of the adult population have literacy problems. This is over one hundred thousand people.

In their teaching methodology NALA volunteers are trained to have the highest respect for the learner. The learner's previous experiences are regarded as a valuable form of knowledge. Very often former students go on to become tutors themselves. Local centres often produce books containing the writings of the students. A recurring theme in such writing is the feeling of freedom and liberation students experience on learning to read and write. New learners are brought along to meet other students who have made progress and to

listen to one another's work. Confidence building is seen as an essential aspect of the teaching methodology. The aim is to encourage the learner to become a fully participating member of the community.

NALA's policy document "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work" contains basic principles which can apply to all adult learning. These principles are:

1. That their work is holistic in that it involves much more than the learning of the mechanics of reading and writing. It involves personal development. The guidelines document describes how working with adults often means taking account of a great deal of negative experiences of school. It refers to how students have low self esteem because of being labelled as failures in school.
2. Adult literacy workers must always recognise and respect the adult status of the learner.
3. Adult literacy students need to become active not passive learners.
4. Learning is a life long process.

(NALA, 1991 P10-13).

Regrettably the government Green Paper (1992) does not support these principles. The Green Paper's utilitarian philosophy is indeed contrary to these

principles. Specifically with regard to literacy it adapts a functional and remedial tone.

To quote Downes (1992) comment on the Green Paper:

What is revealed here is the narrowest and most functional understanding of the nature of adult literacy work. It is totally focused on remedial work to train people to acquire specific technical competencies in reading and writing based essentially on techniques for training developed in military and industrial settings. (Downes 1992, P.19).

NALA sees its work as empowering the learner so that the learner can challenge those who seek to dominate him/her. Their work as with all good adult education is not about domestication but about liberation.

In conclusion this thesis stresses that good adult education is about emancipation from the ideologies and values which result in alienation for many. While formal schooling continues to alienate, adult education seeks to abolish the view that produces such alienation. It is part of a political and social movement which seeks change so that all may genuinely participate meaningfully in society.



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