How has the English government engaged with International league tables and addressed educational disadvantage through policy initiatives? A critical policy analysis of inequality in education in the twenty-first century.

by

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Glossary

DfE: Department for Education

DfES: Department for Education and Skills

DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families

EEF: Education Endowment Fund

ECCE: The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

HE: Higher Education

NESS: The National Evaluation of Sure Start

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

PPG: Pupil Premium Grant

SATS: Standardised Assessment Tests

TALIS: The Teaching and Learning International Survey

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

SSCCs: Sure Start Children's Centres

Clarification on the use of England and the United Kingdom in this inquiry:

Education in the United Kingdom has been devolved with each country from the United Kingdom having separate systems under separate governments: The United Kingdom's Department for Education oversees education in England; whereas the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive assume responsibility for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively. The Education White Papers referenced in this inquiry are specifically created by the United Kingdom's Department for Education for England. In this thesis, England is referred to specifically in terms of its education and specific details of its provision and the United Kingdom is referenced as the policy maker/government who oversees and implements these changes to England. Only policy in England will be considered in this thesis. When the United Kingdom is mentioned, it is in reference to England.

Abstract

This enquiry is an analysis of the Education White Papers introduced in England between 2009 and 2016 regarding the intentions and initiatives of successive governments for tackling disadvantage, mainly using principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. The enquiry scrutinises England's engagement with PISA results and the emerging OECD indicators, as policy makers in England determine how best to respond to the triennial comparisons and the variety of policies, practices and outcomes observed in other countries.

This study integrates Habermas' locutionary aspect and performatory content in a framework to examine the relationship between the OECD's indicators given to England and the responses to these propositions. Ball's study of 'policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects', together with Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction are included in the conceptual framework to analyse disadvantage within the complexity of the policies examined.

The terminology of social class occurs less frequently in policy documents in recent decades, replaced with language that can obscure recognition of the circumstances and challenges faced by marginalised communities. Properly joined-up thinking that would be required to reduce disadvantage is therefore bypassed, while education is imbued with vaguer concerns around inequality. The White Papers can be read as expressions of neo-liberalism rather than a deep engagement with disadvantage, with education deployed as a support mechanism in the wider prioritisation of the economy by English governments.

This thesis claims there has been a process of transubstantiation of economic capital, whereby the most material types of capital can present themselves through the constitution of a person in the immaterial forms of 'social capital' and 'cultural capital'. The role of the parent in their child's schooling is significant, as this means that class differences in attainment are perpetuated through cultural reproduction. Parents who possess the capital that is favoured by educational institutions position themselves as active consumers in education, thus using their cultural capital for the transmission of advantage across generations. The illocutionary and perlocutionary

effects in the White Papers acknowledge that the propositions by the OECD are true and carry weight. Schools are provided with many initiatives that are clearly stated in the White Papers, to ensure that there is a good level of engagement with parents so that parents can fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Position Statement

This research was borne out of my interest into the ways or manner the Department for Education (DfE) takes into account, and reacts to, recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in relation to disadvantage and the effectiveness of such interventions. The government has for years continued to attempt to reduce the attainment gap between those from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds, with limited success (Hirsch, 2007). Despite the numerous initiatives to support disadvantaged pupils so far, the negative correlation between disadvantage and educational attainment has been challenging to eradicate (Raffo, et al., 2007).

In a parliamentary debate, Michael Gove quoted the 2009 PISA figures and discussed the country's decline and dismal failure in relation to our international competitors (Gove, 2011). The Prime Minister (David Cameron MP) of the Coalition government and his deputy (Nick Clegg MP), drew attention to our plummeting international rankings as the key driver for England's schooling system needing a major change. The foreword in the 2010 White Paper states that: '*we are standing still …while others race past…we fell from 4th in the world …*' (DfE, 2010: p.3). It is important to understand that the government did not use other international benchmarks, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which indicated that test figures in England had improved over the same period to determine how well children were doing (Jerrim, 2012). This shows that policymakers based their interpretations on one set of data, which is extremely limited.

Along similar lines, the 'Foreword' by the Secretary of State for Education in *Education Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016) contains a concise vision statement, making a point for change with the emphasis that every child should get a 21st century education (DfE, 2016: p.88). The Conservative government follows suit in

this same paper, with its discourse on social mobility and democracy. The determiner, '*every*', used with reference to children emphasises the use of 'wherever' and 'whatever' to convey its aims of fairness and social justice. 'Education has the power to transform lives and, for me, is a matter of social justice – extending opportunity to every child, wherever they live and whatever their background.' (DfE, 2016: p.6)

This stimulated my interest in how policy was decided upon and enacted by each government and the reasons why it seems so difficult to eradicate the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Social class inequalities in education are considerable in England, despite many governments attempting to reduce the attainment gap over many years. Educational sociologists have provided various explanations for this enduring inequality, though there is no firm agreement over the contributory factors for this disparity (Wood & Scott, 2014). I use the work of Bourdieu to discuss educational attainment in relation to cultural capital and disadvantage, which adds to a wider understanding of the debates that surround poverty and education.

This chapter outlines the overall content of my thesis. It presents an initial overview of the areas I examine, in analysing how disadvantage is addressed by policy in England and investigating the English government's engagement with PISA results in relation to the disadvantaged. Publicly funded schools are given a specific amount of funding for each identified disadvantaged pupil within their setting and school leaders are expected to show how they have improved outcomes for these pupils over time (DCSF, 2009b). The Pupil Premium (PP) grant was introduced by the Coalition government in April 2011, for schools in England. It was apportioned to pupils who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those who were looked after by the state for more than six months. The PP was expanded in 2012/13 to include pupils who have been eligible for FSM at any point over the past six years (EverFSM6). A smaller premium is allocated to pupils who have parents in the armed forces, and this now includes those who have parents who died while in the armed forces (ESFA, 2018). In 2020, schools received £2,345 per looked-after pupil, £1,345 per EverFSM6 pupil at primary school, and £955 at secondary level (Education and Skills

Funding Agency, 2021). This funding is to be used to further support disadvantaged pupils in overcoming any barriers to learning that these pupils may face and also to help increase their participation in education.

There are, however, a few conditions that schools have to adhere to in the administration and strategic use of the grant:

1. The money is to be used on PP, and not simply placed into the general school expenditure pot.
2. Schools must show how they will use these funds to promote the best outcomes for PP pupils, and must publish this strategy.
3. Both Governors and Ofsted must examine this strategy, ensuring it is sound and that the school monitors the progress of PP pupils, to demonstrate how they are attempting to close the attainment gap (Allen, 2018).

There have been various criticisms levelled against this fund:

- Pupil premium students have varied needs. Placing pupils into categories to allocate resources in schools is logical, provided it is educationally sound. Categorising pupils as pupil premium, or not, to justify decisions about who gets access to limited resources in schools would be unsound (Allen, 2018).
- Free school meals entitlement does not necessarily identify the poorest children in schools since between 50% and 75% of these children were not from households with the lowest income (Hobbs & Vignoles, 2010). According to Gorard, et al., (2021), an area that is of concern is when children are living in relative poverty but are not categorised under FSM, based on HMRC's household income figures that showed approximately 11% of pupils in 2013 were not officially registered for FSM even though they should receive this fund given their household income.
- FSM entitlement does not precisely identify the poorest children so it does not make sense to use the funding in this way since poverty is a poor proxy for the educational and social disadvantage of families. Children who come from homes where parents have not had a positive schooling experience and

perhaps struggle to invest time in their child's education may need far more support to be successful at school, making this a social, rather than income, characteristic of the family (Allen, 2018).

- The pupil premium group in any school setting does not have a homogenous context and is dependent on the make-up of group and a school's gaps is dependent on the non-PP statistics. The non-PP group is much more diverse. The gaps reported by schools are mainly due to the demographic composition of the non-PP children at school (Allen, 2018),

School leaders are given limited direction as to how this funding should be spent but are judged on the difference that their schools make to the outcomes of these pupils (DfE, 2016). As someone who is strategically involved in determining the outcomes for pupils, there has been limited information provided or recommended to guide schools in supporting 'disadvantaged' children achieve as well as, or better than their 'more advantaged' peers. As a headteacher, I am the recipient of many initiatives and documents related to 'narrowing the gaps' or 'diminishing the differences' between such disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.

In May 2019, Ofsted published a new *Education Inspection Framework* that established how various institutions in England would be inspected from September 2019. For the first time ever, the framework includes '*cultural capital'* (Ofsted, 2019). This guidance also extends to the *Education Inspection Framework* (2019) and the *School Inspection Handbook* (2019). Ofsted inspectors will make judgements on the quality of educational provision, and how schools are preparing pupils for life by giving them access to the knowledge and cultural capital that they require to succeed. This includes how disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) gain the knowledge and cultural capital they require to be successful (SIH, 2019: p.47; EIF, 2019: p.9). This guidance is new (at the draft stage of this thesis) and it is clear that the leadership at Ofsted are keen to inspect schools' policies and practices aimed at narrowing gaps in educational performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. What has not

yet been communicated or clearly defined, is what is meant by '*cultural capital'* as this understanding is vital for all educators working in schools, as it is they who really need to grasp, interpret and then translate what cultural capital should look like in practice, in and beyond the classroom.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

My enquiry focuses on an analysis of the English government's engagement with PISA results in relation to disadvantage and the implementation of all policies that specifically make reference to improving outcomes for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils in relation to suggestions made by the OECD. This research therefore aims to explore the nature of disadvantage and consider how policy has been used by the English government to address disadvantage, which is the key line of enquiry. It also aims to investigate the way policy expects schools to enact stipulations made to overcome disadvantage that may impinge on pupil learning and examines the policies that the government have created and commissioned, and how they have attempted to engender this change in England. In this thesis, I consider what the government has attempted to accomplish, the specific reasons why difficulties may be encountered due to external influences, and whether there has been any positive outcome from the implementation of policy in relation to disadvantage.

Stephen Ball's, *'policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects'* (2006) is one set of policy analysis tools used to create the conceptual framework that is used to analyse the complexity of the policies, to determine whether socio-economic, political and cultural influences impede or promote particular outcomes. I use Bourdieu's key concepts to construct a methodological and analytical framework through the application of his concepts, and to explore and understand how education policy is used to perpetuate disadvantage. I use Habermas' locutionary aspect and the performatory content to examine the propositions made by OECD's indicators and the responses by England. The OECD oversees PISA and seeks to advocate policies that better the economic and social circumstances of communities around the world. In supporting education, PISA tests pupils who are 15 years old from countries world-wide that choose to participate. The tests in mathematics, science

and reading are held triennially, after which the OECD has the platform to make suggestions to participating countries. Governments can implement the indicators provided by the OECD and collaborate with other countries to improve their individual education systems. The role of PISA and the OECD in policy determination in England and across the world is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

England did relatively well in the first two rounds of PISA (2000 and 2003) and there was limited press coverage or change in policy that was directly influenced by these results. The Labour Government, at the helm at the time, was content with the results and it was asserted that PISA had very little influence over education policy (Baird et al., 2011). Since 2000, the UK's PISA results based on these two-hour tests have fallen, changing the UK's position on the global league table in reading, maths and science. In 2006, with 57 countries participating compared to 32 countries in 2000, the UK was placed 14th for science compared to 4th position in 2000; it fell ten places to 17th in reading and moved from 24th to 28th position in maths. Its position shifted further down in 2009 when 65 countries took part, with the UK being placed 17th in science, 24th in reading and 28th in maths (Coughlan, 2010).

The Conservative Education Minister, Gove stated that the White Paper, '*The Importance of Teaching'*, published in 2010, was a tailor-made reaction to the PISA results from 2009 and the country's performance in relation to other countries. This White Paper concentrated on matters related to the autonomy of schools within an accountability framework and teacher qualifications. In a related article in the *Times Education Supplement* (Gove, 2010), the Minister pointed out that twenty percent of 15-year-old students did not reach the expected levels of literacy and numeracy. However, there are several policies included in the White Paper that are completely unrelated to the PISA findings. Hence, the use of the word 'bespoke' in the article was employed somewhat excessively when describing the comparison between the educational policy document in England and the PISA 2009 findings (Baird et al., 2011). In this thesis I consider the initiatives around disadvantage introduced in education in England between 2009 and 2016, using the following documents:

- OECD documents, 'Education at a Glance' from 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2015.
- White Papers from 2009 to 2016.

These are the key questions and a summary of the findings from this research:
How has the government in England engaged with PISA results in relation to disadvantage?

- England's engagement with PISA and OECD specifically related to disadvantage correlates to educational policy documents by the English Government.

How has policy been used by the English government to address disadvantage?

- The conceptualisation of the term 'disadvantage' differs between the English administration and the OECD. This is noteworthy as the OECD provides indicators to the government to drive policy changes, yet the ways in which these administrations define this concept do not precisely correspond. The definitions for disadvantage by the DfE and the OECD are different and focus on different types of capital. One of my key insights is the process of transubstantiation of economic capital, whereby the most material types of capital can present themselves through the constitution of a person in the immaterial form of social capital and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu economic capital is essential in understanding social inequalities, and that it is significant, especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital.

- The near-erasure of social class from policy is a manipulation of language and discourse in order to reconfigure our thinking with disadvantage being used as a euphemism for class. Following the removal of the word 'class' from most policy documents came the word 'disadvantage' and all the disjointed categories linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty. The policy links one might expect between disadvantage and poverty, social mobility, social exclusion and social inequality are not made. The interconnectedness between poverty, social mobility and social class is not always seen or linked through policy.

How have schools been expected to enact stipulations made in policy to overcome disadvantage that might impinge on pupil learning?

- The language in policies gives parents the permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, requiring schools to consider the parent as an important stakeholder. School have been expected to actively engage with parents as it has been established/is expected that parental involvement has a positive impact on their children's achievement at school. Parents who possess the capital that is favoured by educational institutions position themselves as active consumers in education, using their cultural capital for the transmission of advantage across generations. This advantages those who have the cultural capital with the conversion of these capitals helping transmit advantage across generations. The role of the parent in their child's schooling is very significant as this means that class differences in attainment are perpetuated through cultural reproduction.
- Schools engage positively with policy guidance and many of these are presented as statutory obligations that schools must fulfil to ensure there is a good level of engagement with parents, so that parents know they are getting the best provision for their child.

1.3 Policy as Text, Policy as Discourse and Policy Effects

It is imperative that I clarify the meaning that I have ascribed to the word 'policy' in this research as 'policy' can take on quite a range of meanings. Fairclough indicated that policies outline how we should act and by what rules we should abide. The meaning given to policy is informed by Ball's approach to policy. Ball holds two conceptualisations of policy, based on his theoretical indeterminacy: *'policy as text and policy as discourse'* (Ball, 1993: p.10) and policy as *'both text and actions, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended'* (Ball 1994: p.10). Ball (2006) discussed the need for those analysing policy to be equipped with varied theories and concepts. *'Policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects'* is one set of the tools that are used to create a conceptual framework to analyse the complexity of the policies I examine. The text is deciphered and decoded by actors

in accordance with their identities. All of this takes place within an intricate, complicated system of power structures (Thompson, 2002).

Critical discourse analysts very often use a framework with three levels, defined by Fairclough (1995) and comprised of '*analysis of texts, interactions and social practices at the local, institutional, and societal levels*' (Rogers et al, 2005: p.371). The initial aim is to detail the connection that exists between specific '*texts, interactions and social practices'.* Next, it aims to make sense of the structure/arrangement of the discourse practices. An explanation of '*why and how social practices are constituted, changed and transformed in the way that they are is the third aim'* (Rogers et al, 2005: p.371).

The first dimension of a text is an analysis of the word level, which is focused on 'language in use', used to express the attitudes we have. The production of text, or the discursive practice, is the second dimension and is about language and the change it can bring, with significance placed on the composition of our sentences. The third dimension is social practice, with reference to standards of society or an organisation, thus dimension three is about how language creates opinions and our attitudes. Language also creates social relationships and practices, therefore it is associated with power and this is an integral part of our communication.

1.3.1 Policy as Text

Taylor (2004) considers how language is used tactically because policies are seen to be an expedient in bringing about a desired outcome. This inquiry considers how language has been used in the documents explored and whether specific language has been chosen by authoritative bodies as an expedient to gain a desired end. Policies are representations that are determined in multifaceted ways through struggles, negotiations, authoritative public clarifications and reinterpretations. They are deciphered in complex ways by actors who come with their unique background and experiences (Ball, 1993).

There will be as many meanings of texts as there are readers. Policy texts are most often a result of working jointly and it is imperative to understand that the texts are

not necessarily concluded but are still subject to scrutiny, influence and negotiation at different stages and by various institutions. The texts are also influenced by different policies, as they develop and transform in the political sphere based on circumstances, actors and interests to be served (Ball, 1993). Schools are diverse in terms of their pupil intake, culture, ethos, curriculum and a range of other factors, and this will play a part in how policy is interpreted and enacted. Institutions and local authorities will have their own interpretations of policy documents, so essentially there could be as many elucidations of a policy as there are schools in the country. Not only this, but we must also take into account the leaders of any particular institution and what they deem as crucial, given the stage at which they have arrived. During the analyses, it is imperative to take account of the fact that the policy text does not conclude when published, but only just begins its journey in terms of various interpretations and reinterpretations.

Texts may be relayed by leaders and for some, they may be a secondary source of information. *'Struggle over meaning, or the politics of discourse'* is part of the process of policy making (Luke, 1997). The deciphering of texts by different audiences in particular contexts gives the author of the policy limited control over the numerous interpretations that can arise. The leaders of institutions and local authorities will interpret language in policies based on their experience, skills and context. Themes and tactical language that have been used to produce a particular outcome will be scrutinised.

Policies bring up issues that need a contextual solution. Policies are open to interpretation when enacted, as according to Ball (1993), *'actors'* may be confronted with a number of issues when translating policy texts into practices that are sustainable. Resolutions to difficulties that may arise due to policy text will need to be clarified or explained within particular situations and this may come with temporary solutions and '*messiness*' (Ball, 1993). Policy socialises us into what is '*thinkable' and 'unthinkable*' (Bernstein, 2000). Structures, systems and relations already embody patterns of inequality (whether knowingly or unknowingly) when policies enter (Ball, 1993).

1.3.2 Policy as Discourse

An analysis of the discursive practice includes an exploration of how the policy text is interpreted, reproduced and transformed, shaping meaning of this text in specific contexts. This is specifically about the 'how' of policy. Policies that refer to how the UK government has addressed disadvantage have been explored.

Policy as discourse is concerned with how people interpret and reproduce or transform texts, given their own personal identities. Discourses are a means for knowledge creation through particular meaning, and interpretations of the world, other meanings and interpretations are constrained. All things considered, discourses disrupt or preserve relations of power by describing particular '*discursive limitations',* keeping the pre-determined landscape separate, so that interpretations can take place (Ball, 1993).

Reading, writing, listening and speaking depend on using various texts and exchanging or borrowing language through repeating phrases, statements, and themes that appear across texts (McGregor, 2010). This is referred to as intertextuality, whether that borrowing takes the form of quotes, citations, references, paraphrasing, use of metaphors, or other devices and information. Intertextuality, when used for the purposes of '*construction, representation and projection'* of chosen content, can legitimise and augment the argument of a writer. If identified, intertextuality will be highlighted in the publications examined for the purposes of this inquiry (Ball, 1993).

The two-pronged approach to policies by Ball, being text and discourse, stresses the challenges over the '*interpretation and enactment'* of policies. How the policy is enacted and its effects will be determined by the context (1993: p.11). The conception of a policy may differ vastly based on how abstract the policy is, given the context of the practice. The myriad of given factors that may be involved from one context to the next will determine the circumstances policies can influence and change. The enactment of policy is not mundane and linear, but dynamic, with challenge and an ever evolving face.

1.3.3 Policy Effects

An exploration into the way schools in England have to enact stipulations made through policy to overcome disadvantage helps point out whether the language used has been a determining or limiting power. Leaders in education and teachers construct meaning on the basis of their previous experiences and knowledge with language and texts. Working together, these present '*identifiable systems of meaning and fields of knowledge and belief that, in turn, are tied to ways of knowing, believing, and categorizing the world and modes of action'* (Luke, 1997: p.15).

Analysis of this dimension involves an examination of the manner in which discourses function in the different domains of society (Fairclough, 1995). *Sociocultural practice, is concerned with issues of power—power being a construct that is realized through interdiscursivity and hegemony'* (Rogers, 2005: p.371)*.* Interdiscursivity, where texts borrow and steal from each other, can be seen in the way the language of business has entered into the domain of education (McGregor, 2003). Texts become infused with various sociocultural practices in the enacted world and are at the mercy of the actors who, according to Cahill (2015), authenticate their legitimacy through their consumption, interpretation and implications. Policy effects vary based on the context, and general and specific policy effects frequently merge (Luke, 1997).

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six parts. It begins by conceptualising disadvantage with reference to the literature. It then explores the roles of PISA and OECD in English educational policy. After a discussion of my research methodology and the use of critical discourse analysis, it discusses the findings of this study. The paper concludes by assessing whether there are any positive outcomes from what the government policy attempts to achieve.

In **Chapter One**, I introduce the research and the aims of this enquiry. I also elucidate the meaning ascribed to the word 'policy' in this research using Ball's '*policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects'*.

In **Chapter Two**, I identify and explain the nature and context of the research issue which is the definition of disadvantage**,** and particularly how disadvantage linked to social class is explicated and examined in the context of education in England. I explore how disadvantage intersects with poverty, social exclusion and social mobility. I present Bourdieu's theoretical conceptions which seek to describe exactly how social inequalities are created and perpetuated through a process of cultural reproduction.

Chapter Three focuses on PISA and the OECD, as they have carried out the largest international comparative studies in education. I examine the roles of these organisations in global education, exploring how they determine policy formation in England. I discuss trends in policy borrowing, similarities and differences with other jurisdictions, and trends in recent reforms.

I discuss my research methodology in **Chapter Four**, introducing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I explain the reasons for CDA as my main research method, and discuss my methodology. I take a discursive approach and, by engaging with relevant data, I draw upon documents from the OECD, PISA and the White Papers for Education in England**.** I also employ Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) as the methodological approach. I outline the conceptual frameworks used to analyse policies related to PISA and OECD that have been implemented in England, using Bourdieu's tenets of cultural reproduction, and Habermas' locutionary aspect and the performatory content.

Chapter Five uses Habermas' locutionary aspect and the performatory content to examine all documents from the OECD and PISA, published between 2006 and 2016 that provide indicators to England. Subsequently, I investigate how the content of the Education White Papers (i.e. the response by the English government) connect to the indicators provided by the OECD and PISA. Furthermore, I use thematic analysis, Ball's approach to CDA and the tenets of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, to examine the role of language in the Education White Papers from 2009 to 2016, to provide a comprehensive view of 'disadvantage'. The focus is the scrutiny of language and meaning in policies, so

as to unravel how policy rhetoric and discourse work in favouring some ideas over others. The analyses focuses on the discourse in terms of Ball's '*policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects',* Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and Habermas' performatory and locutionary content. The language used in the White Papers is discussed as crucial to the discourse at relevant points in history. I examine how these policies are interpreted and where contradiction is evident in the rhetoric.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis and explicitly shares the knowledge that is added to the field.

