**ED6 - Roles and Processes in school**

This Section will examine the roles and processes within schools from a sociological perspective, exploring how they impact students' achievement and their overall experience of education. Sociologists have long been interested in the structures and processes of schools and their function in society, as schools are significant agents of socialization and can reproduce or challenge social inequalities. The textbook will discuss the ideal pupil, labelling theory, and groupings in schools, examining how they affect students' achievement and experience in the education system. In addition, the textbook will review several studies in this field, providing insights into methodologies and findings that will be beneficial to students, educators, and policymakers in understanding the workings of schools and developing strategies that promote a more equitable and effective education system. Overall, the study of roles and processes within schools is essential in understanding the complexities of education in modern society and provides a useful framework for further research, policy formulation, and social change.

***LABELLING***

Labelling is an informal process used by teachers to better understand their students. This process is an unconscious one and not as formal as the Sorting Hat in Harry Potter. Instead, it helps teachers shape their teaching to better meet the needs of their class. Although labelling can be helpful, it can also have negative consequences. Sometimes, teachers attach negative labels to students based on their behaviour, appearance, or other factors. This can lead to negative outcomes, including poor academic performance, behavioural issues, and negative educational experiences. A negative label can have significant consequences on a student's self-esteem and sense of belonging. However, there are many factors that influence the labelling process, such as individual personality traits, behaviour, and personal information. It's essential to acknowledge the potential negative effects of labelling in educational settings while recognizing its positive aspects. Teachers should strive to create a positive learning environment for all students, regardless of whether they've been labelled or not. It's crucial to remember that labelling can be both helpful and harmful, and teachers should be aware of the potential consequences of their actions. Overall, it's important to approach labelling with caution and sensitivity, considering both its potential benefits and drawbacks.

***THE LABELLING PROCESS***

Hargreaves (1986) presents a conceptualization of the labelling process as occurring in distinct stages. The initial stage is termed "speculation," whereby certain characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and reputation may contribute to the formulation of a speculative label. This speculative label is then elaborated upon during in-class interactions, which involve the collection of data and the analysis of linguistic codes. This phase is referred to as "elaboration." As the teacher interacts with the student over time, the label stabilizes, resulting in what Hargreaves (1986) calls "stabilization." This tripartite model, comprising speculation, elaboration, and stabilization, serves as a framework for understanding the formation of a label. Therefore, the label is not simply assigned in one instance, but rather evolves over time through the aforementioned stages.

***FACTOR 1 GENDER***

Gender is a socially constructed concept that has a significant influence on how individuals interact with one another and their environment. Gender roles are the expected behaviours and attitudes associated with being male or female, and they are learned through socialization from a young age. Gender socialization occurs through a variety of sources, including family, peers, media, and education. Angela McRobbie has identified the concept of the "bedroom culture" as a form of gender socialization that girls are often exposed to. The bedroom culture is characterized by keeping girls indoors, protecting them from outside influences, and encouraging them to engage in quiet and passive activities, such as reading, crafting, and baking. This socialization creates a perception that girls are fragile and need protection, and it may discourage them from pursuing more active and adventurous activities. In contrast, boys are socialized to be more outgoing and risk-taking, often engaging in more physical activities such as sports or roughhousing. They may be encouraged to take risks and be adventurous, as these behaviours are deemed more masculine.

These gender roles and the associated behaviours and attitudes can influence how teachers perceive their students in the classroom. Teachers may have preconceived notions about how girls and boys should behave, based on their gender roles, which may impact their expectations of their students and their teaching methods. For example, in a class with a higher proportion of boys, a teacher may be more likely to encourage active participation and physical movement, while in a class with a higher proportion of girls, a teacher may focus more on quiet and passive activities. These gendered expectations may perpetuate gender stereotypes and limit the potential of students to pursue activities or behaviours that do not conform to their assigned gender role.

***FACTOR 2: SOCIAL CLASS***

In sociology, social class refers to a group of people who share similar economic, social, and cultural characteristics. Social class can be determined by various factors, such as income, occupation, education, and lifestyle. The education system plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' social class and their educational outcomes.

One way teachers can tell a student's social class is through their language. Bernstein, identified two types of language: restricted and elaborated code. Restricted code is often used by working-class people, while elaborated code is used by the middle class. Elaborated code features more complex vocabulary, grammar, and abstract concepts and does not rely heavily on contextual cues. On the other hand, restricted code is simpler, relies more on context, and tends to be more literal.

