WHAT WAS IT?

• All eleven year olds sat the 11+ (Eleven Plus) exam and they were selected for one of three schools on the basis of the result.

• Those passing the 11+ went to Grammar School which provided all students with the opportunity to study O Levels (the predecessor to GCSEs) and A Levels. Grammar Schools were and still are considered to provide the highest standard of education. Only 20% of all children went to Grammar Schools.

• Those children whose test results showed an aptitude for technical skills went to Technical Schools, although there were very few and catered for only 5% of the high school population.

• Children who did not pass the 11+ attended Secondary Modern schools where they could not take O Levels but instead sat the ‘easier’ and therefore less credible CSE exams. Around 75% of the school population attended these.

HOW DID THIS BENEFIT THE INDIVIDUAL / SOCIETY?:

* Bright working class children could access high quality education and gain O Levels which led to a great deal of social mobility.

WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES OF IT?:

• The likelihood of working class children actually getting to Grammar School was very low and they were full of middle class children who had the cultural capital and the money to get private tuition to pass the exam.

• No parity of esteem – Grammar schools and their pupils were seen as ‘better’ than Secondary modern schools and their pupils. Also, the 11+ was extremely unreliable – a lot of people develop academically far later.

In a nutshell:
Between 1944-1965 children were selected to go to one of three schools; grammar, technical or secondary modern. This was intended to provide clever working class children to experience high quality education which they would usually pay for.
WHAT WAS IT?

• Provided one school for everyone of all abilities and all social backgrounds in a local area.

• Promised equal opportunities to all children by allowing them to sit the most appropriate exam, the O Level or the CSE.

• Children were put into ability groups within the school itself through the processes of streaming and setting. They then had the opportunity to move up the ability groups.

HOW DID THIS BENEFIT THE INDIVIDUAL / SOCIETY?:

• Provided all children with an opportunity to mix with children from different social backgrounds and was intended to break down social class barriers to promote social solidarity.

• Gave all children the opportunity to develop their skills instead of judging them at the tender age of eleven.

• Critics of the comprehensive system

WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES OF IT?:

• Streaming and setting was simply another form of selection. Working class children were frequently labelled as ‘thick’ and put into the lower sets and not given the opportunity to sit the O Level exams.

• While exam results improved, the gap between the middle and working class continued to grow wider. This was partly because schools located in particular areas usually drew in a homogenous (similar) group of students so if they were from a middle class area, it was a middle class school.

In a nutshell:

From 1965 the Tripartite system was replaced with comprehensivisation which provided local schools which catered for all abilities under one roof. This policy was directed by social democratic ideas about equality of opportunity & giving everyone a chance to succeed.
WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES OF IT?

• Parental choice was really only exercised by middle class parents with cultural and social capital.

• League tables are unfair and misleading – many students achieve grades that are amazing for them given their background.

In a nutshell:

A raft of changes to education brought about by The Education Reform Act in 1988. It aimed to raise standards in teaching by encouraging competition between schools for pupils who were now able to choose which school to attend. Schools were funded per pupil so the more students a school attracted, the more money it got...
New Labour Education Policy

WHAT WAS IT?

- Diversity and choice – expanding specialist schools which focus on particular subjects which can select up to 10% of their pupils with particular aptitude for the specialist subject.

- Tackling underachievement in deprived areas – The Excellence in Schools document (1997) proposed the following new types of school to tackle demotivation in inner city areas: Beacon Schools (‘centres of excellence’ who share expertise with other schools), Academies (failed schools taken over by partnerships of government and churches or businesses), Education Action Zones – run by forum of parents and representatives from local businesses and government and given £1 million to spend on flexible learning.

- Vocationalism and training – new qualifications in GNVQs and the New Deal to get people of working age some training.

- Numeracy and literacy hour – where all primary school children work on numeracy and literacy for an hour each in the classroom.