2 Chapter: Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Through my analysis of the literature in the field of education and sociology, I examine how disadvantage has been conceptualised in education with differing emphases from the middle of the 20th century to provide different points of view, so that there is clarity about the term disadvantage used within policy documents. The conceptualisation of disadvantage encompasses income poverty, and also a lack of social and cultural capital and control over decisions that affect life outcomes (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). I examine the idea of disadvantage through the lenses of sociology and education with consideration given to the economic, social and cultural influences that may impinge on the lives of those identified as disadvantaged. This is important as it is only by proceeding in this way that a clear understanding of disadvantage can be established, so that it can be explored within the context of education policy.

I consider the significance of poverty in relation to disadvantage to establish greater clarity from sociological and educational perspectives, drawing on literature from both fields. Since the so called 'death of class' in the 1980s (Pakulski & Waters, 1996), various categories that intersect with disadvantage, such as social exclusion, poverty and those who are in receipt of free school meals, have been proposed in its place (Woodin, 2007), but these are disjointed. Despite these classifications, social class is still prevalent in some government policy , with the Social Justice Unit of the Conservative Party documenting the significant role of social class in education (Woodin, 2007). I analyse the conceptualisation of disadvantage in the broad landscape of texts within the multidisciplinary field of education since the middle of the 1900s. My focus is on the literature in the fields of economics, sociology and psychology, combining the portrayal of educational disadvantage from their different perspectives.

These are the main findings from my literature review:
- The definitions of the term 'disadvantage' differ between the English administration and the OECD and this is significant, as the OECD provides

indicators to governments to drive policy changes yet how these administrations define this concept does not correspond.

- The definitions for disadvantage by the DfE and the OECD are different and focus on different types of capital. Cultural capital is now seen as essential for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils by Ofsted (2019), yet it is not highlighted within educational settings as fundamental. One of my key insights is the process of transubstantiation of economic capital through the constitution of a person into social and cultural capital. Transubstantiation is where the most material types of capital can present themselves in the immaterial form of social capital or cultural capital. Economic resources invested in cultural assets and embodied social characteristics and dispositions are transubstantiated so now culture is capital. According to Bourdieu, economic capital is essential in the understanding of social inequalities, and that it is significant, especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital.

- With the removal of the word 'class' from most policy documents came the word disadvantage and all the disjointed categories linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty.

- The role of the parent in their child's schooling is considered significant as class differences in attainment are perpetuated through cultural reproduction (Reay, 2004). The language in policies gives parents the permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, thus advantaging those who have the cultural capital with the conversion of these capitals in transmitting advantage across generations.

2.2 The Conceptualisation of Disadvantage

2.2.1 Disadvantage

I explore the definitions of disadvantage from differing perspectives and how it has been conceptualised to achieve clarity about its use in the White Papers (DCSF, 2009a; DCSF, 2009b; DfE, 2010 & DfE, 2016), which are the policy documents constituted by the English Government. Educational disadvantage is a multidimensional issue (Frawley, 2014) that pervades all levels of the education

system. O'Sullivan (1994), asserts that educational disadvantage can be discussed from a range of theoretical perspectives: constitutional limitations, personal deficit, cultural deficit, culturally irrelevant schooling, material condition and political economy.

At the outset, the complex concept 'disadvantage' and the various connotations it is given, are examined in the literature in the field of economic, sociological and psychological perspectives on the causes of educational disadvantage from the 1960s. The intrinsic link to poverty in the literature, including the sources of disadvantage that continue to maintain social class inequality are examined. I argue that the definitions and discussion of disadvantage, differ based on how the term is situated within the context and the agenda of the organisation in relation to their use of the term.

Secondly, I clarify and discuss the term '*disadvantaged'* as it is used in the Education White Papers from 2009 to 2016, that lay out the government's plans to address inequality. These White Papers have introduced policies to attempt to narrow the gap between achievements of children and young people who are disadvantaged and others who are not, as they have recognised that children from disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers to achieving their potential (DfE, 2016). I argue that these White Papers adopt a deficit conception of disadvantage in which the disadvantaged have to overcome certain barriers through specific interventions by schools in order to achieve educational success.

Since the middle of the 1900s, literature in the field of education and sociology has defined disadvantage with differing emphases being placed on specific criteria. Philp (2015) asserts that disadvantage suggests a 'lack', a negative quality or characteristic, resulting in children unable to achieve their potential, either as an individual or as part of wider society. This approach carries the connotation of relativity in that children are disadvantaged in comparison with other children, linking the concept with that of 'equality of opportunity'. Tormey (2010) adopted terminology used by Gallie (1955/6), to argue that even though educational disadvantage can be construed as an *'essentially contested concept'*, it is generally portrayed in policy documents as if it is a concept about which consensus has been reached. However,

the use of the concept disadvantage is rooted in a political context within an array of political assumptions, yet it is assumed that there is consensus that the term relates to differentials in educational outcomes. A range of ideological perspectives are inescapable within educational debates, yet sometimes these remain unstated or unacknowledged, leading to false claims of consensus (Tormey, 2010).

In the literature around the 1960s from the perspective of psychology and sociology, the predicament of working-class youth and minority groups is used interchangeably with the disadvantaged, thus giving the definition an explicit slant with specific reference to the working class and minority groups (Ornstein, 1971; Havighurst, 1964; Lewis, 1966). Ornstein says that describing all minority groups as working class encourages stereotyping and strengthens a divided approach to society, with a focus on their weaknesses and combined deficits (1971). During the 1960s and 1970s, the philosophy underlying early childhood education was that there had to be some compensation by the school if the effects of the disadvantage had to be mitigated (Philp, 2015). This analysis is formulated in socio-economic or institutional terms and was reflective of the general trend of policy, which was not concerned with children as individuals. Instead the difficulties experienced by the 'disadvantaged' were viewed as structural (Philp, 2015).

Havighurst (1964) used outmoded language in his writing on disadvantage, portraying the disadvantaged solely in terms of income. He made reference to family, personal and social group impediments, together with classification according to race, ethnicity and income. Clift (1969) describes the disadvantaged as having innumerable negative personality traits, problems with cognitive function and adverse educational values. Comparing both approaches to disadvantaged pupils, the literature of the 60 and 70s that portrays the disadvantaged negatively tend to blame the school, the environment or the student, whereas the more positive standpoint on disadvantage blames the teachers and the schools (Reissman, 1964). Reissman (1964) looked at the positives and strengths of so-called disadvantaged pupils and implied that their teachers needed to challenge themselves to develop new kinds of creativity in these disadvantaged pupils. Lewis (1966) shows his profound respect and concern for those in poverty and is best known for ennobling the concept. This

was another positive portrayal of the disadvantaged, with Lewis (1966) asserting that these children and young people have their own culture and are not necessarily deprived, but judged using middle class standards and bias.

From the 1960s onwards, there was a shift towards social and economic well-being in the definition of disadvantage within the body of literature from the perspective of sociology of education. If a child has to endure disadvantage during the entirety of their school life, their economic and social well-being may be negatively influenced. A child is deprived if the provision offered is limited due to '*social, political, or cultural reasons*' within a school setting (Passow, 1970:16). According to UNESCO (1970:16), a child's learning may be hampered due to the social and cultural characteristics that they come with from home, adding to their underperformance in education in terms of *'knowledge, skills and attitudes',* thus becoming disadvantaged (Passow, 1970). This definition by UNESCO looks at social and cultural characteristics that could hinder their educational outcomes. According to Higgins and Tymms, educational disadvantage or educational inequality exists because of educational differences that are linked with socio-economic status (Wood & Scott, 2014). They also point out that it is imperative that the individual is given the richness and the breadth of social, emotional and physical experiences to be in an advantageous position as the crucial stage for intellectual development is up to and including the teenage years. Evidence shows that the first three years are when the child develops in relation to the stimulation they experience (Wood & Scott, 2014). This reflects the idea that a lack of stimulation and experiences for development would leave the child at an educational disadvantage, requiring intervention while the brain is still able to respond (Ornstein, 1971; Wood & Scott, 2014). Research has suggested that the socio-economic position of the parents, related to their occupation, education and/or income determines their place on the advantaged - disadvantaged continuum. Research attempting to gauge an individual's performance in relation to learning opportunities often uses the socio-economic status of the parent as a basis to understand the transmission of cultural values and expectations (Connelly, et al., 2014).

Mortimore and Blackstone during the 1980s asserted that *'educational disadvantage means the denial of equal access to educational opportunities, the tendency to leave education at the first opportunity, and the hindrance of achievement by social and environmental factors'* (1982). Archer and Hutchings (2000) argue that those with lower access to economic, social and cultural capital are disadvantaged in numerous ways, hampering their educational outcomes and life chances right from the outset of their educational journey. A report by Education Policy Institute (EPI) reiterates this idea, defining disadvantage as encompassing *'not only income poverty, but also a lack of social and cultural capital and control over decisions that affect life outcomes.'* (Crenna-Jennings, 2018: 4) From a sociological perspective, these influences have been conceptualised through the cultural reproduction theory using Bourdieu's cultural capital conception (Bourdieu, 1986: Sullivan, 2001), which is also explored further in Sections 2.6.3 and 2.6.6.

Other definitions of disadvantage from the field of sociology and psychology since the late 1990s focus attention on the school and home environment, as well as the community. Boldt and Devine (1998) argue that educational disadvantage must be recognised in the context of the limited ability of the individual to derive equitable benefit compared to one's peers, based on expectations from the school system. Furthermore, educational disadvantage must be understood in relation to those individuals who left formal education without recognised qualifications, thus being inadequately qualified to obtain steady employment compared to their peers. Poverty and disadvantage are also connected with exclusion and withdrawal from participation in civil society and therefore seen as a cause for much concern (Darton & Strelitz, 2003b). Frawley (2014) argues that educational disadvantage is now believed to be much more than just the social circumstances that children grow up in, but incorporates *'material deprivation, transmitted deprivation, societal, community and school-level factors as well as important individual processes of student engagement with education.'* (p.10) Those in poverty in any country are disadvantaged to some extent, as they lack access to the goods and services obtainable by other people in society, including the skills and knowledge upon which access is contingent (Philp, 2015). Social exclusion takes place where a

combination of various factors confine individuals and communities in a spiral of disadvantage (Levitas et al., 2007).

This section has shown that in the academic literature in sociology, 'Disadvantage' and 'weak students' are some of the expressions that are substituted for class, thus removing issues of class from all the connections relevant to power and the economy. This ensures that any transformation around class becomes extremely difficult (Lynch & Lodge, 2002). An important viewpoint is the targets set for the disadvantaged group in the educational system, concentrating on the disadvantaged group while drawing attention away from the likelihood that the educational system, created from a political perspective, may have processes within that may automatically hinder improved outcomes for working-class children (Tormey, 2010).

2.2.2 Definition used by the OECD

I argue that there should be a shared understanding of the concept disadvantage if the OECD suggests indicators to governments. I examine the definitions used by the OECD over time, which may be in non-academic literature, but for its purposes the OECD draws on the definition of disadvantage from educational literature. In 1992, the OECD defined educational disadvantage as, *'a complicated phenomenon that stems from the interplay of firmly established economic, social and educational factors.'* (Kellaghan, 2001). There is a clear shift in the definition that the OECD moved to in 2001, namely that disadvantage encompassed more than just economic and social elements, but included educational factors. This definition by Kellaghan (1999), quoted in OECD (2001; p.24) has focused on the:

> 'child as being at a disadvantage at school if, because of economic, cultural or social factors, the competencies which the child brings to school differ from those valued in schools, and which are required to facilitate adaptation to school and school learning.'

This definition by Kellaghan, however, is also debatable as it is nuanced, given that it finds the locus of disadvantage in factors that emanate from the child's environment, which are the competencies the child brings from home to school, rather than in the political power which shapes what is considered valuable in school (Tormey, 2010).

The definitions used by the OECD are nuanced, yet significant as it is important to know how PISA determines who is categorised as being a disadvantaged child, as the country's practices are analysed by the OECD so that they can be provided with recommendations to support disadvantaged children (OECD, 2015). When determining advantage/disadvantage, the OECD uses the '*Index of economic, social and cultural status'* ('ESCS') (OECD, 2019; Knowles and Evans, 2012: p.3). This is a measure of the socio-economic profile of the student, using a continuous scale called the PISA index of ESCS, which uses a combination of a range of information on parents' education, employment and home possessions. A positive difference of more than one standard deviation implies that a student is at an advantage and a negative difference of more than one standard deviation points to disadvantage (Knowles and Evans, 2012). Social class is referred to as *'a group of people who share the same socio-economic status.'* (OECD, 2019: p.19) It is significant that the defining characteristics used for the middle class in this recent OECD research report were parent's income, employment and consumption. It is indicative that the phrase 'middle income class' was used rather than 'middle class' (OECD, 2019). This defining characteristic of social class conflates with that of economic advantage/disadvantage.

Similarly, Higgins and Tymms (Wood & Scott, 2014) provide insight into their understanding of disadvantage, showing that pupils do not start school at the same level. Instead, they argue that there are a range of influences, including genetic makeup, quality of parenting, social class and affluence that have an effect on achievement before starting school (Wood & Scott, 2014). This thesis likewise argues that the relationship between disadvantage and poverty and/or income is not a simple causal one and using free school meals as a measure of disadvantage is too crude as it does not consider all the other influences (Darton & Strelitz, 2003b; Wood & Scott, 2014).

Based on various perspectives of this global phenomenon, I understand that it will not be solved by educational solutions alone (Wood & Scott, 2014). It is quite evident from the range of definitions from the sociological, psychological and economic

perspectives, that they are inspired by different criteria and consideration must also be given to the combination of factors that cause disadvantage.

2.2.3 Definition of Educational Disadvantage in England

I now focus on the definition used in England to determine who are the disadvantaged in education in the literature in the sociology and psychology of education from 1998. This section considers how the literature in England defines educational disadvantage according to the 1998 Education Act as: *'the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.' (Section 9)* (The Department of Education, 1998)

This definition of educational disadvantage clarifies the link between poverty and educational outcomes (Kellaghan, 2001; Weir, et al., 2017) and is shared by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted, 2018) and the Education & Skills Funding Authority (ESFA, 2021), based on economic disadvantage which is associated with poverty. It is much more concise in that it is specific and these pupils can be identified with certainty. *'Disadvantaged pupils'* are eligible for means-tested free school meals ('FSM'), or have been at some stage in the last six years, and are in year groups Reception to Year 11. Looked after children ('LAC') or those who have previously been looked after by the State, defined in the Children's Act 1989 *as 'one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English local authority ('LA')'*, are also classified as disadvantaged with this definition being based on social impediments. Also included are LAC, who have been adopted or are under a '*special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order.'* (Ofsted, 2019; ESFA, 2021) This is the definition of 'disadvantaged pupils' in England as used by Ofsted (2019) and the ESFA (2018), and will be used for this research. This definition which determines who is classified as disadvantaged in schools in England makes sense based on the clarification by Wood & Scott (2014) who assert that children living in poverty are often disadvantaged in various areas of their lives. They may have access to free schooling, but the household income determines children's access to provision by the school, beyond what is made available in the classroom in timetabled lessons.

Educational resources and spaces to learn in the home that support learning may not be at one's disposal (Wood & Scott, 2014).

Passow (1970) includes cultural characteristics as part of the definition for both disadvantage and deprivation. The role of cultural factors are not taken into account in the 1998 Education Act, as only social and economic factors are considered to be barriers to a pupil benefiting from education. This will be discussed further in Section 2.6 under sources of disadvantage. Furthermore, the term 'disadvantage' that is defined is being used as part of the definition (in the part where reference is made to social or economic disadvantage). Unlike the OECD's definition of disadvantage in 2001, the 1998 Education Act does not consider cultural characteristics in its definition and only focuses on the socioeconomic elements. The ESFA (2018) and the Ofsted (2019), have stressed economic disadvantage in their definition, allowing for easy identification of pupils through FSM eligibility, not considering cultural characteristics that have an impact on education as indicated with the definition used by the OECD. Furthermore, the definition fails to clarify exactly what the term 'impediments' are, as impediments are the core constituent and the key to understanding the explanation of disadvantage, given that those impediments might stop students from benefiting from education (Kellaghan, 2001). Educational disadvantage according to Kellaghan (2001), is explained in terms of the gaps between the ability and the dispositions that a child comes into school with, compared to the ability and the dispositions that are valued by the institution; and economic, social and cultural capital that affects the development of ability and dispositions. Moreover, educational disadvantage is perpetuated when there are gaps between the ability and dispositions that have begun to develop in homes and communities and the ability and dispositions that assist in being compliant and achieving success at school (Kellaghan, 2001).

In my analysis of the way in which disadvantage is discussed and defined differently, the definition taken by the ESFA and the DfE only uses the economic factor, while no consideration is given to social and cultural factors. The OECD provides indicators to the United Kingdom that are considered and used to improve education through policy initiatives, yet the definitions of common concepts such as 'disadvantage' differ

significantly, which indicates a lack of joined-up thinking to tackle this area of huge concern.

2.2.4 Poverty and Disadvantage

This section examines the correlation between poverty and disadvantage in the literature since the 1970s, as the government in England uses poverty as a determinant for those children in education who fall into the disadvantaged group. I review the literature on poverty and I argue that poverty is inextricably linked to the concept of disadvantage. The conception of poverty has changed and evolved over time, with each new administration adapting the definition and measure of poverty to suit its purposes. According to Lister (2004), poverty is a socially constructed concept that has been recurrently reviewed at as a form of disadvantage associated with material deprivations, symbolic meanings and moral implications. When poverty is associated with disadvantage, it is explained through there being a lack, denial or an absence of advantage (Dean, 2016). Research has revealed that growing up in poverty leads to disadvantage well into adulthood as people are less likely to get good educational qualifications. Low family income in the United Kingdom is a strong forecaster of low educational performance for children (Hirsch, 2007).

Poverty can be an impediment to children and young people gaining access to education or participating successfully and achieving well in school education (McKinney, 2014). Homes with restricted financial resources will not be able to afford the type of support that more affluent homes are accustomed to. Social disadvantage is the concept that is most often connected to poverty as pupils experience disadvantage because of poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) *Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain* in the latter part of the 1990s revealed that over two million children were doing without two or more items that most people thought were essential (Darton & Strelitz, 2003b). Bourdieu asserted that income and wealth is essential in understanding social inequalities, and that it is significant especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

The definition of poverty has also evolved and changed with each passing government, based on the party's ideological stance. In 1979, Sir Keith Joseph, the

Conservative first Education Secretary asserted '*that the needs of the poor should be defined in terms of subsistence needs only.*' (Lansley 2011) Townsend, in his studies in 1979 and 1993, defined poverty not in relation to a 'basket of goods', but as the extent to which people could participate in society in a similar way to their colleagues and also have all their economic, social and healthcare needs met (Dean, 2016) Being deprived was a social phenomenon, with disadvantage undoubtedly being relative for social beings and this is how poverty was to be understood (Smith, 2010). In purely economic terms, Conservative thinkers during this period showed a tendency towards measuring poverty in absolute rather than relative terms. A decade later (1990s) and the viewpoint changed considerably, with John Moore stating that absolute poverty had been eradicated and relative poverty could not be disregarded as it was purely inequality (Lansley 2011)*.* Darton and Strelitz (2003b) make a rational case that poverty and disadvantage restrict the economic capacity of the people who potentially could be making a valid contribution, which is damaging to the prosperity and welfare of a country as a whole. To succeed in reducing poverty, changes have to be effected through specific policy initiatives.

Dean (2016) highlights the definitions of poverty by the United Nations (1995) and George & Howards (1991), where the United Nations differentiates between *absolute* poverty, that exists when there is severe deprivation of basic human need, and *overall* poverty, which may be characterised by the absence of active participation in making choices with regards to civil, social and cultural life (UN, 1995). George & Howards (1991) offer an alternative approach to poverty, using a continuum to describe the range from the most severe form of deprivation of the absolute definition through to the relative definitions based on a 'coping' standard, or a more encompassing 'participation' standard. In this way, the term poverty has been applied validly and justifiably to the varied disadvantaged experiences of those in poverty, such as those who may be victims of famine in a third world country or a single parent finding it difficult to survive on benefits in poor housing in a first world country (Dean, 2016).

The Labour Party (1997-2010) took a different approach to that of the previous administration aiming to ensure that society shared in the profits of growth, by

keeping control of relative poverty levels and passing an act to shore up their commitment to the elimination of poverty. The Child Poverty Act 2010 had explicit targets to be achieved by 2020 (McKinney, 2014; Main & Bradshaw, 2015; Lansley, 2011). The Sure Start programme was planned to provide additional professional help to families with young children in poverty-stricken areas. The Labour Party unveiled Sure Start in 1999, targeting areas of high deprivation, providing a range of services based on needs to deliver support to disadvantaged children and their families. Between 2003 and 2004 the shift from Sure Start to Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs) allowed for services for children to be joined-up, with a clear focus on aiming to close the achievement gap of disadvantaged children and, in doing so, diminishing social inequalities and bringing child poverty to an end (Bouchal & Norris, 2014; Sammons et al., 2015). This was evidenced by the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) commissioned from 2009 to 2015, which evaluated SSCCs in England and found they could mitigate some of the disadvantage experienced by children living in these negative circumstances, helping to reduce the equity gap. These SSCCs alleviated a degree of disadvantage, with high disadvantage families having used the registered children's centre for five months longer and for 38 hours more than low disadvantage families, including the access to specialist services (Sammons et al., 2015). According to Ball (2008), the Sure Start programme enabled parents from the middle class to a greater extent while the parents from the working class received some benefit from the support.

The Sure Start funding was not protected when the Coalition Administration came into power in 2010. The budget for these centres was incorporated into an 'early intervention grant', which also comprised of funding for initiatives associated with teenage pregnancy, mental health and youth crime. These initiatives were in receipt of almost £2.8bn in 2010-2011, but received only £2.2bn in 2011, which amounted to a reduction of 22.4 per cent to local authority budgets. As a result, the Sure Start Centres were gradually reduced (Eaton, 2011), but the pupil premium grant (PPG) came into effect in 2011, attempting to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils through the provision of additional funding to make sure that they have access to the same opportunities as pupils from richer families (ESFA, 2018).