The education system favours elaborated code. As a result, textbooks, teachers, and materials use this code more often. However, this preference for elaborated code can create the idea that those who use restricted code are not intelligent, which is not true. People who use restricted code may simply require more time to understand complex ideas, similar to someone who speaks English as a second language. The education system's emphasis on elaborated code can also create barriers for individuals who use restricted code. Individuals who are not familiar with elaborated code may find it more difficult to understand, leading to lower academic achievement. However, this does not mean that individuals who use restricted code are less intelligent. It simply means they may need additional support and time to understand complex ideas.

In addition to language, a teacher may also determine a student's social class through their access to resources and eligibility for compensatory policies such as pupil premium and free school meals. The working class are more likely to face economic barriers that limit their access to essential learning resources such as stationery, textbooks, or supplementary learning materials. The inability to access these resources can have a significant impact on a student's academic performance, leading to a negative perception from their teacher due to their unpreparedness for learning. This perception can be further perpetuated by societal stereotypes that view the working class as less motivated and less capable of academic success. The effects of limited resources and negative labels on working-class students can be profound, potentially leading to lower academic achievement, self-esteem, and aspirations.

***FACTOR 3: ETHNICITY***

Ethnicity is one of the most common ways that labelling occurs in the educational system. Stereotypes and biases can lead to teachers and other school personnel labelling students based on their ethnicity, such as assuming that a student of Asian descent is naturally good at math, or that a Black student is more likely to be disruptive. Such labelling can have a negative impact on the student's academic performance and overall experience in the classroom. For instance, a student who is labelled as "lazy" or "disruptive" due to their ethnicity may be subject to lowered expectations from teachers, which can in turn affect their self-esteem and motivation to succeed. This can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the student internalizes the label and starts to behave in ways that conform to the stereotype, perpetuating the cycle of negative labelling.

Moreover, ethnic labelling can also lead to discrimination and exclusion, as students may be treated differently based on their ethnicity. This can result in the creation of cliques or social hierarchies based on ethnicity, which can further exacerbate the negative effects of labelling on students' academic and social experiences.

Unconscious bias is a key factor that contributes to the issue of ethnic labelling in the educational system. Unconscious bias refers to the unconscious associations and stereotypes that individuals hold towards certain groups, which can influence their perceptions and behaviours towards those groups. In the context of ethnicity, teachers may hold unconscious biases towards certain ethnic groups, such as assuming that students of a certain ethnicity are less intelligent or more likely to misbehave. These biases can lead to the unconscious labelling of students based on their ethnicity, which can then affect their academic performance and overall experience in the classroom. For instance, a teacher with unconscious biases towards a particular ethnicity may have lower expectations of students from that group, and may be less likely to provide them with the support and resources they need to succeed academically. This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the student's performance conforms to the low expectations set by the teacher.

***FACTOR 4: BEHAVIOUR IN CLASS***

In the process of constructing labels, the interaction between the teacher and student plays a crucial role. It is during these interactions that the teacher evaluates the student's behaviour, and subsequently, assigns a label. The labels may be positive or negative, and the student's behaviour is the primary determinant of the label they receive.

For instance, a student who displays good manners, is respectful, and works hard in class is likely to receive a positive label. Conversely, a student who exhibits disruptive behaviour, is aggressive, or refuses to adhere to the classroom rules is likely to be labelled negatively. It is important to note that the label assigned to a student is not only influenced by their behaviour but also by the teacher's interpretation of that behaviour.

Furthermore, it is worth considering that a student's behaviour in the classroom can be linked to various other labels such as social class, gender, and ethnicity. For instance, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may find it harder to conform to the classroom rules due to various socio-economic factors such as lack of resources, poor parenting, or inadequate education. Similarly, students from minority ethnic backgrounds may face discrimination or stereotyping, which can impact their behaviour in the classroom.

***FACTOR 5: PREVIOUS TEACHERS***

In the context of student labelling, it is worth noting that formal labels are not typically assigned to students. However, teachers do engage in conversations about their students, which may lead to informal labels or reputations being attributed to certain individuals. It is important to recognize that such labels may be based on subjective opinions and experiences and can have significant implications for the student's academic and social standing.

When a student transfers to a new school, reports are written to inform the new teachers of the student's academic performance, strengths, and areas for improvement. This information is crucial for providing a personalized learning experience that is tailored to the individual student's needs.

At the beginning of each academic year, teachers may review their class lists and recall their experiences with former students. These conversations can contribute to informal labelling of the students and may affect their social and academic standing within the classroom. It is important to recognize the potential impact of such labels and to strive for a fair and objective evaluation of each student's strengths and areas for improvement.