- EMA – the Educational Maintenance Allowance was introduced in 2004 and entitled children from relatively low-waged families to a weekly payment of between £10-30, conditional upon full attendance at college. Bonuses were available for those who could evidence good progress, until September 2010 when the Coalition Government scrapped them.

- Tuition fees for university – student maintenance grants scrapped, now all students have to take out student loans and pay tuition fees. Those from very low income homes can access funds.

WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES OF IT?

The middle class still gain and these strategies have done little to reduce class inequality in educational achievement. Cultural deprivation – not having the attitude to put the effort in to succeed in education, is widespread amongst the poor who don’t see themselves as having a valued part in a society that constantly derides them as ‘CHAVs’.
This critically assessed the impact of New Labour Educational Policy.

New Labour has narrowed education down to an economic function; it’s there to provide a skilled workforce. It’s not there now to provide any fun in learning about the world.

New Labour Education Policy is obsessed with ‘raising standards’ to look good against other European countries in a global (world) economy.

New Labour’s preoccupation with ‘raising standards’ means that the middle class children are favoured because over-subscribed schools are able to select (pick) the most able kids – and they’re usually middle class.

Schools are judged on exam results so teachers just teach stuff for the exams and are restricted to a packed specification – teachers and students can’t learn for the joy of it, off the cuff. It’s all about being tested and getting a job.
WHAT IS IT?

Teaching and Leadership
* Initial teacher training only funded for 2.2 degree or above. This is the equivalent of a C grade. The idea is to bring in more academic rigor to teaching and learning.
* Introducing Free Schools which are run by a board of parents who appoint the staff they want and set the curriculum of subjects they think are important for their kids.
* More academies; less government control – more do-it-yourself, self-controlling.

Behaviour
* Strengthen powers to search students for anything deemed offensive by the school.
* Reinstate no-notice detentions – teachers can keep students back the same day.
* Use of reasonable force – staff can use force to control unruly students, particularly in the case of fighting.

Curriculum, assessment and qualifications
* Review of national curriculum – looking at which subjects should be taught.
* Age 6 ‘reading’ test to allow parents to evaluate quality of schools.
* Introduce English Baccalaureat which is highly prestigious qualification.

School Funding
* Pupil Premium – schools will be funded an extra £430 per pupil whose parents earn less than £16,000 per year.
* National Funding Formula – the idea that the education pot of money will be controlled by the government, not the local authority but will be up to Head Teachers to decide how it is spent.
* Abolishing EMA – as part of the public spending cuts.
* Allowing universities to raise their tuition fees to a maximum of £9K per year.

WEAKNESSES:
- Who decides what’s important to learn?
- League tables for age 6 reading test will divide schools into good & bad because it’s home background that is often more important than teachers’ skill.
- But funding is already being cut – this is only the money schools should be getting anyway.
- Working class and underclass kids will continue to be socially excluded by schools that don’t want them & a system that doesn’t give them incentive to study further.
Mock exam questions on the social policies put in place by politicians that affect your experience of and access to education.

1 Read Item A below and answer parts (a) to (d) that follow.

Item A

The 1988 Education Reform Act included a range of policies that aimed to introduce ‘market forces’ into education. Supporters of the Act argued that the ‘marketisation’ of education would bring many benefits, driving up standards in schools and making them more accountable to the ‘consumers’ – parents, local communities and employers – that they serve. However, critics argue that marketisation policies tend to benefit the more privileged groups, such as the middle class and whites. By contrast, less privileged groups, including the working class, some ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs, lose out. Some critics claim that marketisation also disadvantages boys, since schools often see them as under-achievers. As a result, some sociologists believe that marketisation has led to greater inequality of educational opportunity.

(a) Explain what is meant by parental choice. (2 marks)

(b) Identify three policies that government or educational bodies have introduced to overcome children’s cultural deprivation. (6 marks)

(c) Outline some of the government policies that have been introduced since 1988 in order to raise achievement in education. (12 marks)

(d) Using material from Item A and elsewhere, assess the ways in which educational policies may reproduce and justify social class inequalities. (20 marks)