The Conservative administration of 2010 embraced the idea that poverty had to be defined in absolute and relative terms as relative poverty separates the poor from mainstream society. In 2010, inequality was still a huge factor in the UK as relative poverty was defined as lower than 60 per cent of the median household income. Low income means lower living standards, which have an impact on people's life chances and opportunities, such as a child from a home affected by poverty being at increased risk of underachieving in education and struggling in employment later in life. David Cameron stated clearly that his party recognised this problem and determined that they would measure and act on relative poverty, committing to end child poverty by 2020. Those targets were then discarded and replaced with an obligation to monitor and report on data about the educational attainment of disadvantaged children and those living in homes where no one was in an employed position (Lansley, 2011). The Coalition's rethink was down to the costs of the 2020 commitments, which were thought too costly and unsustainable, without tackling the actual causes of poverty. Field (2010), proposed an alternate strategy through the funding of the Foundation Years to abolish child poverty, seeking to prevent poor children from becoming poor adults.

This is significant and relevant to the focus of this research as there needs to be an understanding that those experiencing relative poverty would also be at a disadvantage, just as those who are facing absolute poverty. The basic definition that the JRF uses in its anti-poverty strategy is: *'When a person's resources (mainly material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation).'* (Aldridge et al., 2012) The complexity of this definition is in determining human need, as it could include a range of needs that may not necessarily be a feature of poverty (Goulden & D'Arcy, 2014). Human need may include elements other than material resources such as social activities, which may bear a cost. The inability to afford a range of needs is considered a feature of poverty. The JRF then refers to the definition by Ravallion (1992), which states *that 'poverty means being unable to afford to meet the minimum needs that are deemed reasonable by the standards of the society in question.'* (Goulden & D'Arcy, 2014: p.3) The JRF definition of poverty suggests there are essentials for living which would include social participation (Goulden & D'Arcy, 2014).

Historically, leading Conservative thinkers have revealed a preference for measuring poverty in absolute rather than relative terms. According to Field (2010), an approach that is more effective to break the transmission of intergenerational disadvantage is to employ methods that will incentivise a focus on improving children's life chances. Poverty is seen as greater than a lack of income, with Field emphasising factors such as parenting skills, the value of the home learning environment and local nursery care that should take priority over financial measures in shaping the life chances of children. A lack of resources restricts social participation for those who are disadvantaged and therefore limits the contribution that they could be making to the economy, thus having a negative effect on the economy. Yet still the mismatch between what the disadvantaged should be entitled to and the policymakers' practical intentions is palpable. Policy initiatives in education will have narrow success in surmounting social class disparities in outcomes for pupils unless they are articulated with policies that address wider economic inequalities, which need to be challenged at the governmental level (Whitty, 2001).

The policy set by government determines the measure of poverty of the nation, with recent governments keen to raise aspirations for all children. Governments can establish opportunities that empower individuals and communities to do the best they can for themselves through public policy initiatives, yet the Conservative government removed targets to end child poverty by 2020, rather than addressing poverty as such. Child poverty and unequal educational opportunities are inextricably linked. This is discussed further in Section 2.3.

2.2.5 Social Exclusion

In this section, I will discuss the literature on the relationship between poverty and social exclusion. With the less frequent use of the terminology *social class* in policy documents over the last few decades, other categories such as social exclusion, poverty and those who are in receipt of free school meals have arisen. All these categories intersect with disadvantage and the significance of these associations establish greater clarity about the intersection of these relationships (Woodin, 2007). Disadvantage points to an expansive set of difficulties that prevent people from engaging fully in society, including poverty, restricting factors in particular

circumstances (such as a lack of skills), '*unequal levels of health and well-being associated with economic disadvantage, and discrimination.*' (Darton et al., 2003a: p.4)

Social exclusion refers to multiple disadvantages that result from poverty and is encapsulated in what Tony Blair articulated when he launched the Social Exclusion Unit ('SEU') in 1997, stating that it is about possibilities, networks and life-chances (Davies, 2005). The newly elected Labour government made social exclusion a key policy issue in 1997, endeavouring to set up a joined-up approach, bringing together policy interventions across departments in government, to provide solutions to complex problems of specific groups who were disadvantaged (Levitas, 2007). Not having the capacity to engage economically, socially, culturally and politically, is to be socially excluded (Levitas et al., 2007). It continues to be a present day issue that is damaging to the individual, destructive to self-esteem, harsh for society as a whole and more likely to be passed down from generation to generation than material poverty (Davies, 2005). Moreover, social exclusion was being signified by the processes which create disadvantage (Darton et al., 2003a). The purpose of the SEU was for the most part to produce unified resolutions to complicated issues across government departments, through the meaningful interactions of policy interventions (Davies, 2005). The SEU defined social exclusion as the people who lived in the worst 1300 housing estates, living in absolute poverty, crime, poor educational outcomes and unemployment (Davies, 2005; Levitas, 2007). Education was given the central position in their political strategy to succeed in having a socially inclusive society together with a competitive economy (Alexiadou, 2005). However, the focus remained firmly on widening access to education, coinciding with market-driven policies, with the government disregarding research that education performance revealed wider patterns of social and economic disadvantage (Alexiadou, 2005).

Williams (2005) also considers how the notion of social exclusion can act as the political masking of poverty. Education was deemed to be the crucial driver to halt social exclusion, therefore having the right skills would lead to employment for all, expunging poverty. In the 2003 White Paper, the big ideological move depicted by

'skills for employability' placed the focus on skills, thus laying blame at the door of individuals, rather than the government, for poor job opportunities (William, 2005). The joined-up thinking that is needed for those experiencing social exclusion is difficult to achieve if poverty masks social exclusion and market driven policies take precedence over revelations around research advice that educational performance correlates with wider patterns of social and economic disadvantage. This suggests that some of the problems of social exclusion are blocked from consideration as root causes of poverty by current policy makers, and not therefore addressed.

2.3 Correlation between poverty, disadvantage and education

In this section, I argue that poverty influences outcomes in education and contextualises the correlation between poverty, disadvantage and education according to available literature and studies in this particular field in the sociology of education. I have outlined how poverty, disadvantage and outcomes in education have been securely demonstrated in the literature since 2000 and that when policy makers consider the disadvantaged and the attainment gap, they focus on how these children and their families fare in the school context.

According to the literature in the field of sociology of education, poverty is indistinguishably interconnected with disadvantages in education and other areas of life (Hood and Waters, 2017), as it can be a barrier to children and young people participating successfully in education and achieving desirable outcomes in school education. The most recent data from the Joseph Rowntree Trust (Goulden, 2020) indicates that approximately 30% of children are living in poverty, implying that this is the case for roughly one third of school children. Reay (2019), believes that there is a significant intersection between poverty and being working class, arguing that even as a reserved estimate, most working-class children would be placed among the poorest in our society. Twenty years ago, 39% of people in poverty were in a working family whereas that figure has risen to 56% of people in 2019 (Reay, 2019).

Both in school and further education, poverty is a critical determinant of attainment (Goodman & Gregg, 2010; Hunt & Seiver, 2018). There is a correlation that exists

between low income and low educational performance that has been evidenced by various researchers and is well documented across an extensive body of literature (Weir, et al., 2017; Sullivan, et al., 2014; Kellaghan, 2001; Crenna-Jennings, 2018; Wood & Scott, 2014). Children from poorer families are less likely to do well in the education system, with education simply confirming existing social hierarchies rather than offering a route out of poverty (Raffo, et al., 2009). The lower levels of attainment, which are more likely with poorer families, are a contributory factor to patterns of social mobility and poverty (Goodman & Gregg, 2010). In the UK, the biggest inequalities are centred on income and social background, and these are the main drivers of the high levels of poverty (Wood & Scott, 2014).

As evidenced in the literature, social inequalities in educational attainment are not merely a consequence of low income but there is a definite connection between educational outcomes and poverty (Raffo, et al., 2007). Analysis of the findings across various literary sources, reveals the gap in the performance of disadvantaged children widens by 9.4 months at primary and increasing to 18.4 months as they progress through education, with these children having already started school 4.3 months behind their more privileged peers (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). Analysis by the EPI indicates that persistently disadvantaged pupils, that is those who have been eligible for Free School Meals for at least 80 per cent of their school lives, leave school 23.4 months behind at KS4 (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). According to Wood and Scott (2014), breaking this pattern is extremely challenging as children who live in poverty are faced with multiple drivers of disadvantage in their lives, including family income, type of school, access to private tuition, educational resources as well as 'cultural and social capital'.

Research in the fields of sociology and the sociology of education, shows a clear link with greater joblessness and lower income, and this gap in attainment is a significant driver with the transmission of poverty across generations, for adults who have weak academic outcomes (Adams, 2015). Poverty does often have a negative impact on the outcomes of children who may fail to attain the same educational standard as children from wealthier backgrounds, making the break from poverty a challenge as an adult (Barnard, et al., 2017; Hirsch, 2007). This continues the cycle of

disadvantage into later life and then affects their own children, having a negative impact on the country's wealth and welfare (Hirsch, 2007). Low educational attainment affects opportunities in the job market, having a direct influence on their chances of living in poverty and the chance that this can be perpetuated to the following generation (Wood & Scott, 2014).

The relationship that exists between attainment and disadvantage in the recent literature is extremely complex (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). First of all, Crenna-Jennings (2018) explains the attainment of pupils using a gradient rather than gaps, with the lowest outcomes being achieved by those living in the most disadvantaged environment and the highest by those who are the most advantaged pupils. Second, attainment and experiences of disadvantaged children vary greatly as they are anything but a homogenous group with great variance in factors, depending on the performance measure used and ethnicity group, sex, first language, special educational needs and disability (SEND) status, family history of disadvantage, and the effects of local environment/place of residence (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). Significantly for this thesis, there is a strong link between attainment and family socio-economic position in England in comparison to many other countries on the OECD register (Crenna-Jennings, 2018). In 2013, the DfE revised the guidance to SSCCs, with the emphasis on the reduction of the inequalities that exist between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children (Sammons et al, 2015: 2).

2.4 Disadvantage and Class

I will assert in this thesis that disadvantage is linked to the socio-economic status ('SES'), and that specifically disadvantage has replaced the language of social class in government policy documents. In the literature in the field of education, disadvantage or non-disadvantage is a measure of the social class one comes from (Tormey, 1999). It is significant that there has been a change in the language from deficit to difference with regards to working-class culture. In current policy, the *discontinuities* between the school and home ascribed to educational disadvantage are seen as differences and not deficiencies (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002). When the OECD administers the PISA tests, in gauging how pupils engage with learning in an

educational institution, parents' social class is considered at the outset to grasp the transmission of cultural values and expectations (Wood & Scott, 2014).

The 1998 Education Act confirmed a correlation between social class and disadvantage, clarifying the link between poverty and educational outcomes with disadvantage being inextricably linked to the working class. The language of disadvantage was ushered in through the 1998 Education Act and accounts for social class within education, as an economic measure was used to determine those pupils who are considered for free school meals, falling into the disadvantaged category in schools. This is confirmed by Lynch and Lodge (2002), who point to euphemisms for class such as 'disadvantage' and 'weak students'. According to Ball (2013a), disadvantage has been clearly linked to social class and it has dominated the way disadvantage has been discussed and understood in the literature in the field of the sociology of education in England since the 1900s. Throughout the history of sociology of education, the relationships between disadvantage, social exclusion, and social class have been explicitly drawn out, and it can be argued that social class inequalities are ingrained in the fabric of the social world and UK educational policy making in the later 20th century to the present day (Conway, 1997).

With the 'policy death' of social class in the 1980s came a disjointed approach which used proxies such as social exclusion, 'poverty' and being classified in receipt of free school meals. Social class in the main was eclipsed from public life and from the literature of some sociologists (Pakulski and Waters, 1996), while politicians almost steered clear of mentioning class (Payne, 2012). As has been established already, in England the definition of disadvantage takes into account social and economic factors, which to an extent conflate with social class. Apart from the odd reference to social class on a few occasions in party documents across the different political parties, there is insufficient discussion even at a cursory level about this area (Payne, 2012). The root causes are obscured as '*the class structure of the UK is conveniently hidden away in the detail of the ways a subset of young people are socially disadvantaged.*' (Payne, 2012: p.69)

According to Pakulski and Waters (1996), class has always been a contentious concept. It became the master term for political analysis and sociology during the 1960s and the 1970s. Around the time preceding the publication of this book by Pakulski and Waters (1996), there was contention in the field of sociology about classes dissolving and advanced societies not being structured along the lines of class. From the mid-1970s to the late 1990s, the decline of class was due to the drastic erosion of what had been recognised as the traditional working-class culture, and the way that this concept was defined by leading academics, which weakened the interest that class held (Savage, 2016). Tittenbrum (2014), emphasised that while the notion of social class being outdated was not especially new, through policy as discourse, the previous two decades brought with it a good proportion of powerful sociological theories in declaring its inappropriateness. The new forms of inequality that emerged created the need for sociologists to look at options and competing ideas other than class (Tittenbrum, 2014). According to (Pakulski, Walters 1996: p.4), this took the form of:

> "a wide redistribution of property; the proliferation of indirect and small ownership; the credentialisation of skills and the professionalisation of occupations; the multiple segmentation and globalisation of markets; and an increasing role for consumption as a status and lifestyle generator."

The resurgence of the concept of class since 2000 indicates the widening of academic interest in class, encouraged by Bourdieu's approach in bringing up the cultural aspects of class, and the capacity of these academic discourses to draw the public in (Savage, 2016).

SES or an individual's present social and economic situation determine social class in educational research (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). SES can be defined as '*an individual's overall social position to which attainments in both the social and economic domain contribute*' (Ainley et al., 1995: p.ix). A person's educational achievement, career or occupational status, earnings and affluence will determine their SES. The SES of the family or parents is used when research is undertaken on children's school achievement (Considine & Zappala, 2002). According to Bourdieu (1987), SES is mainly concerned with economic boundaries, whereas social class

deals with greater complexities than just economic status. In order to have a good grasp of social class it is necessary to take note of specific occurrences and experiences of individuals and how these are *'historically and culturally'* positioned (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). In the lives of children and their families, social class is a significant factor in social inequality, as it plays a crucial role in the ever increasing gap in opportunities between the working and middle classes, and is consequential for an individual's material wellbeing (Jones and Vagle, 2013; Goldthorpe, 2016). Class hierarchies may include complex stances that could influence the understanding of students, teachers and families in terms of themselves, others and the world (Jones and Vagle, 2013).

Researchers involved in theoretical and empirical research on social inequalities, recognise occupational structure as central to the understanding of social stratification. For sociologists, occupations are the most reliable indicator of the social positions of individuals. Socio-economic measures based on occupational status are not there simply as a proxy for unavailable income data, but are there to indicate important forms of social relations and inequalities, to which income is merely a secondary phenomenon. There is no established way of measuring occupations, although occupations are fundamental to the understanding of social stratification (Connelly, et al., 2016). There is an excessive amount of churning yearly which makes it implausible to reliably show individuals' positions in the economy according to empirical inquiries using recurring contacts data (Jarvis & Jenkins, 1997). Socio-economic measures based on occupation offer greater stability and give more reliable lifetime earning profiles. A wide range of measures, frequently connected with conventional sociological theories and concepts, and linked with social class, have been promoted (Connelly, et al., 2016).

This has come under huge criticism from some sociologists who argue that changes to the occupational structure and the economy in general have undermined the importance of social class as a meaningful category (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). The cultural element to social class is also not revealed in occupational charts. Occupation (the economic domain), is not an adequate indicator of social class as it can be argued that consumption practices are

significant in social class processes (Bourdieu, 1984; Reay, 2005; Bourdieu, 1987). Some contemporary sociologists disagree with the claimed significance of occupation-based social classifications (Erikson, et al., 1979). A new viewpoint to social class, driven by Bourdieu, was proposed by Savage, et al., (2013). From his perspective, instead of occupations, the concepts of economic capital, cultural capital and social capital are the principal gauges to determine social stratification (discussed in detail later in Section 2.6). Household earnings, savings, value of assets, social connections and the occupations of these social contacts and involvement with 'highbrow culture' are indicators used to measure these concepts (Savage, et al., 2013). Bourdieu (1984), contended that the three capitals could be used to clarify the processes of social reproduction, instead of theorising occupations as the foundation of the opportunity structure. Savage, et al. (2013), asserted that quantifying the levels of these capitals possessed by an individual based on Bourdieu's theory was a far more helpful social class schema compared to the long-established measures that are used. The seven classes recommended by Savage, et al. (2013), match the categories founded by the UK National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) and are very similar, though with an additional 'elite' category (Payne, 2013).

In educational research, social class is primarily examined in relation to SES or an individual's social and economic situation, and enquiries are often focused on the students and families of low SES. The conceptualisation of social class is basically economic, which considers occupation and this is related to disadvantage, as the definition of '*disadvantaged pupils'* by the ESFA (2018) is based on economic disadvantage. *'Disadvantaged pupils'* are eligible for means-tested free school meals ('FSM').

For the purpose of this research I use the adapted version of the class positions determined by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), which has informed the main social classification in use in British official statistics since 2001. In this classification, class positions are decided by the social relations which individuals undertake in their economic lives through their employment (Goldthorpe, 2016). In England, social class is an important variable linked with opportunity and participation based on their occupation and parents' level of education, with

substantial reproduction of status and education within families (Gorard, 2008). Table 1 below contains the seven-class 'analytical' version of NS-SEC.

Table 2.1

The National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC): seven-class version

	Class Description	
1	Higher managerial and professional occupations	Salariat (Upper class)
2	Lower managerial and professional occupations	
3	Ancillary professional and administrative occupations	Intermediate classes (Middle class)
4	Small employers (less than 25 employers) and own account workers	
5	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	
6	Semi-routine occupations	Working class (Lower class)
7	Routine occupations	

The NS-SEC places people according to their employment status and occupation in seven main classes, differentiating between those working on a 'labour contract' in routine or semi-routine positions, from those employed on a 'service contract' in a professional or managerial capacity. Nevertheless, this occupationally constructed classification does not consider the part that social and cultural practices play in engendering class divisions (Savage, et al., 2013). In the United Kingdom an income-based measure is used to determine whether students receive a free school meal and are considered disadvantaged (Patten, 2019). Regardless of the problems associated with occupation as an indicator of SES, it can work well, provided that the sample is large and varied. However, the status of various occupations differs across countries, so this may make international comparisons problematic (Sweeny, 2015).

The working-class person in Class 6 or 7 is also referred to as belonging to the lower class, comprising people from manual, partly and unskilled occupations, who experience some degree of economic and social disadvantage within society (Archer

& Hutchings, 2000). This type of person has a relatively higher chance of job loss and frequent or long-term unemployment, with weekly earnings that may vary with respect to overtime, shift work, etc. The person in Class 1 or 2 (salariat) is referred to as belonging to the upper or higher class. This salariat has a fixed salary paid each month, relatively high job security, reasonable expectations of pay rises and promotion, and lives in a significantly different economic world from the person in Class 6 or 7 (working-class).

There are numerous ways to unpick and interpret the SES of individuals and families. To illustrate this point, the differences between the working-class experiences of settled living and hard living are made clear. Settled living describes those who are on slightly higher incomes with some benefits, who may own a home and lead an orderly life. Hard living depicts those who are in unstable, low-paying employment, do not own their own homes, do not have any additional benefits and who lead difficult, uncertain lives (Bettie, 2000). These portrayals show that SES classifications are not homogenous but are socially constructed perspectives of location within a social hierarchy.

2.5 Neo-liberalism

This section focuses on neo-liberalism and considers the influence neo-liberalism has on education and the education of the disadvantaged in England. The following review of pertinent literature creates an understanding of the ideologies relevant to neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is a contested area as it was initially used to denote 'new liberalism', emphasising humanistic values and the expectation that it would improve on liberalism (Boas *&* Gans-Morse, 2009). However, modern neo-liberalism is a market-driven ideology, focused on economic and social transformation to enable greater efficiency and effectiveness, with the reduction of government regulation (Connell, 2013) and this is the perspective from which I discuss this area. A founding principle of neo-liberal thinking is that the wellbeing of people is at its level best when private enterprise, personal accountability and competitive markets are promoted to stimulate and coordinate the performance of entrepreneurs, with the role of the state in neo-liberal economic theory being limited (Dougherty & Natow, 2019; Heath-Kelly et al., 2015). One of the aims when mobilising neo-liberal ideas is to

reorganise all aspects of society through the revolution of education systems, so that workers are produced for the economy as the main directive and the dissemination of education as a state dominated entity, opening it up to strategic investment (Robertson, 2007).

Sahlberg (2012) used the term Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) to describe the unfolding of a new global dogma that he described as *spreading and destructive, just like an epidemic*, in education policy. The UK government has been actively engaged with the reforms that promoted and contributed to GERM, alongside the USA and Chile, as early as the 1970s and 1980s (Harvey, 2007). Sahlberg (2012) has pin-pointed the key features of the GERM that have been ushered in through a pernicious array of policies: increasing corporate management practices as a significant feature, growing standardisation, narrowing the curriculum to focus on core subjects/knowledge and the cuts in teacher-pupil ratios. Neo-liberal policies have changed the face of education and the important changes are discussed in this section.

In the literature of sociology of education, neo-liberalism is a modern theory which promotes free trade, supports privatisation and limited state regulation with an emphasis on economic growth. The years 1978 to 1980 marked the turning point in the social and economic history of the world, impacting education globally. (Robertson, 2007). According to Dougherty & Natow (2019), neo-liberalism is particularly intent on managing public agencies so that they are more effective and economically efficient, with a model for managing this sector, called New Public Management (NPM) (Robertson, 2007). In NPM, government agencies, it is argued, should be privatised as far as possible through trading off public holdings and services to the business sector, with each part of the organisation performing like a business enterprise, with managers held to account for the income/expenditure balance (Dougherty & Natow, 2019; Connell, 2013; Hill, 2012; Robertson, 2007). This comprises a number of elements where organisations, such as schools, are put in competition with each other based on a market driven system, services are centralised with some decentralised and funding is determined by the outcomes achieved (Ball, 2009).

In the literature of sociology of education since 1995, this new ideological stance was not disconnected from wider changes in society, with the notion that state welfare was neither affordable nor sustainable and where the corporate world began to influence the political sphere and delivery of public services which had previously been the preserve of the state, managed for the public good (Heath-Kelly, et al., 2015). In the pursuit of profit, private capital began to pull apart publicly funded health, welfare and education systems (Robertson, 2007; Heath-Kelly, et al., 2015). By these means Neo-liberalism has subtly increased inequality as families with greater advantages are able to profit from a market-oriented system (Dougherty & Natow, 2019), causing an enormous shift of wealth, power and resources from the poorest in society to the privileged (Heath-Kelly, et al., 2015). Neo-liberal capitalist policy in England has increased inequalities of '*wealth and income, unemployment and degraded work conditions, immiseration and impoverishment.'* (Hill, et al., 2013: 61) The ramifications for education have been increasing since each government in power has advanced this agenda towards a disjointed system (Hill, et al., 2013). Policies associated with deregulation and the reform of the welfare state have led to greater economic uncertainty and inequality, creating serious hardship for low-income families (Feldman, 2019).