Conversations among educators regarding past students may persist throughout the year and may contribute to the perpetuation of informal labels. To ensure a fair and equitable evaluation of each student, it is important to encourage teachers to approach their evaluations in a neutral and objective manner, based on the individual student's merits and achievements.

***FACTOR 6: REPUTATIONS***

In the school environment, reputations can form labels that students and teachers use to describe and categorize individuals. Reputation can stem from a variety of factors, including academic performance, social behaviour, or family background. These labels can be positive or negative, and they can be difficult to shake off once established. Even teachers who have never taught a particular student may be aware of their reputation through informal channels of communication, such as teacher lounges or hallway conversations.

When teachers form preconceptions based on a student's reputation, it can significantly impact how they interact with the student. For example, a student with a reputation for being disruptive may be treated more harshly than another student who has not gained the same label, even if their behaviour is identical. This labelling is not limited to teachers labelling students, however, as students may also form preconceptions about teachers based on their reputation.

***FACTOR 7: DATA***

The consideration of data is an important aspect of education. Through the collection of various reports, such as previous academic grades, we are able to gain insights into a student's educational needs, including any additional requirements they may have. This information is particularly valuable when a student has faced external challenges that may have impacted their performance in the past. Such data plays a pivotal role in the education system, allowing educators to set achievable targets for each student. If a student is predicted to attain a low grade, then obtaining such a result is deemed acceptable. However, if a student has been targeted to achieve a higher grade, a lower-than-expected result can raise questions about what may have gone wrong. The use of data, therefore, has the potential to alter a student's experience. The factors that influence a student's educational journey are many and varied, and as such, require consideration of numerous elements to create a comprehensive label.

***IDEAL PUPIL***

Becker (1971) outlines the concept of the "ideal pupil" as a construct that teachers hold in their minds regarding the characteristics and behaviours of a model student. This ideal pupil serves as a reference point against which all other students are measured. For instance, in sociology, a teacher may seek students who demonstrate engagement in discussions, curiosity about the world, and an ability to apply their knowledge to the world around them. These criteria form the framework for what the ideal sociology student would look like. The ideal pupil, thus, acts as a guide for teachers when evaluating students and assigning labels. Students who meet the criteria of the ideal pupil are more likely to receive positive labels, whereas those who fall short may receive negative labels. This construct plays a significant role in the labelling process in the classroom, as it guides teachers' expectations and perceptions of their students.

In a study by Hempel-Jorgensen (2009), the notion of the ideal pupil was found to vary not only between individual teachers but also between different types of schools, depending on their social composition. For instance, in a working-class school in Aspen, where discipline was an issue, the ideal pupil was perceived as quiet, passive, and obedient. In contrast, in a middle-class school in Rowan, which had fewer disciplinary problems, the ideal pupil was defined by personality and academic ability rather than behaviour. This demonstrates that the definition of the ideal pupil, which informs the labelling process and determines whether a label is positive or negative, can be different depending on the specific school context.

***STUDIES INTO LABELLING***

The first study examined by Ray Rist, an American sociologist, analyzed how a teacher used the home backgrounds of kindergarten students to segregate them into different groups. Rist found that the teacher grouped students based on their socio-economic status, creating the "Tigers" group, comprised of neat, middle-class, academically advanced students, the "Cardinals," who were average, and the "Clownfish," who were considered troublesome students from poor, working-class, and deprived backgrounds. Rist's longitudinal study followed these students through their primary and secondary education and revealed that the labels attached to them in their early years of education continued to influence their academic experiences and outcomes. Those labeled as "Clownfish" were viewed as low academic achievers and troublesome even ten years later in high school, while those in the "Tigers" group were pushed into advanced placement courses and excelled within the education system. This study highlights the significant impact that early labeling can have on a student's education and ultimately, their future opportunities.

Rosenthal and Jacobson's study, Pygmalion in the Classroom, was a field experiment in which they gave fake IQ tests to students and randomly selected 20% of them as "bright" students or "bloomers" and another 10% as "less able" students or "non-bloomers". The researchers informed the school of the results and then retested the students a year later to see if the label of being a bloomer or non-bloomer had affected their educational progress. The study found that those identified as bloomers made more progress than other students, while those identified as non-bloomers tended to regress in their testing. However, the study was considered unethical because it negatively impacted the education of some students. The study also found that the data created in-class and in-school groupings based on the labels given to the students. This study has been criticized for its ethical concerns. The researchers used deception by giving fake IQ tests to the students, which might have caused psychological harm to the students who were falsely labeled as less able. Moreover, the researchers randomly selected students and labeled them as "bloomers" or less able, which could have affected the students' self-esteem and academic performance.

Another ethical concern is that the researchers informed the school about the test results, which resulted in the school creating in-class and school groupings based on the labels assigned by the researchers. This categorization could have further stigmatized students who were labeled as less able, leading to a negative impact on their academic and social outcomes.

***IN SCHOOL GROUPINGS***

The concept of in-school groupings is closely linked to labelling, as it can both result from and create labels. Educational institutions utilize four methods of grouping students, namely, setting, streaming, in-class groupings, and mixed-ability teaching.

**Setting**: This is a method of grouping students within each subject area based on their ability. Students are assigned to a group based on their performance in that subject, with each group consisting of students who are either top, middle, or bottom performers in the subject. This grouping is usually determined by a test or an assessment that is designed to measure the student's knowledge and skills in that particular subject area. This approach can have both positive and negative consequences, as it allows for appropriately challenging instruction, but it can also perpetuate negative labels.

**Streaming**: This is a method of grouping students based on their overall academic ability. Students are placed in a group with other students who have similar academic abilities and are taught all subjects within that group at the same level. The groupings are often labelled, such as red, green, or blue band, and students may be required to take certain GCSE subjects depending on the band they are placed in. Streaming, which has largely been phased out due to negative labelling, and leading to blocking of educational opportunities for students in lower streams.

**Mixed-ability teaching**, which is currently the norm in education, is aimed at providing equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their ability. . This is a method of teaching where students of different abilities and academic backgrounds are placed in the same class and taught together. However, this approach can be both positive and negative, as it requires teachers to differentiate instruction to cater to the needs of both high- and low-ability

**In-class grouping:** This is a method of grouping students within a single class based on their academic ability. Teachers may group students together based on their performance in a particular subject or on a specific task or project. The aim is to provide differentiated instruction that meets the needs of each student in the class.

In the study by Keddie, the concept of speculative labelling was applied to in-school groupings. Speculative labelling refers to the practice of labeling students based on expectations or assumptions, rather than on actual evidence of their abilities. This type of labeling can have negative consequences, as it can lead to students being placed in lower streams or sets, which can limit their access to educational opportunities and resources.

Keddie's study found that students who were speculatively labelled as underachieving were often placed in lower sets and streams, which became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This means that because they were placed in lower sets and streams, they were not given access to the same knowledge and opportunities as their peers in higher sets and streams, which further perpetuated their perceived underachievement. As a result, these students were not given the opportunity to show their full potential, and they may have become discouraged or disengaged from their education.

This study highlights the importance of being aware of the potential negative consequences of in-school grouping practices, such as setting and streaming. While these practices can have some benefits, such as providing appropriate support and challenge for students of different abilities, they can also perpetuate inequality and limit educational opportunities for certain students. Therefore, it is important for educators to consider the potential consequences of in-school grouping practices, and to strive for more equitable and inclusive educational practices that support all students to reach their full potential.

***SELF FULLFULLING PROPHECY***

The notion of self-fulfilling prophecy is an important concept in sociology. However, it is essential to recognize that labelling is a process that involves more than just attaching a label to an individual. Hargreaves' concept of speculation, elaboration, and stabilization highlights this process. For instance, a teacher may speculate about a student and create an image in their mind of what that student is like. This image is shaped by the ideal pupil that the teacher has in mind. This label then shapes the teacher's interaction with the student.

The negotiation phase follows this stage, where it is not necessarily the case that being treated in a particular way will lead to a corresponding behaviour. A self-fulfilling prophecy can occur, but it is not a given outcome. The student can accept the label and internalize it, leading to a master status, which they live up to. For example, if a student is labelled as high achieving, they may internalize this label and behave accordingly. However, the negotiation phase can also result in a rejection of the label, leading to the student proving the label wrong.

Margaret Fuller's study on Afro-Caribbean girls in a London school exemplifies this point. These girls rejected negative labels and went on to achieve despite the label. The elaboration phase in Hargreaves' three-step system is referred to as the negotiation phase in the self-fulfilling prophecy process. This phase considers which elements of the label other students will accept or reject and act upon accordingly. Thus, a self-fulfilling prophecy is not guaranteed and depends on how the student reacts to the label.

The labelling process is linked to in-class grouping processes that can lead to a positive or negative experience of the education system. The label can also impact a student's academic performance. It is essential to remember that these labels are not fixed and are constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Giddens' concept of the reflexive self is relevant here. In addition, the ideal pupil, as conceptualized by Becker, varies between teachers and affects how students are grouped in school settings, such as streaming and mixed ability. In conclusion, labelling theory can be linked to education, with speculation, elaboration, and stabilization forming a crucial aspect of this connection.

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