Neo-liberalism is a mediatory influence that has to be considered with its implications for maintaining social inequality, as it has a crucial role in the direction that education takes (Dougherty & Natow, 2019). It has been argued that policies that have driven initiatives that endorsed the marketisation of education have merely served to entrench social class divisions and class competition further (Dougherty & Natow, 2019). Education policies in the UK have, in this way, contributed to the continuing privilege of the middle and upper classes who are able to use their social, economic and cultural capital to access places at private schools or at one of the high-ranking comprehensive schools, and vice versa these institutions have the chance to make their choice from the best pupils, hence bolstering class divisions. Families that are poorer accept places at schools within their locality that are less popular, and then are held responsible for their poor results. The league tables that rate the quality of each school creates social stratification in opening up or closing off access to further

privileges (Robertson, 2007). The discussion around research undertaken by Reay (2012) and Ball (2010) indicates that working-class children are more likely to be in deprived schools, with middle-class children being educated in more favourable circumstances.

To conclude this discussion, it is clear that neo-liberalism in education endorses the policies that promote marketisation and the transference of services into private ownership rather than government control. This, it is argued, increases inequality in education and is propelled by market forces. These forces are centred on economic and social change to enable greater efficiency and effectiveness, with the decrease of bureaucratic regulation, causing considerable damage to, yet there is little concern about using them as instruments of greater equality or social solidarity. It is this inequality that fails to support disadvantaged pupils, who therefore experience further shortcomings, whereas given all the added focus and support from government initiatives, their performance should be improving.

2.6 Sources of Disadvantage

In this section, I examine the literature across the last three decades in the sociology of education to determine how economic capital, social capital and cultural capital perpetuate inequalities in education as the OECD use these forms of capital in their definition of disadvantage whereas the current English government only uses economic capital as an indicator of disadvantage. I explore the role of economic, social and cultural capital, in an attempt to develop a deeper grasp of how disadvantage is conceptualised before scrutinising my chosen policies. The distinctions in social class with regard to educational attainment is discussed by sociologists with reference to economic capital, social capital and cultural capital (Sullivan and Whitty, 2007).

Bourdieu likened the concept of 'capital', as exercised in economics, to culture, with cultural capital equated to money that can be saved and invested to acquire various resources (Kingston, 2001). The term 'capital' indicates Bourdieu's resolve that it is valuable and can provide a profit for those who possess it (Bourdieu, 1984). According to Bourdieu, *'capitals'* are considered to be a *'set of actually usable*

resources and powers', which have a '"*market value*" *in the struggle for privilege*' (Bourdieu 1984: p.114). There are also other conceptualisations of cultural capital within the sociology of education that have been operationalised through research. Dumais (2002), explains cultural capital as the knowledge and competencies associated with members of the upper classes. DiMaggio defined cultural capital as the bond with 'prestigious' cultural practices (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) and according to Sullivan (2001: p.895), cultural capital is *'familiarity with the dominant culture in the society and especially the ability to use "educated" language'*. These conceptualisations associate cultural capital as having *'knowledge of or competence with highbrow aesthetic culture'.* (Reay, 2004a)

There are three types of *'capital'* considered in the definition of educational disadvantage:

- economic capital, which is currently the dominant factor in the identification of disadvantage for schools in England;
- cultural capital, which is principally linked to conditions that promote cognitive and academic growth;
- social capital, which is mainly connected with *conduct, identity, social behaviour, attitudes and motivations* (Kellaghan, 2001).

In the literature of sociology of education, these three types of capital are often used by sociologists to explain the social class differences in educational attainment (Cooper and Stewart, 2013; Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014). Parental social class determines the degree to which one possesses economic, social and cultural capital. These factors are interrelated and affect the development of *competencies and dispositions,* assisting academic progress in some instances and in some cases resulting in problems adjusting to school and low attainment (Kellaghan, 2001).

In the literature in the sociology of education, 'cognitive competencies and dispositions' that are linked with academic achievement are the most significant factors of the three types of capital in the definition of disadvantage. *'Personal dispositions'* is the first form of cultural capital that is seen as long-standing, related to a range of '*cognitive and non-cognitive competencies'*. These are affected by a

person's previous background and determine how future challenges are negotiated. Cultural capital in the second form is embodied in cultural goods, such as books and music (Kellaghan, 2001). Cultural artefacts and knowledge were considered significant and parallel to financial resources, being vital in social class relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The third form of cultural capital is institutionalised, for instance in taking tertiary qualifications (Kellaghan, 2001). Bourdieu considered social networks and connections, and the advantages obtained from having both formal and informal social links to others who hold parallel positions in social space (Bourdieu, 1997). Social networks function together with cultural capital and have a role to play in Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction by providing members of a group with a further opportunity for securing material or symbolic advantages. In this way, Bourdieu states that social capital *'exerts a multiplier effect'* on other forms of capital already acquired (Bourdieu, 1997: p.51) and as a consequence there is a growing chance of triumph for those in the higher social class positions.

If there are gaps between ability and the dispositions of the disadvantaged child, then it is essential that there is some clarification about the three types of capital outlined above, with regard to how they affect developing ability and dispositions. The various types of capital are considered separately but are interrelated and convertible under particular conditions (Kellaghan, 2001). *Habitus* and the perpetuation of disadvantage through Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction are also explored in the literature. I will use the concepts from the Bourdieuian perspective to consider how the middle class is advantaged in education. The approach to disadvantage discussed by Kellaghan and adopted by the OECD is that there needs to be a focus on the elements of economic, social and cultural capital and their impact on opportunities and outcomes in education, broadly determined by social class (Kellaghan, 2001). I now focus on the various capitals that are valued by educational institutions which are economic, social and cultural capital that affects the development of ability and dispositions of an individual so that when exploring how disadvantage is addressed in policy, it will become clear as to whether accounts of the various types of capital have been considered. Subsequently, I move onto a deeper understanding of how cultural capital contributes to advantage or

disadvantage through cultural reproduction which emphasises the conversion of capitals which is transmitted across generations.

2.6.1 Economic Capital

In the literature of sociology of education, one of the indicators of disadvantage is the economic capital of a family, indicated by their financial or material resources or their lack of these things. Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim (2014) provide a range of reasons why children who come from advantaged backgrounds achieve better educational outcomes, because of the resources at the family's disposal. Children living in homes that are materially poor may face hunger, malnutrition, pain and illness, with their communities showing signs of physical decay, including drug and gang related problems (Kellaghan, 2001), with poor living conditions being related to low attainment and impaired health (The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014). Disadvantage also occurs where compared to advantaged families, relatively poor families are less able to purchase books or benefit from added tuition and even further education (Kellaghan, 2001). Financial resources give some parents the choice of better schools, either through choosing to live in a good catchment area or being able to pay for private schooling (Sullivan and Whitty, 2007). Economic circumstances can therefore be understood and interpreted in numerous ways, even given standardised SES classification (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). The occupation of parents, their educational qualifications, their expectations of and the quality of the relationships with their children are compelling factors in the causation of disadvantage (Kellaghan, 2001).

Cahill and Hall (2014) discuss fundamental structural unfairness in relation to economic capital and how it contributes negatively in access to cultural and social capital. *'Structural economic inequality is intricately bound up with the social and cultural tool-kits needed for school success.'* (Cahill and Hall, 2014) Bourdieu validates the suggestion that economic capital, social capital and cultural capital can be interchangeable. He states that '*economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital*', explaining that social and cultural capital are transubstantiated forms of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1997: p.54).

2.6.2 Social Capital

In the literature, social capital is principally associated with conduct, a person's individuality, dispositions, behaviour and attitudes (Kellaghan, 2001). Bourdieu defines social capital as follows:

> 'Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p119)

It is an additional form of capital, which assists in the development of children's competencies and dispositions, it is situated in institutions such as schools, communities and families. There may be factors in a child's environment that conflict with the social capital that is valued by the school or which are essential to enable the child getting to grips with learning at school. Not possessing the social capital prized by the school can perpetuate inequalities in education, leading to disadvantage.

Social capital is generally entrenched in '*relationships between individuals in informal social networks'* (Kellaghan, 2001*).* According to Connelly, et al. (2014), social capital relates to the relationships that exist in families, schools and communities (such as schools), with individuals belonging to these networks and by doing so, securing certain benefits. There are also added attributes which will be explicated by Kellaghan (2001*).* Firstly, social capital is made up of a system of common *'values and norms, together with sanctions and rules'.* This shared system is used to determine acceptable conduct in institutions like schools. Next, it is based on the belief that certain things are true and includes responsibility based on cooperation between individuals in settings like schools, such as rules around arrival and dismissal procedures for children and parents. Thirdly, it includes information channels, whereby those who contribute information understand that others will respond in the same way (Kellaghan, 2001).

Social control, which takes the form of support from parents and family, as well as the social networking beyond the immediate family, such as educational settings, is

mediated through social capital (Connelly, et al., 2014). Moreover, social control is received and maintained by individuals and their families are regarded as significant factors in the shaping of their behaviour, especially with regard to education. Some aspects of social capital can be negative when there are limitations placed on the freedom of individuals and rights to resources such as education. It is true to say that '*outsiders'* (those who are not part of the dominant class) are excluded when social capital is shaped by the dominant class (Kellaghan, 2001). Schools are institutions that are part of this picture and schools serving deprived communities have added challenges to address (Connelly, et al., 2014).

2.6.3 Cultural Capital

One of the leading theoretical contributions to the explanation of educational inequalities is the concept of cultural capital, famously developed by Bourdieu (Lareau and Weininger, 2003). There is an attempt in the literature to elucidate class-based differentials from specific forms of 'high culture' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This section investigates how deficits in cultural capital contribute to social inequalities (Reay, 2004a), and how social inequality is perpetuated through cultural capital in the education system in order to fully understand its impact in preserving disadvantage (Sullivan, 2003). Furthermore, I explore to what extent an individual's class of origin becomes their class of destination through inequality in education (Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

The concept of cultural capital was developed in part by Bourdieu, to explain how children from the middle and upper classes have cultural advantages, functioning beyond yet often alongside their advantageous economic position. Goodman and Gregg (2010) presented information which is significant in relation to Bourdieu's conceptual framework, asserting that it would be highly improbable for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to experience a *'rich home learning environment'* in their early years, when compared to children from the richest families. They discovered that 42% of children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds were read to every day compared to 79% of children from the most advantaged backgrounds (2010:20). This corresponds well with the cultural reproduction theory. Embodied cultural capital has been identified to constitute reading habits, educational and cognitive growth and

stimulation activities. The significance placed on reading and the literacy climate in the home have been acknowledged as solid determinants of educational advantage within educational research (Sullivan and Brown, 2013).

Reay (1998) also applies ideas about cultural capital to educational inequality. She used case studies in (Classwork) to survey mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling in England, with cultural capital being used as a conceptual tool to examine how the activities of mothers can show important differences in class. This is particularly pertinent to my research as the competencies and dispositions that a child comes with from home are significant and determine whether they are at an advantage or disadvantage at school. Mothers' personal educational background had an impact on the type of involvement in their children's education and the cultural capital they presented together with how it influenced their effectiveness in dealing with teachers. Reay found very few differences between middle-class and working-class mothers with regards to the energy given to schooling and to the importance placed on education. She discovered that the working-class mother's limited ability to support her child appropriately with any educational matter stemmed from her lack of cultural competence, including academic competence (1998). During the 1990s, parental involvement was encouraged in educational policies (DES, 1985; 1986; 1988; DfEE, 1997) in England (Reay, 2004a). The White Papers (DCSF, 2009a; DCSF, 2009b; DfE, 2016), make statements about parents having the opportunity to engage with the school and provide their child with the necessary support. This would mean that parents who are already disadvantaged will not be able to provide their children with the support and wider development that these policies advocate. In doing so, the government expects to tap into the resources of parents to raise standards. Contrary to what government policy expects, working-class parents are dependent on schools to educate their children as they do not feel equipped to support the school with any added intervention that might be assumed that they could carry out in the home.

Depending on how parents are positioned from the social class perspective, the views that they hold on education, how they interact and work with the school and the cultural capital that children have access to may differ (Lareau, 1989). There is an

increased expectation by schools that parents are active participants in their child's education, through homework, meetings with their teachers and also compliance with the home-school agreement (Reay, 2004a; Weir, et al., 2017). There is agreement that notable cultural practices, such as reading for pleasure, are prevalent among the educated middle class and these practices are inextricably linked to better educational outcomes. Sullivan and Brown (2013) found that children who engaged with reading for pleasure made greater intellectual progress at age sixteen than having a parent with a degree. Research has revealed that there is a correlation between reading experiences and future reading success. Whether it is family from a working class or from the upper social class, they create a *habitus* that fosters the reproduction of the culture for the next generation (Sullivan, 2001). Parents' background and educational experiences determine their participation in their children's education, especially their success in engaging with teachers, and these differences are powerfully entrenched in cultural capital (Reay, 2004a; Murphy & Costa, 2016). Educational success translated into self-assurance and a sense of privilege for middle-class parents gives them the confidence and the proficiency to get their viewpoints across in a school setting (Reay, 2004a).

According to Sullivan (2001), Bourdieu argues that cultural capital comprises of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society, and especially the capacity to employ and understand 'educated' language, affirming the significance of linguistic competence to educational achievement . De Graaf et al. (2000) states that it is not the '*mastery of highbrow cultural'* codes, but linguistic and reading skills, that give an advantage at higher levels of schooling. Reading is an activity that is associated with linguistic ability and cultural knowledge (Sullivan, 2001) and it is this linguistic ability and cultural knowledge that are more firmly reproduced within the home than in the school. Based on research by De Graaf et al. (2000), it was discovered that children in the Netherlands appeared to benefit to a greater extent from their parents' linguistic and cognitive skills when measured by a scale of reading behaviour, compared with their parents' involvement in highbrow cultural pursuits. Therefore, a home milieu that encourages reading and linguistic skills will preserve its advantages (De Graaf et al., 2000).

Hunt & Seiver (2018) acknowledge that there are repercussions for families and access to education based on the '*material structures of class hierarchies'*. Children from lower social classes can amass '*the social, linguistic, and cultural competencies',* but it is difficult for them to acquire the same degree of familiarity that children from middle and upper classes possess, leaving them academically pummelled (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Cultural capital has been used in explanations for academic achievement differing based on social class (Kellaghan, 2001). It appears that cultural capital is one means through which advantaged families ensure educational benefit for their children (Sullivan, 2001). Knowledge and understanding of, and involvement in the dominant culture can be assumed as cultural competence. The dominant group determines the capital necessary for success in academic institutions (Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014; Kellaghan, 2001; Reay, 2004a). Bourdieu argues that possessing cultural capital changes with social class, yet the education system requires the possession of cultural capital. This makes it very challenging for lower class pupils to flourish and achieve well in the education system (Sullivan, 2001).

There are critics of Bourdieu who discount his reproduction theory, while some reviewers state that some of his concepts have analytical potential but only if freed from his larger theoretical framework. Kingston (2001: p.97) is uncertain about the usefulness of the concept of cultural capital, as he explains that the cultural practices that augment school success should not be dismissed as '*conformity to dominant norms*', suggesting that other norms could be just as valuable, or even that these norms are in some way '*illegitimate*'. Particular cultural practices support everyone at school and are no less valuable because of the link to class and this is a critical message especially for the disadvantaged. Cultural practices that make a huge difference to academic success should be encouraged (Kingston, 2001).

2.6.4 *Habitus*

Bourdieu defines *habitus* as a property of social agents that constitute a '*structured and structuring structure*', meaning that social agents cultivate strategies which are tailored to the structures of the social worlds that they inhabit (Bourdieu, 1991). It is

'structured' by the circumstances acquired within one's experiences in the past and present. *Habitus* is the product of structures such as those established though education; it produces practices and reproduces structures. The *habitus* tends to mould and produce practices that go along with the social conditions that produced it, such as being rooted in one's family and being acclimatised to one's position in the social structure (Nash, 1990). The people who reproduce these structures will, probably with variations, act in harmony with the structures that helped produce their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1978). *Habitus* and social class are closely connected, as different circumstances produce different *habitus* (Hastings, 2015). The *habitus* is thus a system of enduring dispositions internal to the individual, which gives rise to practices, influencing a person's expectations of social life and which are reflected in their actions and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1978).

Due to *habitus* being embodied, it acquires a history and engenders its practices for some time even when the impartial conditions that induced it are no longer present (Nash, 1990). It is 'structuring' in that an individual's habitus establishes their present and future practices. It is not random and unsystematic, but rather systematically ordered so it is a '*structure*' (Bourdieu, 1978). The social structures may not have determined the behaviour of the individual, but predispose the person to act in line with the social structures that are responsible for shaping the individual. According to Bourdieu, the individual's main *habitus*, instilled during childhood, is likely to be more enduring when compared to the secondary *habitus* that may be acquired later. The dispositions acquired as a child shape the mind and 'become second nature', functioning at a level below conscious awareness, and therefore not likely open to conscious reflection and change (Bourdieu, 1991). The child who possesses dispositions and competencies that are incongruent with their educational setting will be at a distinct disadvantage. In terms of cultural capital, the most significant investment is in prescribed education, which can be gauged by quality and duration of the capital, leading to a distinctive *habitus* that equips the individual with embodied social attributes (Moore, 2004).

Habitus plays a large role in what people do in their daily lives or their practices such as education, which involves more than *habitus*. Included is a *'class habitus'*, which

according to Bourdieu *'is the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails.'* (1984: p.101) Distinctive educational practices and preferences that impact attitudes and beliefs are developed within given social classes (Hunt & Seiver, 2018*)*. Social class and social identity are inextricably linked with *'particular ways of knowing, being, and doing'* in education, as elsewhere (Ostrove and Cole 2003, cited in Hunt & Seiver, 2018). Sullivan (2002) and Van de Werfhorst (2010) find the concept of *habitus* to be imprecise and immeasurable, therefore dismissing it as unable to make any useful contribution. Based on Bourdieu proving his concept of habitus by using '*correspondence analysis'* as the main statistical method in his work, '*Distinction*', there is little doubt that habitus establishes an individuals present and future practices.

2.6.5 Field

Bourdieu's model of practice provides a clear conceptual understanding of an action as the outcome of a correlation between *habitus*, capital and field, with practices growing out of the interrelationship between *habitus* and field. Fields are structured spaces established around specific kinds of capital, involving inferior and dominant positions. Fields indicate areas of production, transmission, and acquisition of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accrue and dominate these different kinds of capital. Fields cannot exist without capital (Swartz, 1997).

It could be argued that the notion of reproduction of capital begins within the concept of field and in the struggles that occur within and across fields. Capital and field (structure) become connected with practice through the workings of habitus (Reay, 2004b). A field is a system or arrangement of objective relations that keep to particular logic and rules (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).   Bourdieu claims that *habitus* becomes dynamic in relation to a field, and the same *habitus* can lead to varied practices and viewpoints depending on the state of the field (Reay, 2004b). Fields are spaces of social forces and struggles, trying to either sustain or change the configuration of these forces (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, fields are spaces for domination of those less powerful by the more powerful (Azaola, 2012). Bourdieu states that the *habitus* obtained within the family forms the basis of

the assimilation of the classroom message. Having cultural capital that is valued in the classroom means being familiar with the dominant culture in society, and having the ability to use educated language, so that the classroom message will be easily assimilated (Sullivan, 2001)

According to Bourdieu, the social space can be regarded as a group of social fields that can be likened to a game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: p.98) in terms of the competitive struggles that arise (Thomson, 2005). For Bourdieu, fields like education systems reinforce social hierarchy as it is the struggle within the field that engenders the unequal allocation of resources (Thomson, 2005: p68). The processes in and products of a field are various forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic, as discussed above. The use of capital obtained in one field could be easily transferred and used in other social spaces (Bourdieu, 1984). 'Players' start off with particular forms of capital, placing them in an advantageous position, since a good 'fit' between the *habitus* and the field is of greater benefit in the field of struggle (Bourdieu, 1984). The privileged players use their capital advantageously to accrue more and progress, beyond others. For example, in educational terms, children and families who have middle-class dispositions are already in an advantageous position in education. (Thomson, 2005). Ball draws on the Department for Work and Pensions report (2007 p.73) and discusses studies that indicate how middle-class parents attempt to preserve the social advantage for their children by pursuing particular prospects, including using resources at their disposal. In taking this competitive stance, they reduce the opportunities accessible to working-class children. The determination to be in an advantageous position is related to middle class families ensuring social reproduction, within fluctuating market conditions and greater competition for jobs (Ball, 2010).

'The habitus is necessity internalised and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: p.170). The ability to regulate ways of acting according to a field may characterise the *habitus* of advantaged social groups (Hastings, 2015). The structuring of school experiences is determined by the *habitus* acquired in the family. As social beings, individuals learn the rules which become embodied as *habitus*: a set of dispositions to know, be and act in specific ways within the school setting (Thomson, 2005). Positions in the field classroom / school setting

vary and reconfigure, thus requiring particular dispositions (Bourdieu,1984: p.176). Social interactions take place within them and change continually, as those in positions of dominion posture themselves favourably. The *habitus* is restructured based on experiences and encounters within the school setting, with the dominant players transforming the rules of the game to a greater or lesser extent (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: p.99). This may lead to working-class children disengaging with the education provided by the school, being unable to configure a *habitus* in agreement with it. In this sense working-class children may exclude themselves from the provision of education, or be excluded from it (Reay, 2004a).

The *doxa* is conceptualised as the 'right' and dominant vision, with undisputed shared beliefs which make up the fields that have become the taken-for-granted understanding of the world. It is an act of symbolic power, imposing and reproducing dominant values through the accumulation and distribution of capitals (Bourdieu 1998). Bourdieu and Waquant (1992: p.168), discuss '*misrecognition*' as an important concept for linking *doxa* and symbolic violence, where the violence wielded is not perceived as such. It is therefore seen as persuasion that is obscured and one which focuses attention back on the *doxa*, removing other understandings of the world, with the doxic narrative obscuring how the 'game' reproduces social inequality.

The concepts '*doxa*' and '*symbolic violence'* are essential in understanding the processes of dominance and advantage in Bourdieu's theory of power and their relationship to educational disadvantage and achievement. The process of 'transubstantiation' of economic capital into social and cultural capital is overshadowed by the attention elicited by symbolic violence (Hastings, 2015). Symbolic violence is an unconscious reinforcement of domination, with the dominating classes having to exert little power to maintain their dominance. This is an effectual act, as the dominant group goes about their normal daily activities, adhering to rules of the system that permits them to maintain their advantageous position and allowing the system to take its course (Bourdieu, 1991). The dominant social groups are also able to modify the classroom situation to make it work to their advantage by changing the rules.

Bourdieu looked at education as a specific field *'characterised by the regularised, institutionalised unequal positions of social agents and, crucially, by competitive relations or 'struggles' within them.' (*Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: p.98–104) Fields could also be regarded as the source of the competitive struggle in social spaces, as well as the product of it. The unequal distribution of resources within the field are reproduced by the struggle and a social hierarchy that is self-preserving (Thomson, 2005). Bourdieu argued that the unequal and unfair economic, social and cultural interactions, through a succession of fields, like politics and education, are constructed and reshaped by capitalist societies. However, there is a configuration across and between fields and the field of power, even with their relative autonomies (Thomson, 2005). He noted that the fields of cultural production inhabit a position that is mostly dominant in the social space, which is of significance for sociologists (Bourdieu, 1998b). The education field is susceptible to political and economic powers, as the state and other associated fields go through crisis points, with these points yielding periods of struggle between the agents who become involved in the same game (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

2.6.6 Theory of cultural reproduction

Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction emphasises the conversion of capitals, and this involves the transmission of advantage across generations. '*The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital.*' (Bourdieu 1997:54) Embodied cultural capital can be used in an endeavour to acquire institutionalised cultural capital, by applying the relevant cultural knowledge to education. Bourdieu considers the transmission of capitals from parents to their children, with conversions taking place within one's lifetime, but also between generations, as the decisive mechanism for social and cultural reproduction (1997). Parents' investment of their economic and cultural capitals in their efforts to augment their children's institutionalised cultural capital is important with respect to social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1997). This is significant to my thesis as it means that those who are disadvantaged will not be able to improve the plight of their children as they do not possess the necessary capitals to do so, or if they acquire some, are unable to keep up with transformations instituted by the powerful.

The following studies highlight the close relationship between cultural and economic capital, and how they reinforce one other. A study by Reay (2004) on the mobilisation of cultural and economic capital considered the choice of policies that further advantaged the middle classes with the introduction of secondary comprehensives in the 1960s and 1970s. The middle-class *habitus* engendered by the '*feel for the game'*, together with economic, social and cultural capital, provided these families with a sense of entitlement when making choices for their children's secondary education. The growing policy emphasis on parental involvement led to deepening social segregation between schools and pupils based on middle-class cultural capital. The establishment of policies that underpin the new marketised field of education provide opportunities for the middle class to reassert their historic educational advantages, with education policy shifting away from the more egalitarian posture of the 1960s and 1970s. There is a burgeoning synergy between policy in education and the cultural capital of the middle class (Reay, 2004).

Jaeger (2010) surveyed 12,686 young people between the ages of 14 and 22 in the UK, investigating the correlation between cultural capital and academic achievement. She observed that children's reading recognition, reading comprehension and maths test scores are directly correlated to the cultural capital that they possess, having a positive effect in support of cultural reproduction theory. She concluded that even though cultural capital has a statistically noteworthy effect on academic achievement, its impact is limited in terms of explaining educational inequalities (Jaeger 2010).

Bourdieu states that it is evident that the more privileged in society are adept at transmitting and making the dominant culture legitimate, taking advantage of all the resources at their disposal and using their ability to gather all the necessary information to make informed decisions in the pursuit of their choices (Ball, 1993). These parents instil in their children a culture rich in intellectual content, which corresponds with what is requisite for educational institutions (Kingston 2001). A school will commonly disregard the *habitus* of children of non-dominant classes, according to Bourdieu, since they are not ready for school knowledge (Nash 1990).

Bourdieu has championed the '*cultural reproduction*' approach and he asserts that the pedagogical approach taken by schools supports the transmission of the dominant culture and adds to the reproduction of the structure of power relations within society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000). From the Bourdieuian standpoint, it is seen as a system of reproduction of social practices and opportunities, with social classes being characterised not only in parallel with the position they inhabit in the field, but likewise through the cultural capital and *habitus* connected with their specific position. Bourdieu used the concept of field to clarify the relational context in which value is assigned to the different types of capital and where the effects of cultural capital and *habitus* occur. Logically, this converts into forms of symbolic power, which is the sense of identity and distinction ascribed to them in their position in the field (Murphy & Costa).

Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim (2014: p.5) maintain that academic qualifications of a parent and social class are strongly connected, with *the skills, knowledge, dispositions and practices that go with it, being often described as 'cultural capital'*. According to Sullivan (2001), Bourdieu used parental education as a proxy for cultural capital. Sullivan (2001) conducted a survey of Year 11 pupils in England by examining the processes that the theory of cultural reproduction advocates should function across the educational system, with both their own and their parents' cultural capital under scrutiny. Sullivan (date) concluded that cultural capital is transmitted within the home and has a significant effect on performance in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination, although cultural reproduction can provide only a partial explanation of social class differences in educational attainment.

Drawing on Foucault's work (1980), Hunt & Seiver (2018), asserted that in order to help perpetuate social class privilege, social class identities are upheld through intricate power relations as tools used to set up structures and dominant discourses within schools. To illustrate this point, belief in a meritocracy may lead to the assumption that individual responsibility is valued over the collective good. When deciding on a definition, '*performative and enacted nature of social class identities*' needs to be considered, rather than just financial resources or professions (Hunt &

Seiver, 2018: p.343). An important perspective by Hunt & Seiver (2018) focuses on the reviewed research to dispute commonly held deficit discourses of economically disadvantaged students and families and to highlight how these discourses are reproduced and resisted within schools, as educators and students enact unique and fluid class identities. They make the point that Jones and Vagle (2013) capture so vividly in their work on 'Social Class–Sensitive Pedagogy', that a rationale should be provided for acknowledging social class as extremely significant within '*social justice oriented teaching and research*' (p.343). The real-life experiences of the economically disadvantaged is diminished due to the lack of consideration given to social class, which causes it be invisible. It should not be assumed that teachers are to be exclusively responsible for inequities that result from the existence of different social classes in schools.

In this thesis I argue that instead of making teachers liable for particular deficits, policy solutions should be provided so that teachers can be trained, coached and empowered in their roles, thus engaging in a 'class-sensitive pedagogy' (Hunt & Seiver, 2018: p.343). It is important to provide teachers with the appropriate professional development to help them recognise and desist deficit views of economically disadvantaged students, so as to avoid making teachers the new target of deficit thought. They should not be held entirely responsible for the social class inequities that exist in schools. This would give teachers the support they need to identify and change elements of school culture and curriculum that may disregard class differences, as well as supporting educators in recognising and challenging deficit views of economically disadvantaged students and families, thus reviewing parts of the culture and curriculum. as determined by the school, that may '*marginalize and pathologize*' differences between the classes (Hunt & Seiver, 2018: p.353). It is necessary for those working in the classroom to endeavour to dismantle deficit discourses and play an active role in creating a curriculum that considers social class (Hunt & Seiver, 2018: p.354).

I agree with Hunt & Seiver, who carried out a conceptual literature review in the United States, analysing how social class discourses were reproduced across a period of twenty years. They identify pursuit of selfish individual gain and the

significance of financial gain that supersedes the collective good of the community or group rather than the quest for inner value and growth. Rather than the focus for social and economic disparities being placed on the systemic and structural inequality of classism, the blame is shifted onto the economically disadvantaged (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). In keeping with this conclusion, Kellaghan (2001) and Cahill (2017) assert that schools are middle-class organisations, constructing and embracing middle-class values and practices that enable progress in a post-industrial society.

2.6.7 Cultural Reproduction and Social Class

Class distinctions can be maintained through the concepts of cultural capital and *habitus*, with middle and upper-class families retaining their social advantages from one generation to the next, through processes of social reproduction (McCulloch, 2006). The relevant literature deliberates on the growing combined effect between the cultural capital of the middle class and education policy (Reay, 2004a). As a result, pupils who are most advantaged assimilate cultural capital easily, as they have already been exposed to it by their families, and for longer (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Consequently, the educational institution facilitates the reproduction of both social opportunities and injustices across the different classes. Consideration of cultural capital seems even more pertinent today, with neo-liberal education policies being promoted through marketisation, giving parents and schools more freedom, and so middle-class parents and schools use these opportunities to exclude the working classes. Jones and Vagle (2013) gave the example where people frequently appraise others in relation to discourses that are classist and imbued with neo-liberal beliefs, with the responsibility for the economic and social inequalities being laid at the door of the disadvantaged.

Social class determines how parents view education, how they communicate with schools and the cultural capital they possess (Hunt & Seiver 2018). Cultural and economic benefits are part of the lifestyle that the middle-class child is led to expect, and when the right kind of capital is brought into an educational institution this leads to better outcomes (Kellaghan, 2001). The middle class is accepted as possessing the cultural capital that is prized within the educational system and all the authority is

bestowed on them, with the system ascribing value to them rather than the working class (Ball, 2003).

Sullivan (2003) draws on Floud et al. (1956) to categorise the resources into *'material'* and *'cultural'*. Cultural resources include the parent's knowledge of how to navigate the school system to maximise the benefits and opportunities for their child (Sullivan, 2003; Cahill, 2016; Reay, 2004a), making it easy for them to exploit all opportunities for their child to fully participate in external projects. It is this middle-class parenting strategy that engenders the highest gain in the school environment. Schools assign values to particular '*systems of knowledge'* over others and this was underlined by Apple (1986), when he discusses the '*hidden curriculum*' in schools.

Due to the increased influence of neo-liberalism in education policy making in the UK, it has become the dominant hegemony that is privileged in education. The middle class is 'propped up' by the sense of working-class inadequacy (Cahill, 2016). Bettie (2000) refers to cultural capital as *'class-based knowledge, skills, linguistic and cultural competencies, and a worldview that is passed on via family; it is related more to educational attainment than to occupation.'* If children come from homes that have established routines and structures in which current and relevant topics are talked through and debated and where parents have adequate knowledge about the school system to be able to provide the necessary help and guidance with all school-related matters, they will have a definite head start when they attend school. In contrast, children would be at a disadvantage academically, socially and ideologically, if their cultural forms were to depend on:

- a language code that is restricted
- oppositional modes of dress
- devaluation of individualism with limited personal choice available (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986).

According to Goodman and Gregg (2010), *'attitudes and behaviours'* are important determining factors in educational outcomes and these factors are characteristic of culture. Hence attitudes and behaviours of a particular socio-economic group may contribute significantly to the learning culture. Social class is enmeshed with the

culturally targeted idea of classed identity. Cahill and Hall (2014) say there has been a culture of '*distinction and difference'* as a result of the overlapping of class issues and a neo-liberal market that has driven particular educational issues. Regardless of the reforms promoted to thwart this disadvantage so far, the connection between social class and educational attainment has been challenging to eradicate (Connelly, et al., 2014). Sociologists have deduced that since removing the financial barriers necessary for participation in education have not negated the social class inequalities in educational attainment, the key may lie in addressing the cultural differences as well.

2.6.8 Effects of Social Class

In the literature in sociology of education, it is argued that social class is not given sufficient attention within educational research and this deficit in attention to issues of social class minimises the real experiences that the economically disadvantaged children face (Ball, 2003). The economic, social and cultural aspects of social class determine how this concept is considered and interpreted. Cahill (2017) advocates a perspective that claims that social class is '*relational and interactional'*.

> 'It is a fluid conceptualisation that is in a constant stream of making, one that refuses the strictly defined categorisations of socio-economic models and works to infuse the cultural elements of class.' (Cahill, 2017: p.2)

Lynch and Baker (2005) assert that having an understanding of the interrelated nature of the relationships between **'*education and the economic, political, sociocultural and affective systems in society'*** supports the acquisition of equality in education. '*Class identities are always here relational, made by distinctions and classifications of self and others.'* (Ball, 2003: p.168). In a society that is driven by neo-liberalism, being middle-class has been linked to prestige and success, whereas being working class is associated with failure and disjointedness.*'* (Ball, 2003). This echoes what Morse (2015) pointed out about the working class having lower attainment, lower income and higher unemployment, with greater job insecurity.

It is therefore imperative to examine social class, giving consideration to cultural position and social and economic perspectives, as well as focusing on the trivial

details that add to the picture of class differentiation (Cahill, 2017). There is a difference in the approaches that the home and school take to education, with the school decontextualising and formalising learning. Disadvantaged parents show lower levels of engagement with their child's education when compared to more affluent parents, which could be due to economic and social difficulties facing them. This could include inflexible working hours, single parenting and uncertainty around their role in their child's schooling, giving rise to working-class parents perceiving a disjuncture between home and school (West, 2007). There would be '*discontinuity*' that children may encounter in the change from home to school and this would depend on the family values, belief system and life-style in relation to those valued at school. Difficulties experienced in conforming to school are the greatest where the '*discontinuities'* are large and the opposite is true where '*discontinuities'* are tiny (Kellaghan, 2001).

2.7 Summary

This chapter has attempted a survey of current understanding of disadvantage and how it intersects with other concepts, which can be used in the exploration of policy. The differences in definitions of the term 'disadvantage' between the English administration and the OECD is significant, as the OECD provide indicators to the government to drive policy changes, yet how these administrations define this concept does not correspond. With the eradication of the word 'class' from most policy documents, disadvantage became the euphemism for class, together with the emergence of all the disjointed categories linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty.

3 Chapter Three: The Role of PISA and OECD in UK Education Policy Determination

3.1 Introduction

A key area of focus in my enquiry is how the English government engages with PISA results in relation to disadvantage and the implementation of all policies that specifically make reference to improving outcomes for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils based on suggestions made by the OECD. Therefore a discussion about the role of the OECD and PISA in relation to English educational policy and other participating countries is imperative. This section focuses on PISA and the OECD, as they have carried out the largest international comparative studies in education and provide indicators which are use determine policy for all nations participating in the programme. It has become an accepted phenomenon that PISA, with its elevated status, sets the agenda for judging the performance of an education system, defining policy problems, setting targets for improvement and enacting the borrowing and reforming of policy (Froese-Germain, 2010), as the field of education becomes internationalised (Niemann et al., 2017). I explore the role of the OECD in the international arena and its influence on governance by means of the leading comparative study of education. I argue that the OECD lacks any binding governance mechanisms, but has become extremely influential through the use of a 'soft' governance approach.

The OECD, which administers and analyses the PISA test data and supports the cross-national development of human capital, has been involved in policy determination, removing some of the responsibility from national government (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017). I argue that PISA has been driving policy reform for education systems and interrogating the reliability and validity of the data related to improving or declining outcomes, even though the data may be flawed and not robust enough to warrant policy changes. Based on the explanations given for policy decisions made by the government, the OECD uses the PISA outcomes to exert substantial sway, even though it has no legal power over the countries that choose to be members.

3.2 The Global Positioning and Role of OECD and PISA

PISA and the OECD make judgements on the educational performance of the English education system and provide comparative data against which we are measured globally. In their prominent position, PISA and the OECD set the agenda for judging the performance of all countries that join in the triennial testing regime. The OECD, given implicit permission from all participating countries, provides support for them to improve their education systems. Improvement in education has been increasingly portrayed as a way to reform a country's global ambitions, being measured by the outcomes pupils achieve that are reflected in the international league tables (Grek, 2009). This has created the need for further evidence, which recognises the successes of school systems. There are various organisations that have emerged to fulfil this requirement, revealing their approach to policy making as derived from or informed by pragmatic and objective evidence (Auld & Morris, 2016). During the end of the 20th century, when education and economic policy converged, the OECD was strategically placed to increase its authority in education (Lewis, 2017; Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

PISA has been established by the OECD as a cross-national survey of pupils and is used globally as a point of reference for the evaluation of education systems, being the largest comparative education study to analyse characteristics and proficiencies of 15-year-olds (Breakspear, 2014; Froese-Germain, 2010; Nagel et al., 2010; PISA, 2017). According to Bradshaw, et al., (2010), the testing cycle has taken place since the year 2000, covering reading, mathematical skills and scientific literacy, with the focus on one of these skills during every cycle. PISA is a multi-year project with execution phases that take place in sequence and are connected with the publication of the outcomes of the survey the following year (PISA, 2017).

Samples are drawn from each participating country for the PISA survey (Micklewright and Schnepf, 2006). The test is taken by members of the OECD, and a rising number of non-OECD countries have recently participated. The principal aim of PISA is supplying comparable cross-national data of student performance on the skills that

are deemed to be essential for adults (Breakspear, 2014). Sixty-five countries took part in PISA 2009, including thirty-three members of the OECD and twenty-four members of the European Union (EU) (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Breakspear, 2014; Froese-Germain, 2010; Nagel et al., 2010). In 2018 participation in the PISA tests increased to 79 countries (OECD, 2019).

There are stringent international quality standards that are employed during all phases of the PISA assessment to ensure that equivalence and correspondence is not lost (Mickelwright and Schnepf, 2006). PISA includes background questionnaires for students and participating schools, to provide contextual information. Some questioning concentrates on pupils' attitudes to reading and aspects of the teaching and learning of reading, while there may also be questions related to the parents' level of education and resources that are available in their households (OECD, 2018b). School leadership and ethos are also included in the survey, with school principals also completing a questionnaire about their schools' leadership and management (OECD, 2018b). The assessments are designed to measure students' preparation for adulthood, so they do not specifically correspond to the curriculum of any country that participates in the testing (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

PISA's aim is to measure how well students can apply their learning in real life contexts. The data gathered from the background questionnaires and the assessments are published a year later once they have been analysed and evaluated (PISA, 2017). However, Grey and Morris (2018) call into question the analyses and validity of these assessments for providing sound evidence on which to base the intended conclusions. They further object that subsequent policy-making is in fact heavily ideological.

The revenue that the OECD receives from its testing services is substantial, as countries have to pay to participate, and it continues to broaden the scope of its role, showing how they have marketised the services they offer.

3.3 Global Governance and Influence of OECD

The OECD's role in the international arena and its influence through governance of the leading comparative education study has expanded massively since the turn of the century (Niemann et al., 2017), augmenting its advisory influence to provide policy makers with better information (Ball, 2015b) and so countries feel obligated to comply with the directives given. Soft governance refers to 'governance by numbers', where countries make the choice to use or disregard the results from international rankings, to either facilitate change or reduce pressure to reform their own national system, in order to align with international best practices (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

PISA has assumed its role as an important part of the OECD as the global organisation for assessing, analysing and comparing educational performance at an international level. The OECD has taken up evaluating education and training systems at a national level, as international points of comparison compel education policy based on its work on indicators through PISA (Grek, 2009). For accountability, performance is managed and scrutinised at all levels from the international league table ranking through to the consistent use of hard and soft targets to review the performance of teachers and pupils, as well as various procedures of self-evaluation (Ozga, 2012). The OECD provides "*education governance by comparison*", so that countries can improve their performance in the global economy (Froese-Germain, 2012). Essentially, these are the reasons given to justify the work that the OECD does in education, its involvement in the field of global education policy and its augmented role as policy actor (Grek, 2009). Nation states are not obliged to comply with OECD policy guidance, but the OECD has established its position as being highly proficient in this arena (OECD, 2016), determining educational indicators as well as providing comparative data to measure educational performance (Grek, 2009). By evaluating systems worldwide, it aims to generate superior-quality indicators of the knowledge and skills of these education systems (Schleicher, 2018), and provides reasoning for national differences in scores linked to policy advice (Sellar and Lingard, 2014). Ozga (2012), contends that organisations such as PISA that hold nations to account in this way manipulate the presentation of the results with selective data to present the outcomes in ways compatible with the desired conclusions.

According to the Collins Dictionary online, spatialisation is the process of causing something to occupy space or assume some of the properties of space. Therefore, respatialisation constitutes global instances when comparable processes occur in various parts of the world, both planned and unplanned, steered by specific factors. Respatialisation is about the spatial order changing, with the frameworks for social actions being challenged, while others are developing and contending with those already established (Keilbach, 2016). Ozga (2012), has referred to 'respatialisation' with reference to how PISA has performed its governance role, exercising its authority and accountability practices. Globalising tendencies have produced what is referred to as the respatialisation of the social world (Scholte, 2002). The concept of respatialisation is significant to this thesis as it is imperative to understand how England engages with the authority and accountability practices of PISA in this chapter. Data and data systems are considered to be the key policy technology that supports the work of governance, identifying policy problems and creating policy solutions cross-nationally. These predicaments have seen a shift in implications, leading to a 'respatialisation' of governance practices, especially in Europe, as this is envisaged as a key policy area for recovery of the economy and offering resources to fight against social exclusion and other related problems (Ozga, 2012).

National education systems have changed from government to governance through new official OECD procedures that have been manoeuvred by significant elements, such as the connection between the indicators and the audit and performance (Grek, 2009). Grey & Morris (2018) and Sellar & Lingard (2013) draw on Woodward's (2009) typology of the OECD's role from government to global governance using four dimensions: cognitive, normative, legal and palliative. Cognitive governance operates through the corresponding values shared by participating countries and this is a distinguishing style of influence used by the OECD, so it does not have to settle competing ideological positions among members. To be a member of the OECD, there has to be a broad commitment to liberal democracy, market economics and human rights (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The education enterprise of the OECD has grown to become a significant connection in this intricate policy field as education is

considered to be the key to national markets, having leverage and advancing despite globalisation (Grek, 2009).

The second dimension of governance explained by Woodward (2009) is the normative one, concerning the epistemological assumptions that form the basis of the policy work that the OECD does through questioning and growing the mindsets of the people concerned for greatest effect. This is connected to the significant role taken by the OECD, of which comparative analyses is a central function of governance as it operates across numerous levels (Niemann & Martens, 2018; Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The OECD indirectly determines education policy and then appraises the achievement of national education administrations against these terms, which is a self-perpetuating dynamic (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

The OECD enforces legal agreement through close observation and peer pressure rather than sanctions, with this mode of governance being the least important in terms of its global impact (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Whilst PISA may have a noteworthy impact on formal policies, the actual outcomes of PISA-related reforms at the regional level may be less significant. The influence of the comparative analysis of PISA is dependent on national educational institutions and their infrastructure, which are as important as national politics and the particular system of government (Niemann et al., 2017).

Woodward's final mode is palliative governance, which the OECD does through filling gaps in global governance, interrogating emerging policy concerns, its approach to policy issues in various fields of study and its supportive work with other related inter-governmental organisations (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The OECD does not possess the financial leverage nor the legal agency to assiduously promote policy making at the national level within member states. However, through its ranking practices published in *Education at a Glance* and other publications developed in amalgamation with organisations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and PISA, its mandate has become noteworthy in shaping education policy at national and global level (Grek, 2009).

The OECD uses cognitive and normative governance as an important influence in exercising soft power in member countries, which has been the distinguishing characteristic of the OECD's intergovernmental structure (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Using the soft governance approach, the OECD guides local practice rather than dictating change. Information garnered from analysis of the PISA tests is then structured into a range of formats, creating opportunities for this information to be shared and discussed on various fora (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017; Froese-Germain, 2012). The indicators set by PISA help to determine an understanding of individual education systems (Niemann et al., 2017).   It is accepted as an authoritative body through its data, reports and studies, and its policy propositions are received as well-founded by both scholars and politicians (Grek, 2009).

3.3.1 Data

I argue that OECD data is not always relevant to driving policy reform for education systems. Their data may not necessarily be reliable, valid or robust enough to warrant policy changes as claimed, given certain flaws in the data gathered, or analyses failing to show correlation of input variables, with improving or declining outcomes. Education policy making is increasingly removed from national governments and is now based on performative data rather than what individual governments and school leaders may know is best for their schools.

Standardisation, benchmarking and data management strengthens governance, providing opportunities to influence and shape behaviour at various levels within national systems by using comparative performance data. PISA is able to represent the results and conclusions to present a particular perspective as the analysis and judgement by the OECD goes unchallenged, altering the accountability of administrations and increasing the demand for more to be accomplished with the data supplied (Ozga, 2012). Given the set expectations of the OECD, policymakers find they are obliged to make certain policy changes given predetermined conclusions supposedly drawn from the dataset (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017). Although external authority is applied to national systems, the nation state is able to participate in this process, using the comparative data and conclusions provided as a basis for the manoeuvre of policy within the state (Ozga, 2012). The accountability measures

can get tough through the use of tenacious governance, whereby the status of the legitimated data is augmented and policymakers find they are unable to select any other policy route, irrespective of how favourable such options seem, without negative consequences or sanctions. The approach taken by the OECD, could be one of soft governance, where outcomes, guidance and advice could be published, creating various fora where this could be shared and debated. This then puts pressure on the policy makers to respond as their country's results come under scrutiny once in the public arena (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017).

The techniques that PISA uses for data collection and presentation are received with scepticism in some quarters (Jerrim, 2012). Researchers and commentators have argued that the process does not do justice to so many varied education systems with diverse historical backgrounds and traditions through often simplistic comparisons. PISA does little to consider the qualitative differences between the various education systems that participate in the programme (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Comparisons of performance reduced to a straightforward ranking is challenged as unsuitable for assessing such varied and complex education systems. Still, PISA defines the manner in which education is being assessed, an illustration of the preferential use of quantified data for policy making and simplifying global exchange of information (Grek, 2009).   It is probable that PISA is venerated by policy makers who seek improvement in PISA indicators instead of ensuring that reform is logical, consistent and sustainable (Niemann et al., 2017).

3.3.2. PISA Shaping Policy

It has become a matter of course that the PISA data is referenced during policy debates, having established these frameworks and indicators for examining educational systems worldwide (Breakspear, 2014). According to OECD (2017), the most significant effect of the indicators provided to countries after the PISA assessments is that they are the principal means to establish what the key issues are and to explain policy problems. In order for countries to use the PISA indicators, policy problems are simplified and quantified, ensuring they can be understood and used effectively.

The English government's understanding of educational goals is shaped by PISA, who then themselves seek to measure the indicators in the next cycle, which become inextricably linked to the original goals (Mickelwright and Schnepf, 2006). Thus, improvements of educational quality are one and the same as improving PISA scores. By relating an indicator to the initial aims, many essential features may be obscured when clarifying and measuring complicated phenomena and varied constructs. A jurisdiction's perspective of educational matters may become skewed through excessive comparison by the same restrictive indicators. Breakspear (2014) pinpointed three types of PISA-based improvement targets, which are related to rank order, specific average point scores and a focus on equity. The adoption of PISA policy improvement targets suggests that policy makers venerate the evaluation accorded by PISA (Stanley, 2013). One of the key features of PISA is to provide capacity-building plans for governments to draw from, examining the quality of educational outcomes and shaping these outcomes and the returns on investment in education (FroeseGermain, 2010). According to Breakspear (2014), clear and measurable targets for improvement are clarified by setting PISA targets, which may in turn support reform efforts, involving all system stakeholders around a shared purpose. PISA sets out to define policy problems, by quantifying key features of identified challenges. PISA also tracks the trends over time across a three-year period) so that they can report whether a country's performance is improving, failing or has plateaued.

The performance of a country's education system must therefore show improvement, the new policies and practices achieving measurable improvements solely through the use of PISA data, deemed to be valuable evidence, which is arguably a narrow conceptualisation by the OECD (Lewis, 2017). These processes have become normalised with the assumption that the aims and outcomes of different schooling systems are commensurable and the results of comparative testing are directly correlated to economic success. The OECD have failed to consider the varied problems inherent in endorsing best practice and policy transfer in this way, as the comparative performance data has created an international policy space limited only to the extent of data collected. Using the comparative data, evidence-based policy decisions are mediated by political judgments and prioritisation (Lewis, 2017).

The OECD maintains that PISA proffers an in depth understanding of educational policy and practice, and in so doing their track record allows policy makers from participating countries to learn from the pragmatism employed elsewhere (Marlaine et al., 2015). Undue pressure emerges as a result of the indicators determined by PISA, with consideration given to the dissemination of expertise, the vigilant observation of outcomes and the continued research in education policy by the OECD (Niemann et al., 2017). In England, Ministers have made repeated reference to PISA results, and this the success of other nation's education systems, with better performing systems taken as models to improve schools' practice in an attempt to improve our international ranking in the PISA league tables. However, no consideration is given to the context and history of the country we are borrowing the initiatives from and then whether this would be the correct approach taken by England, given our local context (Ball, 2013a).

3.3.3 Political Manoeuvring or Politics of Educational Reform

Change in policy takes place because ministers want to provoke sustainable reform and also for the sake of position in the league tables. The outcome indicators that countries receive from PISA significantly influence policy due to the tremendous credibility bestowed on PISA from all over the world (Grey & Morris, 2018). Position in the league tables is quite obviously being used to influence and argue for political reformation, with the policy field becoming increasingly internationalised. The prominence of these comparative evaluations is rising as the number of countries that are engaging with the PISA results increases. (Niemann & Martens, 2018). These incongruous reforms may hike up PISA scores but often do little to boost learning and teaching. There have been countries that have embarked on extensive policy changes due to what has been termed, *'PISA Shock'* (Breakspear, 2014: p7).

With the publication of the PISA performance tables and the media honing in on countries' ranking in the league tables, many jurisdictions are under pressure to reform policy without considering improvements in teaching and learning that are coherent and can be sustained. Germany, Denmark and Japan have been examples of countries that have responded to PISA, making changes to their policy in such a way (Breakspear, 2014: p7). The indicators are not there simply to generate

rankings, but instead to compel national policy makers into a particular understanding of what the best educational provision should be, encouraging them to pursue particular policy options to improve outcomes (Froese-Germain, 2010).

According to the OECD, many high performing education systems have endured painstakingly planned reforms during the time when human capital has grown in significance for national economies (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). As a result of hard governance pressures, PISA data was used to uphold national policy initiatives. In England, for example, due to the curriculum demands made on higher achieving pupils, these pupils were supported to a greater extent in their mathematical development than many lower achieving pupils. The result was a widening gap between these two groups in the assessment data. However, in Germany, PISA data shaped the government's response through a softer policy change approach, with all groups of pupils were provided with improved teaching practices in parallel. These similarities served to explain why the outcomes for the lower achieving pupils in Germany were raised closer to those who were higher achievers. The different approaches taken by England and Germany show the impact on the different outcomes. It is apparent that the interplay between the local, national and international powers are complicated and are not helped by simple models like that of a policy cycle. A less rigid model is proposed; one which acknowledges the evolving and socio-cultural nature of social activity and in so doing considers both the processes of governance and the development of pedagogical practices (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017).

The compelling nature of the OECD's education policy work emphasises the significance of policy factors over the effects of cultural and social context (Auld & Morris, 2013). Together with discussions around the performance of an education system, countries being ranked using comparative data by PISA has arguably turned the focus of stakeholders in education towards the policies and practices of high performing schooling systems without taking into account significant social and historical differences (Auld and Morris, 2016). Using a particular policy from a nation state that has been successful with a particular aspect of education can provide governments with authority for their own internal reform plans, rather than using

cultural and historical explanations to legitimise reforms for the success of education systems in other countries (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Whilst this may be beneficial for the purposes of gathering knowledge on policy and gleaning the effects of policy from other factors, the possibility exists that the data on the comparative analysis may overlook system specific factors (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). PISA data, which can be ubiquitous and influential, receives high media coverage, is at the forefront of policy making decisions and bears testament to how education policy processes have become '*mediatised*' (Grek, 2009). In 2014, PISA drew huge criticism from academics and teachers around the world, who, in an open letter to Andreas Schleicher, the OECD's Director of Education, demanded a change to the testing regime. This document was justifiably signed by thousands of experts voicing their apprehension about PISA's influence on policy, their over reliance on quantitative data and the tendency to generate only short-term educational improvements through a limited view of the complex topic of education. They also highlighted the OECD's economic view on schools and the lack of its democratic approval (Niemann et al., 2017).

3.4 The OECD and Neo-liberalism

This section is linked to Section 2.5, which focuses on the influence neo-liberalism has on education and the education of the disadvantaged in England. The OECD and PISA follow the principles of this market driven ideology (neo-liberalism), which is focused on economic and social transformation to enable greater efficiency and effectiveness, with reduced government regulation. This is the perspective from which I will continue the discussion in this section. The neo-liberal policies of the OECD have significantly changed education as the global governance of the OECD has significant leverage, and it continues to advance its agenda.

The OECD has become a significant agent of globalisation, as it has deliberately propagated neo-liberal market capitalism. The New Public Management (NPM) has seen an increased reliance on data in policy processes, which is part of the restructured mode of governance (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Governance practices in education have changed and, in step with this, the accountability of administrations

have transformed in line with neo-liberalism, where comparative performance using data is the single accountability criterion that carries weight (Ozga, 2012).

According to Robertson (2014), PISA is a manifestation of the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM), which has been destroying good education systems in both northern and southern countries. The first stage is standardisation through outcomes-based approaches, driven by enterprises who are happy to provide resources as a one-size-fits-all package. The second element of GERM is a focus on core subjects such as literacy and numeracy, undermining other areas of learning that are important for well-rounded individuals and communities, including physical education, music and art. Third, there is a drive for methods of attaining learning goals using low-risk approaches. Many of these approaches are linked to teacher performance. A fourth element is the adoption of corporate management models, which asserts that business corporations know better how to run schools than those in the public sector. Finally, there is a belief that test-based 'accountability' is the way to raise student achievement. This leads to a practice of 'teaching to the test', excluding students who are likely to achieve the wrong kinds of results (Robertson, 2014).

The techniques of measurement and monitoring used for reflection and representation in PISA play a specific part in the '*contemporary relationship between truth and power and the self that we call neoliberalism*' (Ball, 2015b). As people who are subjected to neo-liberalism, school teachers and leaders are always prompted to empower and improve themselves, so that their performance is enhanced both in their personal and work lives. In the classroom, the message of performance and improvement in terms of student test outcomes is to an increasing extent linked to the form of reward that is performance-related pay (Ball, 2015b). Therefore, I consider it essential to draw out the effects of policy from other factors for the specific intent of learning from policy. However, there is the chance that the comparative analyses provided by the OECD's data can overlook factors that are particular to a system, especially in relation to the consequences of inherent inequality on educational success. There is structural inequality in society beyond schooling, frequently omitted as a reason for poor quality and inadequate outcomes on PISA,

even though PISA emphasises the potential for equity through schooling systems. Hence, there is a need to challenge inherent socio-economic inequalities in a move towards more equitable and excellent schooling provision (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

Since the growing hegemony of neo-liberalism and a globalist capitalist economy, the most important reason for setting up the OECD has become redundant (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017). This is because the international comparative data is not always used astutely by national systems, but rather exploited to reinforce their own reform agendas, often strengthening the features of GERM. However, I am arguing in this thesis that although it may be helpful to know about other nations' educational performance and policy making, governments also need to acknowledge the differences that schools and teachers make, with localised policy that considers the cultural context and focuses on building trust in teacher professionalism, together with social policies that are warranted to address economic inequalities (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

3.5 Reliability and Validity

The OECD is quite confident in its decision to make policy recommendations, yet it cautions participating countries to be judicious with the interpretation of the results and trends (Forestier & Crossley, 2015). There are considerable differences in the explanation of the results and the actual interpretation, particularly by the media and politicians of various countries. According to Murphy (2010), the examination of PISA reveals that the validity of PISA is questionable for various reasons, but that some of the validity concerns raise questions about who is given the chance to actually participate in educational policy formation. Given that technical issues related to sampling have arisen, eliminating the analysis of England's reading results from 2000 to 2009, and those of numerous other countries, uncertainties arise about the reliability of the PISA data. Are standards actually declining or improving? (Jerrim, 2011). The focus by PISA on just maths, science and reading literacy to assess education has been challenged, as valuable skills such as creativity, bilingualism and critical thinking are disregarded (Forestier & Crossley, 2015).

In summary, it is evident that PISA can be regarded as an astutely managed tool that privileges certain types of knowledge and, even though this is concealed, requiring participation in its design clearly limits it (Murphy, 2010). Large-scale assessments like PISA are compromised by significant flaws and it is not robust enough to sustain the kinds of comparisons and policy decisions that claim this data as evidence or justification. While further research into the uses of PISA would be extremely advantageous, providing a more critical understanding of PISA and all its functions, this appeal is left unanswered by the OECD. One can argue that these practices by the OECD, ignoring appeals by participating nation states suppress those who want to broaden the discourse about fundamental values and judgements arising out of PISA. (Murphy, 2010).

According to Jerrim (2011), the PISA sampling may not be reliable due to differences in the content and format of tests, student motivation, scheduling of tests and especially variations between countries joining the testing programme. From a validity standpoint, some of the literacy test items duplicate test items on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), grounding concerns over whether the PISA test is more designed for adults or teenagers. PISA uses a common test development procedure known as item response theory (IRT), which is constructed on the premise that a '*single latent trait*' explains the responses to items on a test. There is a lack of probable relationships, critics suggesting that in many items in the PISA test, more than one trait is at work. The assertion that students taking different versions of the test are effectively taking '*the same'* test is debateable. (Murphy, 2010). The reading is taken out of the reading test, as students talked about being able to answer a question without reading the passage on the text. The reading test becomes a test of background knowledge and experience. The ability to translate is crucial to making rational comparative inferences about PISA (Murphy, 2010). There are many multiple-choice items that do not correspond in their translated versions for Asian countries, compared to the test versions in Western languages. This suggests that PISA rankings of countries that vary based on language may be unreliable (Jerrim, 2012; Murphy, 2010). The representation of culture is also problematic for PISA, as accounting for cultural diversity in test items has been a challenge to fulfil.

This certainly makes PISA's test results unsound given concerns about cultural factors influencing test design itself (Murphy, 2010).

PISA's webpage sets out disconcerting messages to countries about their students and how well prepared they are relative to the international context, raising apprehension about their economic development in comparison to other industrialised nations. Such uncertainty is deployed to inspire imitation to fulfil PISA's purposes for globalisation and economic prioritisation (Murphy, 2010).

3.6 Policy Borrowing

'Policy borrowing' is advocated by the OECD, especially where they have evidence that a recommendation they have previously made has worked with a particular country. This does not automatically mean that policies and practices should be borrowed from one country to the next after the comparative study of educational systems (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Active cross-national replication of policy includes the appropriation of solutions from another country, which may involve the administration and implementation being judged more feasible when the characteristics of the different education systems, together with the main political ideologies, are synchronous with each other (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). However, research suggests that attempting to replicate a system that comes with its own complexities is not straightforward and results in inconsistencies and contradictions (Auld & Morris, 2016).

Policy borrowing and transfer of policy that is not sensitive to the local context could result in problems with the implementation and policy failure. It has been argued that simply transplanting policies and practices from high to low achieving countries will not necessarily work, yet this takes place repeatedly across the world (Forestier & Crossley, 2015). In essence, it may be part of the political construction to generate public concern and promote particular reforms which reflect ideological stances rather than from an intention to import successful educational models from high performing countries (Forestier & Crossley, 2015). According to Ozga (2012), policy makers may use PISA to justify national policy directions they have wanted to pursue in their own contexts, without being held accountable by their electorates for poor

performance (as judged by PISA), but rather attributing it to poor teacher performance. This is precisely what has happened in England since 2005 (Gove, 2011). Information gleaned from international comparisons of performance are not always taken on board by national systems, but they use the data as information to support their own reform plans instead, often reinforcing the features of GERM (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

Policy borrowing has become an oversimplified process, with policy makers using PISA data to give credence to their decisions. Oates (2011) focuses on the importance of using evidence from international comparisons and contends for policy borrowing that is judicious and considered, rather than submissively accepting parts of other education systems. Finland, for example, has been a beacon of success and ranked highly according to PISA; however, to import classroom practice from the Finnish education system into the UK would be a serious blunder. Their schools have been close-knit community schools with limited ethnic diversity, though are changing radically at present, moving away from the things that assured its success in the past. This type of system would be difficult to replicate, where the social and ethnic composition is less varied and communities have a choice in terms of the school they attend, actually eschewing the conditions which some other countries believe to be vital to success (Oates, 2011). Analysts accentuate the importance of understanding the wider context that the cultural and historical effects on education systems (Jerrim & Choi, 2014; Auld and Morris, 2014). Understanding the broader context in which they are rooted demonstrates that we do not have the techniques to stipulate the clear links between cause and effect that policy borrowing requires (Auld and Morris, 2014).

3.7 Policy Determination in the UK

In this thesis I examine how England engages with PISA and the OECD to understand how its policy direction is influenced by its falling rankings on the PISA league tables. The statutory delegation of powers for the UK changed in the late 1990s so that education could be governed from a subnational level rather than from central government. The UK Government still holds responsibility for England,

whereas in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, responsibility has shifted to the devolved governments in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

After the PISA testing in 2000, no 'next steps' to improve outcomes in the future were introduced, as the UK Government was pleased with the results (Breakspear, 2012). This is an example of how PISA outcomes are used in a one-sided way by politicians (national policy actors) [only] to prove that improvement is needed (Breakspear, 2012), such that the narrative of decline provides the stimulus for reform (Auld & Morris, 2016). National media headlines focused on the decline in performance of England's secondary school pupils when the PISA 2009 results were published in 2010, with the analysis of the PISA data showing average maths outcomes being in relative decline (Jerrim, 2012). This has subsequently been used for political advantage to defend change to policy.

> 'This is conclusive proof that Labour's claim to have improved Britain's schools during its period in office is utter nonsense. Spending on education increased by £30 billion under the last government, yet between 2000-09 British schoolchildren plummeted in the international league tables.' The Daily Telegraph (Young, 2010)

The Coalition government drew attention to the need for change in the English schooling system based on the decline in performance (Jerrim, 2012). The narrative in the introduction of the 2010 Schools White Paper affirmed their concerns about the decline in our educational performance based on the PISA data:

> "The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. …[…] the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics." (Department for Education, 2010).

Policymakers in England have paid much regard to this PISA data without considering that this is a single study, with Jerrim (2012) concluding that the PISA data is problematic, given missing data, suspect survey procedures and questionable sampling, which has restricted the inferences being made. The conclusion that performance has declined in relation to other countries participating in the tests in the past decade is inconclusive, as the test outcomes have not been statistically robust enough to warrant policy change (Jerrim, 2012). Yet, PISA has simply become too big to ignore (Auld & Morris, 2014).

According to Jerrim (2012), an increasing number of academics have begun to question parts of the PISA methodology, such as scaling procedures, cultural bias, motivation of students and the choice of test items. Ireland has suffered a similar fate, with a decline in their PISA results between 2000 and 2009, but the Irish national report (Perkins et al, 2010: p10) cited in Jerrim (2012) also considers other factors linked to the administration of PISA that may have contributed to this decline. According to Jerrim and Choi (2014), the coalition government launched a review of England's national curriculum in 2011 in pursuit of the 'world class' education prototype, claiming that it needed to concentrate on a limited core of propositional knowledge in traditional subjects, as this is what was thought to determines success in some high performing countries such as Finland and Singapore. The government disregarded assertions about demography, culture and the interplay of a range of other factors from international comparisons (Ball, 2013a; Jerrim and Choi, 2014). The emphasis on what is referred to as '*back to basics'* and improving performance in the primary curriculum is steered by an added level of comparison, provided through the PISA league tables. Ministers' speeches reference performance in other education systems repeatedly, as an incentive and requirement for raising standards. Better performing systems as judged by PISA are chosen to be exemplars for better practice (Ball, 2013a).

The United Kingdom's response to the questionnaire by Breakspear (2012: p13) – '*Overall ranking and trend performance in PISA'* shows that there are other participating countries which are advancing much faster than the UK/England and in fact surpassing it. This has been taken to necessitate the need for reforms planned in Education White Papers from 2009 to 2016. The response from Scotland was that PISA was a key measure of their weakening position on the international rankings, with particular emphasis on the negative impact of socioeconomic background. Nonetheless, policy determination is based on both national and international evidence (Breakspear, 2012: p13)*.* The instance of Scotland shows an extremely measured approach, using a range of data rather than a single set of results. The United Kingdom thought that the PISA outcomes were an important indicator of how effective each school system was and that the results of the 2009 PISA would provide a baseline which could be used to calculate the success of improvements

that had been put in place in the recent past (Breakspear, 2012). How could the PISA report be a reasonable assessment of changes in England, given the fact that reforms need to be embedded so that they could then be measured to judge their effectiveness?

With results from PISA determining '*winners*' and '*losers*', policy advisers in nation states attempt to identify the next prescription for better educational performance so that nations can grow their economic future. For example, one could argue that England has moved towards policy making by using PISA recommendations that is allegedly evidence-based when determining improvement in education. A statement is included in the policy document to assure the reader that the transformation intended, has worked in other high performing education systems (Auld and Morris, 2014).

A succession of English ministers have drawn on quasi-research carried out by often overtly ideological research organisations such as think tanks e.g.: the Adam Smith Institute and the Education Policy Institute to generate so-called expert knowledge in support of their ideologically informed policy ideas. According to Ball (2012), some researchers perform completely unregulated in the field, bypassing independent peer review, raising concerns that there is growing participation of numerous 'professional', but not peer-reviewed group of advisory organisations in the business of policy development. This burgeoning group of entrepreneurs brought their research aims in line with the policy context that was emergent in England through the use of comparative data at the core of the new mode of governance (Auld and Morris, 2014).

Finland is cited very often as the system that other education systems want to emulate, but it has two features which are seldom mentioned: that of an overriding commitment to social and educational equity through a fully reliable, excellent quality comprehensive school system. The private sector co-exists harmoniously with the public sector and there is no leverage of systemic reform that other governments in other countries have signed up to. According to Jerrim and Choi (2014), the category of being 'world class' is an extremely debateable idea in a society in which the

existence of the human race is contingent upon international cooperation. Drawing a parallel between world class education and top scores in the PISA test is not acceptable as our global educational excellence should not be limited to the competencies associated with just literacy, numeracy and science. There has been recently an increasing consensus across a wide spectrum of professional, parental and public opinion in Britain and many other nations, that the fixation on tests and league tables is wholly unhelpful and that we need a deeper and more humanitarian response when seeking clarity about what constitutes a world class education system, and specifically regarding '*world class'* as a category (Jerrim and Choi, 2014).   PISA has become recognised as an authoritative body that can define policy problems, set targets for improvement and reform policy, exerting undue pressure on participating countries through the indicators determined by the OECD. The policy problems are quantified so that they can be understood and engaged with. The OECD has assumed this authoritative position with pressure being applied to participating countries, but I argue with my sources it is high time this is corrected.

4 Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses my research design and the processes that have generated the data used in my findings. Critical policy analysis (CPA) helps us to understand the implicit values of policy text and discourse through close examination and analysis. In this inquiry, CPA is used to question how disadvantage is addressed in the White Papers selected as part of my review (Tables 5.3 to 5.6) and the impact of these enactments in the field of education. This study, with its discursive analysis of how written policy vocabulary and language structure the discourse of disadvantage, is based upon the CPA assumption that policies are socially constructed courses of action, shaped by historically contingent power differences (Fischer, 2003). Discourse analysis was chosen as the analytical framework, as it allows the critical examination of historically specific discourses shaping the language used in education policy. The use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) when undertaking CPA brings to light the role that discursive politics plays in the struggles over educational policies, opening a door to understanding the way language is used to bring people under the subjection of dominant groups (Apple, 2019). This focus on language as social practice was further underscored by Fairclough (1989) and Wodak & Meyer (2009), strengthening the theoretical framework for CPA.

This research is interpretive in the sense that existing policy documents are critically analysed with regard to their particular use of 'disadvantage' (the complexity of which was explored in Chapter One). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been the most appropriate methodology to establish the framework and therefore to determine whether cultural capital is advocated and advanced. In order to discover the full implications of this research question, CDA and thematic analysis have been employed to clarify the role of language in selected policy documents to provide a comprehensive view of 'disadvantage' within the confines of the inquiry. I created a theoretical and conceptual framework that determines the context of the study and the particular theories explaining my reasoning behind CDA being the preferred choice. I have drawn on Bourdieu's key concept and borrowed theories from

Stephen Ball and Jurgen Habermas, who both treat policy as discourse. These theories shape my analysis of the English government's engagement with PISA results in relation to disadvantage, the Education White Papers from 2009 and publications related to disadvantage from the Department of Education (DfE) since 2009. Moreover, I explore the way policy requires schools to enact stipulations made to overcome disadvantage that could impact on pupil learning. I also discuss thematic analysis as a way of deconstructing the text, after which I discuss each stage of my inquiry, including the rationale and the process of data collection selected to investigate the research questions as fully as possible.

4.2 Ontological and Epistemological Overview

Educational researchers undertake critical policy analysis, drawing on a wide range of philosophical and methodological conventions and take varied ontological and epistemological positions. Ontology is defined as '*the study of being'* and is concerned with the nature of existence and the structure of reality (Crotty: 2003: p.10) Sikes (2004), defines ontology as the beliefs held about social reality, '*the nature or essence of things.*' (p.19) Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and what it is possible to know (Crotty: 2003). Sikes (2004) states that the notion of truth is crucial as what constitutes the truth. 'Truth' is based on how particular data is acquired from research procedures. The understanding and value a researcher attaches to different types of data determines the method that is chosen and the knowledge that will be generated (Sikes, 2004). I approached my educational research from the standpoint and the understanding that sociological perspectives provide effective frameworks for insightful and critical discussion, the exploration and challenge of key issues, as well as for providing solutions and stimulating additional questions. Accordingly, I take the view that social reality is constructed through individual thoughts, actions and discourse, which is the reason behind/the basis for my choice of research methods (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I placed significant value on qualitative research methods, with the belief that the qualitative approach can reveal and clarify the social construction of situations and participant institutions. I endeavoured to work systematically and critically to engage in an authentic and rational exploration of the relevant documents and to make pertinent suggestions for future policy and practice.

My role as a Headteacher and my particular interests determined how I conceived and engaged with this study. As explained by Sikes (2004), the perspectives and assumptions held by a researcher, which inform their worldview, have implications for their choice of methods, theoretical position and research-related practices. My yearning/motivation is to make a difference to the lives of the children I work with, seeking a solution to support our disadvantaged children especially, while appreciating that there are influential factors beyond the school gates and outside the school's control. I see the OECD as an example of an organisation steeped in neo-liberal ideology, wielding a 'one size fits all' approach without giving consideration to the contextual factors of each country. I believe schools and educational institutions with a strong moral compass can make a significant difference through their best endeavours. Hopefully the correct steering from those at the helm of the country, with a sound moral imperative and with effective policies in place to address social injustice, will pave the way for such success.

4.3 Critical Policy Analysis

Policymaking is deemed a deliberate process where a group of specific researchers and professionals use research and reason to guarantee the best policy outcomes (Young, 2018). CPA is founded on the assumption that it is imperative to understand the complex links between education and the '*relations of dominance and subordination*' in wider society, and the movements that are attempting to impede these relations (Apple, 2019). Of significance is the fact that CPA also uses critical approaches to record and question the dominant forms of policy and practice that create and/or reproduce inequalities (Apple, 2019; Diem et al., (2019). The study of educational policy through a critical lens permits a nuanced, comprehensive understanding of the complexities associated with education policy, identifying and framing the issues to policy development, implementation, and evaluation (Young, 2018). Prunty (1985) asserted that CPA could successfully bring to light the determinants of repression, exploitation and domination that are rooted in and legitimised by educational policy, serving those whose voices and values have been incapacitated by the dominant hegemony.

CPA considers policy as the execution of power and domination (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and creates the platform for those involved as researchers and analysts in policy to voice their standpoints with influence and authority against policy that is erroneous, repressive and unjust at various levels (Ozga, 2000). Critical policy researchers are concerned with how a policy stance comes to be viewed as valid (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). CPA spans the humanities and social sciences (Young & Diem, 2017) and covers varied perspectives and developments, with the intent to critique and provide alternate approaches for exploring educational policy issues (Young, 2018). Critical Policy analysis should generate greater depth and breadth in policy critiquing, due to the multi-theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches used to analyse educational policies (Diem et al., 2014).

More recently, the key focus in CPA has been to understand, critique and conceptualise the global direction of educational policy. According to Diem et al. (2019), scholars used five key practices:

- Aiming to understand the difference between the rhetoric and practiced reality of the policy.
- Concern with how the policy emerged, the solution it was intended to bring to the issues experienced, how it evolved over a period of time, and its part in bolstering the dominant culture.
- Interest in the dissemination of power, resources and knowledge, including the *creation of policy 'winners' and 'losers'.*
- Understanding the nature of the responses, both resistance and/or engagement by members of the non-dominant groups.

Consequently, a critical policy analyst should be able to conceive why a policy is created during a specific period of time and how it is executed. In critical policy research, it is important to be familiar with how policy values are directed and arranged around a group of policy statements. From Ball's (2013b) point of view, a critical policy analyst must take risks and be reflexive and self-evaluative.

CPA was chosen as it was the most appropriate conceptual approach and method of analysis, because it helps to resolve the kinds of critical questions outlined in Section 4.6. Specific to this study, discourse analysis was used to highlight the

ways in which dominant policy discourses have created and shaped how disadvantage is conceptualised.

My intent, in this thesis is to highlight the agency of power through policy, while recognising that CPA could be value-laden from the political perspective (Allan et al., 2010). I explored the views and policy initiatives of the Labour, Coalition and Conservative parties. CPA assists in exploring structures of inequality and oppression, drawing in academics who have a focus on social justice (Young, 2018). For example, critical policy analysts have demonstrated how policy processes have often negated and suppressed the interests of those who are oppressed and Prunty (1985) focused on political inequalities and the significance of ethical guidance and advancement in the policy process. According to Prunty (1985), the commitment to theory and practice and the assurance of an analyst that values justice, equality and the protection of individual freedoms are the two main characteristics in favour of CPA.

Maslen (2019) used critical discourse analysis to examine *Cracking the Code: How Schools Can Improve Social Mobility* (2014), produced by the UK Government's Social Mobility Commission. There is an attempt by successive governments to address deeply rooted issues such as poverty within the neo-liberal framework. An analysis of this report by Maslen, revealed a problematic individualism that was encouraged, with aspects of the language used and metaphors employed promoting competition. Fairness in the form of competition in the discourse was encouraged to tackle inequality.

Smith-Carrier & Lawlor (2017) examined the poverty reduction strategy introduced in Canada's most densely populated province, Ontario. They used critical discourse analysis to explore the dominant discourses in governmental policies and reports between and 2014–2019. The study revealed six key discourses: social and exclusion and inclusion, economic advantage, expert knowledge, community engagement and fundamentals for the poverty reduction strategy's success. There was no discourse of human rights or the entitlement to the basics needed for a

decent standard of living, with the government removing itself from the responsibility to ensure these rights and the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty.

Woodside-Jiron (2011), used Fairclough (1992) and Bernstein (1996) used CDA to critically analyse reading policy in the state of California between 1995 and 1997. This study has been very pertinent to my enquiry as I mostly used this approach to analyse policy as text. In conducting the research, Woodside-Jiron used close policy analysis to explore how power operates in policy. Policy as text, discourses and social practices that describe, interpret and clarify how reading policies are employed, were explored. The analysis showed that power and orders of discourse have far-reaching consequences for children and their literary experience as they are shaped by these practices. CDA as a framework for examining power and cultural paradigms, enhances the understanding of the connections between policy and those who are directly affected by the policy, while offering a perspective for change (Woodside-Jiron (2011).

CPA deduces conclusions from CDA, which makes use of the stance of critical theory in exploring how instances of discourse reflect power dynamics in society (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). A good example of CPA was undertaken by Cahill, with an analysis of intersections between social class inequalities and education policy in Ireland. The Irish Constitution and equality legislation, social inclusion policies such as the DEIS scheme, literacy and numeracy policy documents, as well as current government policy statements on education, were drawn upon. Ball's toolbox of '*policy as text*, *policy as discourse* and *policy effects'* were used to explore the social, cultural and political concepts of policy and legislation influencing social class inequality in education in Ireland (Ball, 1993). Social class was not *explicitly* recognised in these documents, but remained an underlying influence in the access an individual has to resources that support educational opportunities, experiences and outcomes. The consideration of social class in policy and legislative discourses discovered through the analysis, suggests the growing influence of neo-liberalism in Irish education policy, with an ever-increasing emphasis on international comparisons that have negative consequences for disadvantaged pupils (Cahill, 2015).

4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is a qualitative approach that analyses language critically and then seeks to depict, clarify and explain how discourses perpetuate social inequalities (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Mullet, 2018). CDA reveals connections between language, power, inequality, and ideology, and how they reveal themselves in education policy and practice (Taylor, 2004; Wodak, 2009; Fairclough, 1989).   Critical policy analysts who use CDA are interested in understanding critical social issues (Van Dijk 2006). Language constructs the social world and is acknowledged as tendentious, as it is, in my research question, caught up in social and cultural constructions of disadvantage and how it plays out in education (Rogers et al, 2005; Fulcher, 2010) CDA scrutinises how the portrayal of social worlds*, 'social relationships and social identities'* are constructed by texts such as policy documents, with a focus on bringing to light how these procedures and texts are determined ideologically through dominance and inequality (Taylor, 2004: p.3). The language in publications already mentioned in the key questions has been explored to determine how it is shaped to present the Government's plans.

CDA has a 'linguistic' perspective, where language is viewed as a vehicle used to exercise domination and social force (McGregor, 2010: p.2). Foucault used the word 'discourse' to be specific about the combination of power and knowledge (Luke, 1997). In my exploration of the language in policy related to disadvantage, I scrutinise the elements of power and knowledge in relation to class and culture, with a focus on how the text is interpreted, reproduced and transformed, shaping meaning in specific contexts. I examined the infusion of the text with sociocultural practices and how policy is enacted in real contexts, including language being either a determining or limiting power for schools having to enact stipulations made to overcome disadvantage.

4.4.1. CDA Addresses Social Problems

CDA focusses on the relations between discourse and society, underlining the use of language as a meaning-making process (Fairclough, 2001). Researchers in education that use discourse analysis attempt to gain an understanding of how

people make meaning in educational contexts (Rogers *et al*, 2005). CDA has been widely used to provide solutions to the connections between language and how society operates (Rogers *et al*, 2005). For instance, the circumstances of disadvantaged pupils are characterised through a particular lens in the social practices of the government (Fairclough, 2001). The explanation in this case would be to spotlight the way in which disadvantaged children are problematised, highlighting policy language and discourse through conceptual frameworks such as those used to explain social processes (Bacchi, 2000: p.46), which is what has been carried out in this inquiry.

Situated language rather than theoretical concepts should be the starting point (Bacchi, 2000), which is what this inquiry aims to do. The language situated within policy documents and other publications related to disadvantage have been critically interrogated using CPA. The intent of policy as discourse is signalled by Bacchi (2000) to expose 'problematizations', such as conceptualisations of 'disadvantage' for deliberation. These disclosures play a key role in challenging political processes. They present a beneficial way in which particular discursive constructions can be uncovered and made public. Even though there are limitations on what can be said, it is important that '*discourses are plural and contradictory'* (Bacchi 2000: p.50). This inquiry is a form of social action that has attempted to challenge this process of problematisation. The constructed evidence will either disagree or concur with the rationale for tackling disadvantage through *particular* educational policies.

4.4.2 Power Relations are Discursive

CDA is principally concerned with the way language expresses power. The role and use of language in government policy as a source to exhibit power is highlighted and of specific interest to CDA (Mullet, 2018). CDA exposes discursive influences by the powerful and it predominantly examines the way '*social power abuse, dominance, and inequality*' are authorised, replicated, and challenged by '*text and talk in the social and political context*.' (Van Dijk, 1993: p.352)**.** The theoretical and practical aspects of CDA are centred on a framework of texts and talk (Van Dijk, 2006). CDA discloses implicit dominance or underlying ideologies, focussing on social justice issues, abuse of power and social inequity to determine the hidden power

connections that exist (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Mullet, 2018). This relates directly to my focus in this thesis on disadvantage and the question of whether policy has been used by the English government to address disadvantage fairly. When CDA is able to give an explanation of the role and use of language and discourse that is linked to dominance or inequality, it can unquestionably contribute to political and social analyses (Van Dijk, 2006). CDA can be oriented towards any theoretical and methodological approach, provided that it undertakes to examine social problems and other forms of social inequality. This point is echoed by Cahill (2015), who highlights disparaged groups and their marginalisation through policy bias.   Moreover, he shows how the prevalent uneven allocation of wealth and capital is perpetuated through policy, and how this is a key focus of policy analysis.

The focus on disadvantaged pupils in this inquiry has helped to determine whether the inequality that resulted from their disadvantage is addressed through policy and whether the intended outcomes are realised. Issues tend to get depicted in ways that could confuse '*power relations'*, instead placing the onus on individuals for their failures and deflecting away from the structures that established the inequality. This happens through the focus on the way issues are portrayed, focusing on language and on discourse (Bacchi, 2000). McGregor (2003) also highlights that within a text there may be a tendency for some social groups to be less valued, so that those in power can legitimise their assertions through '*stereotyping or labelling*'. A deficit model of a group such as the '*disadvantaged*', would already be negative stereotyping or labelling. In this instance, Luke (1997) calls attention to Cole's (2001) and Ballard's (1995) work on labelling in this area of educational inclusion and how segregation is perpetuated by alleging individual deficits rather than systemic failures.

4.4.3 Discourse Constitutes Society and Culture

McGregor (2010) contends that CDA impels us to change how we see language from being abstract to seeing words as having meaning in a specific historical, social and political context.

> 'Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on how language as a cultural tool mediates relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge.' (Rogers et al, 2005: p.367)

Critical discourse analysts investigate how to redress inequality and sees discourse or language use as a social practice in the arena of power (Rogers et al, 2005). Texts are situated in specific institutions and are used to make sense of the world, constructing social actions and relations required in everyday life in certain ways (Luke, 1997). The habitus is the product of structures such as those established through education, and schooling tends to provide a turn towards 'a cultured habitus'. It is 'structured' by the circumstances acquired within one's experiences with the outside world. Working-class who are unable to construct a habitus in agreement with the school, cannot engage with the 'educated habitus', therefore excluding themselves and being excluded from it (Reay, 2004b). In the policy documents I examined, discourse is made up of wording and statements that are recurrent in the text (Luke, 1997). Interdiscursivity, where texts borrow and steal from each other, can be seen in the way the language of business has entered into the domain of education (McGregor, 2003). Institutions seek to establish connectivity with other texts and genres that have credibility in order to legitimise their claims or their worldview (Luke 1997).

4.4.4 Discourse does Ideological Work

CDA is focused on relations of power, dominance and inequality and the ways these are opposed or reproduced by specific social groups through discourse.

> 'Critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of, and are ideologically shaped by, relations of power and struggles over power.' (Locke, 2004: p.1)

Ideological assumptions that are implicit in text or utterances are revealed through CDA, so that different forms of power can be opposed or resisted (Fairclough, 1989; McGregor, 2003). CDA assumes that the '*discursive resources*' are managed under the authority of the establishment. Access to these resources is dependent on where the balance of power and authority lies between the different 'players' (Mullet, 2018).

The way educational institutions are expected to enact policy stipulations made to overcome disadvantage that may impinge/impact on pupil outcomes, is probed in order to determine whether the language used in policies supports organisations in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Ideologies, such as neo-liberalism that have a function in the replication of or opposition to inequality or dominance are revealed through effective CDA. Texts from institutions are carefully crafted and thought through; they do not just randomly appear, but are tied to particular social actions and outcomes required in the context of specific social institutions (Luke, 1997)**.** '*Just as discourses develop to articulate particular fields of knowledge and belief, texts develop to serve institutional purposes and projects'* (Luke, 1997: p.15). The White Papers studied in this thesis were created by the government of the day to ensure that schools improve their provision of education and promote the best outcomes for all children, including those who are disadvantaged; therefore, the language has been scrutinised to determine to what extent this is the case and that there are no other underlying motivations, such as might be related to capitalism or neo-liberalism. CDA provides tools to enable an understanding of how texts represent and generate the exercise of institutional power. In capitalist societies, constant engagement with some form of text (language) is the norm (Luke, 1997). Both CDA and CPA accentuate '*the cultural and historical acts of meaning making'*, according to Rogers, et al. (2005, p.369), as Cahill insightfully points out (2015).

4.4.5 The Link between Text and Society is Mediated by CDA

CDA reveals discrepancies between policy text and policy enactment, especially with regard to power relationships in society (Cahill, 2015). Language communicates in the context of speaker and audience, and therefore the audience's perception or familiarity with the text producer may determine how the text is received. It can be difficult for the author to ascertain who exactly the audience is, with the author then presuming an '*idealised, projected construction'*. The analysis involves deciding on the relationship that exists between the text and reading, writing, speaking and listening. The way policy guidance by the English education authority is stipulated, has been explored to determine whether there is clarity in the directives.

Understanding latent meanings through analysis can help with the interpretation of unspoken issues that may exist *and the use of text serves to direct those who are in positions of authority in education* [truism] (Van Dijk, 2006). According to Lynch & Lodge (2002), cited in Cahill (2015), class issues become extremely difficult to address, as the euphemistic language used minimises the point in question from both the relational influence and economic framework. Policy as analysis focuses on the limitations language and discourse place on what can be said about a particular issue (Bacchi, 2000).

4.5 Explanation for CDA as the Methodology

For this research, CDA enabled the exploration of the relations between educational issues and social situations (Mullet, 2018) and was focussed on social phenomena and not on '*scholarly paradigms'* (Mullet, 2018; Van Dijk, 1993). CDA is constructionist in its approach, therefore it was selected to focus on government publications and other policy documents related to disadvantage. As a tool, I used CDA to analyse the policies and other non-statutory documents that were used to communicate with educational institutions, given the significant reliance on policy to enact government's edicts. All elements of language were analysed because they were constructed over a period of time and within given social contexts. CDA has been used to examine how language over the identified period of time has set out a particular agenda to drive government ideology (Cahill, 2015) and expose any masked power relations as constructed in the White Papers. In doing so, social inequalities perpetuated by those in authority could be revealed and described.

There are various approaches to CDA that are used to ascertain language as social practice and the context of language, given the vagueness of concepts like 'cultural capital and cultural reproduction'. This approach has allowed me to get to fully grasp the government's ontological approach to disadvantage, which is explicated in the policy documents. I have focused on Ball's analytical toolbox that matches with Cahill's *micro-produced, meso-negotiated and macro-enacted'* framework (2015). In this approach the text (micro-level) is deciphered and decoded in accordance with their identities (meso-level), all of which take place within an intricate, complicated

system of power structures (macro-level). Cahill's work is discussed in Section 4.3. This inquiry employs a very similar methodology and explores the social, cultural and political constructs of policy and legislation affecting the disadvantaged in education in Ireland, with some related findings. This inquiry has drawn on the need to describe, interpret, analyse and critique key policy initiatives linked to disadvantage, reflected in text by using CDA. Lucke (1996) asserts that texts are used to make sense of the world and to construct a range of meanings, ideas and interpretations of the world.

The speech of those in influence or in authority (governance bodies who determine the content of policy documents) is considered as 'truth' and carries weight, whilst the words of those who are not in power are discounted and ignored (McGregor, 2010). These 'truths' turn out to be the dominant meanings and classifications through which those in authority govern their populations and by which members of a population come to define themselves and others (Luke, 1996). Foucault (1980: p131), asserted that '*each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true.*' Foucault outlined several tenets of truth regimes: processes that distinguish true and false; the endorsement of true and false; and the prestige of those who communicate that which is acknowledged as truth. According to Foucault, within dominant discourses such as education policy, these knowledge-power relations are accomplished by the construction of so-called 'truths' about the natural and social world.

Ball (1994) brings up the issue that, although the concept of '*policy as text'* does incorporate social agency and the intentions of policy actors, it may focus too much on what those who are involved with policy prioritise, thus missing and failing to act on what they do not think consider significant. Instead of using meanings from knowledge that already exists, language is used to classify occurrences and experiences through which individuals construct, comprehend and depict reality. The way in which people make sense of the world is therefore discursively mediated, with language not taking place in isolation, but always within a specific context (Taylor, 2004). Reflexivity within a CDA framework results from a *'concern about the stabilization of knowledge claims and the slipperiness of language'*. According to

Rogers, this means that the fundamental nature of language impedes empirical research that is intended to establish the 'truth' (Rogers et al., 2005: p.382).

There are several methodologies that employ CDA that I could have chosen from, but I had to consider how the range of methods employed would impact on the successful implementation of my research study. Bourdieu's key concepts, Ball's '*policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects'* and Habermas' performative and propositional structure have been used to create the theoretical framework to explore social phenomena linked to disadvantage. Historical social practices have evolved over time in policy formation and I have deconstructed what is evident for just over a decade, examined how the government has engaged with international tables and how the discourse has emerged in relation to conceptualisation of disadvantage.

4.6 Thematic Analysis as a Research Tool

Some theorists consider thematic analysis or content analysis as a research method in itself (Clarke and Braun, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Boyatzis (1998) instead identifies it as a valuable research tool that can be used across different methods rather than being considered a method in its own right. Thematic analysis is the *'process of identifying patterns or themes'* within qualitative data and is not fixed to specific theoretical or epistemological stances (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis has greater compatibility with the '*essentialist and constructionist'* paradigms, providing flexibility and theoretical freedom, as there is no stipulation to adhere to any particular *'theory of language or explanatory meaning framework'*, so specific expertise is not required (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis provides the opportunity to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In this thesis, policies are deconstructed in an attempt to determine themes, ideas, views, and roles within the text. In this way I deconstruct evidence through CPA to build a clear picture of themes and patterns in the selected White Papers, using a researcher-constructed evidence approach.

1. Through transcription, reading and taking down ideas, I familiarised myself with the data.

2. Initial codes were created through coding features.

3. Themes were established by turning codes into possible themes.

4. Themes were reviewed to check if themes worked with coded extracts.

5. Themes were defined and determined by refining the specifics of each theme for
   all the data: poverty, social exclusion, social mobility and social inequality.

6. A report was written by selecting exemplifications, which back up the argument.
(Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

4.7 Statement of the Problem

Social mobility has become a key area of focus within educational settings, with
success at school being measured in part on the basis of how well children from
disadvantaged backgrounds perform (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Most
professionals in the educational sector are aware of the rhetoric used by educational
authorities around the international league tables and how we have slipped in our
performance over the last decade (Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014). As a
headteacher, I receive many initiatives and documents related to '*narrowing the
gaps*' or '*diminishing the differences*' between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged
children. In a context where the expectation is to enact stipulations made in policy to
overcome social class issues that may impinge on pupil learning, this immersion has
left me contemplating how much of what the OECD says, or PISA results indicate,
the English government actually considers when formulating policy, and how one
might best respond to them. To continue with this inquiry, these are the questions
that have extended my investigation into this area.

4.7.1 Research Questions

1. How has the government in England engaged with PISA results in relation to
    disadvantage? The following documents have been used in the analysis:
    - OECD documents: 'Education at a Glance' from 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009,
      2012 and 2015.
    - White Papers from 2009 to 2016.
2. How have these White papers and the policies they introduced been used by the
    English government to address disadvantage?

3. How has the English government expected schools to enact stipulations made in the selected policies to overcome disadvantage that might impact on pupil learning?

4.7.2 Research Process

The following section describes the research process used in this inquiry. It reveals the various ways, techniques or processes in which data has been collected and analysed, focussing on how the UK Government engages with PISA results in relation to disadvantage. Research generally gives useful information and explains why and how particular policies have been adopted and ratified. Research is sometimes also conducted to ascertain the implications of public policy, rather than its impact (Bell and Stevenson, 2006). There are three stages in critical policy methodology, according to Rata (2014). The first stage addresses the theoretical framework that pinpoints links between global powers and improvement in individual countries. Stage two analyses educational policy within the context of that theoretical framework. Finally, in the third stage, empirical research gathered from the analysis is used to investigate particular aspects of education found in the broader context of political and economic powers and policies (Rata, 2014).

4.7.2.1 Stage 1: Determining the Framework

I engage with selected discourse theorists, combining elements of their work to create a theoretical and conceptual framework. I use thematic analysis, electronic searches, linguistic/semiotic analysis of texts and theories from Ball, Habermas and Bourdieu to gather and examine data. In order to probe the nuances of the language used in policies to address disadvantage, I specifically chose to investigate this system qualitatively. (see 'Theoretical and Conceptual Framework' for an elucidation of these concepts in Section 4.8). This framework was used to establish the theoretical steps that have given structure to the exploration, analysis and understanding of this research.

England took part in all three PISA assessments and fared well in 2000, taking seventh place for reading, eighth in maths and fourth in science. The 2003 results

are barely discussed, because the sampling was problematic and the results not published in the 2003 report. The 2003 results that were available did not seem to be as good as the results in 2000. According to Micklewright and Schnepf (2006), England's data should only be reported on from 2006, due to the controversy surrounding sampling issues that arose during the 2000 and 2003 assessment period. Even though England had produced good results in the first two rounds of PISA, with limited commentary in the press and little or no effect on policy (Grek 2009), the Department for Education and Skills came to the conclusion that the sampling was flawed, resulting in an overestimation of England's outcomes (Micklewright and Schnepf, 2006).

I have therefore decided not to survey the 2000 and 2003 PISA results, nor the subsequent White Papers, until 2009 because the outcomes may not be an accurate representation of the performance of the students. The validity of indicators specified to England by the OECD is therefore undermined.

4.7.2.2 Stage 2: Exploration and Interpretation of Findings

There has been a focus on the use of language and meaning in policies to unpick how rhetoric and discourse work in favouring some ideas over others.   This is discussed fully in Section 4.4.2.

Step 1: Papers from OECD/PISA focusing on the indicators provided by the OECD to the United Kingdom (England) have been explored. To begin with, an electronic search of the OECD documents, using the imposed words 'United Kingdom' and 'England' was carried out. All the statements were then selected and from these statements, all the indicators provided to the England related to the imposed words, disadvantage or socio-economic background were selected and transcribed onto a corpus table (Table 5.2).

Step 2: At this phase, an electronic search was completed on all White Papers from 2009 to 2016, for words and phrases related to disadvantage. Once gathered, the data needed to be organised in a systematic way so it was selected and transcribed onto corpus tables. I familiarised myself with the data to determine the codes.

Coding is realised by ascribing units of meaning to chunks of data of differing size, consisting of words, phrases, sentences and entire paragraphs (Miles & Huberman 1994). I used coding to arrange the selected data into manageable segments of meaning, using the areas that intersected with disadvantage. The following codes were used to categorise the text: poverty, social exclusion, social mobility and social inequality. The selected text having been placed into categories based on the coding, was then transcribed onto the corpus tables presented in Tables 5.3 to 5.6. The results for each category were placed on a separate table. The codes in this inquiry easily translated into themes, as these themes intersected with disadvantage from the literature review. Prominent themes around disadvantage were explored to reveal how deficit discourses are sustained and reproduced (Hunt & Seiver, 2018).

Step 3: The White Papers have been critically analysed in detail to extract the rationale and implementation process stipulated, and also the outcomes expected by the government. The White Papers were used to determine where policies implemented by England to focus on the 'disadvantaged' related to the indicators provided by PISA and OECD (transcribed in Table 5.2).

Step 4: I completed both an interdiscursive and linguistic/semiotic analysis. 'Interdiscursive' analysis concerns itself with how the discourse relates to other discourses or themes, such as disadvantage and its link to social exclusion. Linguistic/semiotic analysis refers to the analysis of language employed in the policies, such as the role of metaphoric language. The analytical framework has been used jointly with electronic searches and a close examination of the policy documents and other pertinent legislative documents. In an attempt to interpret political messages, links to dominance and inequality, and implications for its implementation, I have focused on the analysis and critical evaluation of metaphoric language and themes related to disadvantage and deprivation, constructing an empirical picture of the evidence.

4.7.2.3 Stage 3: Analysis

The analysis of sources of OECD documents and White Papers published between 2006 and 2016 have been presented. The analysis has been systematic and a

narrative around the information discovered has been included. The results and discussion that followed involved applying evidence found in each document in turn to the analytical frames detailed, so that an empirical view could be constructed. I have drawn from government policy, legislation, and specifically education policy documents, in order to extract and construct the evidence. Any necessary surrounding evidence, including the involvement and influence of stakeholders driving the creation of these policies have been reviewed to acquire a rich knowledge base.   Qualitative insight has been extracted from the documents examined and this process is interpretive in nature, therefore being open to the possibility of bias (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). My values and worldview could have influenced some of my conclusions and I reflect on this as objectively as possible. The qualitative analysis is the heart of the method, but it is supplemented by the broader empirical findings (Rata, 2014).

4.8 Research Design

4.8.1 Bourdieusian Conceptual Perspective used to Construct an Analytical Framework

Through the application of Bourdieu's conceptual framework, a methodological and analytical framework can be constructed (Murphy & Costa, 2016) to explore and understand how education policy is used to perpetuate disadvantage. Written policy could be used to reproduce inequalities, as Bourdieu (1991) argued that policy makers are placed in positions of authority and pass on particular knowledge. Our part in the production and use of such knowledge is important because it is constitutive (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and the ideas are discussed extensively in Sections 2.6.3 to 2.6.7.

A feature of CDA as a critical paradigm is how language is used as a basis to perpetuate inequality and power, which merges well with Bourdieu's framework, as it is the language that explains and unfolds ideas and plans within policy text, discourse and effects that can be linked to the Bourdieuian concepts that are analysed to expose disadvantage in education policy. Reference to the concept of cultural capital has been particularly significant in understanding how education

services intersect with class divisions to maintain inequalities (Ball et al, 1995). The language in the White Papers is explored to show how the education system creates opportunities for parents and children, yet how those possessing the right cultural capital might engage and take advantage of such opportunities, placing them in an advantageous position and thus disadvantaging others. Bourdieu's theories have the explanatory power to expose how forms of capital become '*transubstantiated*' into the constitution of a person, perpetuating cycles of advantage and disadvantage, as educational researchers have demonstrated through the application of the Bourdieuian lens (Murphy & Costa, 2016). This is due to the fact that Bourdieu's key concepts are '*malleable*', and therefore open to new ideas (Murphy & Costa, 2016).

4.8.2 Habermas' Performative and Propositional Structure as a form of Data Analysis

Habermas attached significance to the concept of communicative action to explain how society functions and indicated that with things as they are, all efficacious action is dependent on the ability to come to an agreement. He carried out an analysis of speech-act theory to distinguish between illocutionary and perlocutionary effects. Cohen and Manion (2007: p.27) draw on Habermas' (1972) conceptualisation of knowledge serving various interests with interests being socially constructed and '*knowledge constitutive*'. They discuss how ideological domination can be promoted through those that are in authority maintaining their position of power while the disempowered remain in their disenfranchised state. Cohen and Manion (2007) extract the reasoning of Habermas (1979; 1984) that coercive forces that manipulate communication need to be uncovered. For the purposes of this research, these dominant influences that thread through policies are brought to light and examined.

Habermas asserted that language is the vehicle of supremacy and social force, serving to authorise associations of organised power (Habermas, 1967). '*Utterances are never simply sentences*' (Habermas 1970: p.368) but meaning stems from the situation in which it is established or from which it originates (Cohen et al., 2007: p.389). Habermas theorised the idea of the 'public sphere' as the

domain of organised power that cannot always be identified fully with the sphere of the visible. The practice of this 'public' authority can be 'private' if the internal structures of power of the government are systematically hidden by the government itself (Susen, 2011). A speech act therefore can be read as a performative and propositional structure, with the proposition in the sentence indicating a particular state of affairs and remaining fixed, and the performative segment establishing and defining the illocutionary influence of the speech act and giving the context in which it is uttered. According to Habermas, the success of an illocutionary act is illustrated if the hearer holds the speaker's propositions as true, whereas illocutionary success is difficult to affirm if the hearer categorises it as false (Habermas, 1984). Habermas purports that the illocutionary force of speech act proposals is accounted for by the inherent link between everyday language use and the validity claims actors indirectly raise and accept. Individuals who reach a shared agreement about a speech act are motivated from a rational viewpoint to keep to their action '*binders',* due to their personal commitment to the subject matter of the utterance, having individual understanding of the '*propositional truth, normative rightness, and subjective sincerity of its content'.* Habermas contends that social order is shaped and reshaped through compromise and agreement in communicative action, with it being fully reliant on the voluntary consent of social participants who can possibly disagree at any given time (Cooren, 2000).

In order to explicate how society functioned, Habermas ascribed significance to the concept of '*communicative action'*, which essentially is an agreement; each person is supposed to be capable of assessing the inherent '*claims of validity'* made by others and when all participants engage and reach consensus, '*action co-ordination'* is realised, receiving the '*speech offer'.* Validity, in Habermas' (1984) study on validity claims, encompasses '*truth*, *legitimacy, comprehensibility and sincerity'* (Cohen and Manion, 2007: p18), and every utterance has to submit to the standards of '*legitimacy, truth, rightness, sincerity and comprehensibility'* (Habermas, 1984). Habermas' idea of the perfect speech situation contends that discourse should be engaged in the pursuit of empowering individuals, groups and institutions, rather than subjecting participants to authoritarianism or ideological misrepresentation (Cohen and Manion, 2007). For Habermas, discourse analysis seeks to expose,

through a critical analysis of ideology, the authoritarian influences that misrepresent communication. For the purposes of this research, we can take from Habermas the need to reveal and interrogate the dominatory influences that thread through the discourses in the texts that are examined (Habermas, 1984).

From this viewpoint, it is logical why the performative segment cannot be analysed from the standpoint of 'truth', but can be understood from the point of view of 'legitimacy' as a consequence of conditions of appropriateness (Cohen et al., 2007: p.389). All policy utterances may not necessarily be appropriate for all settings as some may be ideological and may certainly not be beneficial. This may especially be the case for the indicators that come from the OECD, as they do not consider our local and cultural context. Habermas claims that the speech act is indeed an act or endeavour whose illocutionary power can be defined (Habermas, 1984). The act of speech in this instance suggests, '*to say something, to act in saying something, to bring about something through acting in saying something*' (Habermas 1984: p.289).

It is the perlocutions from the viewpoint of strategic actions that are of significance, as there must be a form of consensus between partners on both the performative and propositional levels so that the promises given or guaranteed in the illocutionary part of the speech are genuine. A perlocutionary act is indirect and attempts to achieve an intended aim or goal, with the utterance becoming reliant on the recipient working through a sequence of reasoning to get to the intended aim. Perlocutionary effects are concealed, but may be positive, negative, or neither, with Habermas contending that speech-acts are self-interpreting and open to view, making clear the intentions and goals. Perlocutionary speech acts are a particular difficulty in social theory, since unpleasant goals are frequently concealed behind seemingly harmless statements. An indirect speech act is more of a roundabout way of saying something (Habermas, 1984). Any utterance that is made in speech or text that tries to realise an intended aim or goal directly, is an illocutionary act, with the content of the utterance encapsulating the proposed aim of the utterance precisely. The actual utterance of a sentence is referred to as the locutionary act. The illocutionary effect of a speech-act is to attain reasonably determined agreement or to realise a specific outcome through consensus. The illocutionary

aim of an utterance is to get the appeal to be acknowledged as rational and sensible, and to obtain voluntary compliance, with the speaker performing an action in saying something (Habermas, 1984).

4.9 Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Education is aimed at improving and enhancing individual lives and that of society. Research in education is believed to be primarily and largely about truth and values, on the basis of qualitative priorities and moral reasoning. Thus, education is essentially, value, and schooling is, unavoidably, a moral enterprise. I concur with Prunty (1985), who argues that educational policy analysis, as a subsection of policy analysis itself, must be carried out from '*within a moral and ethical stance'* (p.135). Ethical approval is not needed based on the nature of the research being undertaken; however, in order to evidence my commitment to upholding the ethical guidelines for educational research, an ethical approval form has been completed. I have maintained a commitment to academic rigour and responsibility at all times during my research and as such, can confirm that there are no issues with data protection. All documents are readily available through internet searches and the libraries.

As a researcher, I have brought my own identity into the text and therefore my own interpretation of language used in the policies I am examining. My writing and analyses are inevitably restricted by the limited expert knowledge and understanding that I possess. In this inquiry, my viewpoints, bias, values and background have played a part in determining my interpretation of language during the analysis (Creswell, 2012). The qualitative researcher is sometimes referred to as the '*research instrument'*, considering that his or her capacity to analyse data and the approach and understanding taken, is essential in revealing meaning in specific situations (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). I believe that being aware and having knowledge of the context has enhanced the analyses I have made, rather than impairing my interpretation.

5 Chapter Five: Findings & Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five presents the findings of this research enquiry and seeks to address the research questions while discussing the study's findings.

These are the questions that have informed and steered the implementation of this study:

1. How has the government in England engaged with PISA results in relation to disadvantage? The following documents have been used in the analysis:

    *   OECD documents: 'Education at a Glance' from 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2015.

    *   White Papers from 2009 to 2016.

2. How have these White papers and the policies they introduced been used by the English government to address disadvantage?

3. How has the English government expected schools to enact stipulations made in the selected policies to overcome disadvantage that might impact on pupil learning?

This thesis examines the nature of disadvantage and considers how policy has been used by the English government to address disadvantage and the significance given to suggestions made by the OECD. The English government has been looking at improving the outcomes of those who are disadvantaged for over fifty years. The gaps that exist between the outcomes of disadvantaged and the non-disadvantaged pupils have been recognised by successive governments and various initiatives have been implemented to alleviate this disadvantage through the support offered to these pupils (Andrews et al., 2017). There is limited evidence that the various policy initiatives and reforms have made a sustained improvement in the outcomes for disadvantaged children (Hutchinson & Dunford, 2016; Crenna-Jennings, 2018). The discourse of disadvantage has been at the centre of the education agenda and more recently, schools have been funded with the PPG (DfE, 2010; DfE, 2016), which they have to use to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In responding to the research questions in this thesis, I also deliberate over whether there is any positive

outcome in what the government attempts to accomplish and the specific reasons why difficulties may be encountered.

5.1.1 Analyses

Through the viewpoint of Habermas' illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances, I find that the OECD's propositions to the English government are the dominant influences threading through the White Papers. I have used Ball's *'policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects'*, together with Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction to analyse disadvantage, which have revealed underlying themes and a construction of knowledge and insight into the findings. This conceptual framework by Habermas and Ball, together with Bourdieu's theory are used to analyse the findings and provide a comprehensive view of 'disadvantage' within the confines of the inquiry. Moreover, they clarify and explain how discourses perpetuate social inequalities**.**

5.1.2 Core Findings

My analyses reveal that there is a need for 'joined-up thinking' from policymakers, international organisations and stakeholders so that there is a shared understanding about how the educationally disadvantaged are identified and the support offered to ensure equitable opportunities to secure better outcomes.

England's engagement with PISA and OECD specifically related to disadvantage correlate to language used in educational policy documents by the English government. However, the conceptualisation of the term 'disadvantage' in the selected policies differs between the English administration and the OECD. One of my key insights is Bourdieu's process of transubstantiation of economic capital through the constitution of a person into social and cultural capital. Furthermore, I note the role of the parent in their child's schooling is very significant, as this means that class differences in attainment outcomes are perpetuated through cultural reproduction.

The use of the term 'social class', and associated conceptualisations being almost erased from policy has meant that the language and discourse is manipulated in order to reconfigure our thinking, with disadvantage used as a proxy for social class.

The removal of the word 'class' from most policy documents corresponds to a greater use of the word disadvantage and all the disjointed categories linked to it, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty.

5.2. Overview of White Papers

5.2.1 Policy as Text

The White Papers are '*policy as text'* as they speak to a range of audiences in differing contexts and in a variety of ways. Meaning can be produced through the '*linguistic nuances, shape and statement of text'* (Cahill, 2015: p.304; Ball 1993). The work of Woodside-Jiron has been used as a model to provide guidance in the analysis of policy as text (2011). Multiple policies have been published, and then within a few months or years, the next White Paper is published, bringing to the fore the most recent guidance, sometimes negating the strategies and changes previously considered vital.

Table 5.1: Intervals between publications of White Papers 2009 to 2016

White Paper	Date	Interval
New Opportunities: Fair chances for the Future	January 2009	3 years and 3 months
Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future	June 2009	5 months
The Importance of Teaching	November 2010	1 year and 5 months
Educational Excellence Everywhere	March 2016	4 years and 4 months

5.2.1.1 Uses of Language

The reader determines the meaning of a policy, so there could be as many interpretations as there are readers, with the author unable to control the meanings ascribed by the reader except through the use of particular rhetorical devices, which may still produce shades of meaning. In the White Papers, '*we*' is used as an inclusive or, as Dockerty (2018) refers to it, a '*collective*' term. The exercise of power through the use of such language engenders a sense of togetherness, that through everyone pulling together, solutions will be found and a difference will be made. The word '*we*' introduces an inclusive discourse for change, with the phrases '*we want'*

and '*we will*' stressing the imperative for change. In this way, responsibility is deflected away from government and vested instead, in those who have not initiated and created these policies (Dockerty, 2018).

All the White Papers explored in this research contain metaphorical language, which in its most basic form serves to connect two unrelated things, so that the similarities can be accentuated (Wallace, 2005). '*Educational phenomena*' become comprehensible by students and teachers, as metaphors serve as effective '*cognitive models*', establishing connections with what is already known (Botha, 2009). Wallace draws on the work of Beavis and Thomas (1996), who see metaphors as the expression of unconsciously held values and attitudes and demonstrate a shared culture (2005). Metaphors '*can contribute to a situation where they privilege one understanding of reality over others*'. It is clear that metaphorical thinking affects our attitudes, beliefs, and actions, perhaps even in unexpected ways (Hart, 2008: 91).

5.2.1.2 Metaphors

A range of phrases in the forewords of the four White Papers, some metaphorical, are used repeatedly to draw the reader into promises of hope*: 'diverse pipeline of leaders', 'the engine of social justice', 'to attract high-flying graduates', 'families are the bedrock of our society', 'the ultimate prize will be greater still', 'we must raise our game', 'engines of social mobility', 'yawning gulf', 'the gulf between the opportunities available'. …* The word '*prize*' is located in all the White Papers except *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b). Invariably, it is used metaphorically in order to emphasise how competitive, and potentially rewarding education has become, equating it to business. The word '*race*' is also used metaphorically to indicate how competitive education has become, again equating it to business, such as the need for 'up-skilling to maintain a competitive position in the global marketplace. '*England has fallen behind in the global race*', which has become a powerful narrative (Francis, 2015: 442). The word *prize* used liberally in phrases such as: '*the prize of securing educational excellence everywhere'; 'there is a huge prize waiting to be claimed by teachers'; 'teachers are now claiming that prize'; 'the prize is worth the challenge*'.

The words '*prize*' and '*race*' have been used to connect competition with education and highlight the similarities (Wallace, 2005). Education as competition becomes logical to students, parents and teachers as '*prize*' and '*race'* used in metaphorical phrases serve as effective '*cognitive models'*, establishing connections with what is already known (Botha, 2009). With the use of particular metaphors given in the White Papers, it is apparent that language is used to bring to the fore either a particular stance or a new understanding that will shift thinking, changing or reinforcing the discourse, as metaphorical language affects our attitudes, beliefs, and actions in unexpected ways (Hart, 2008).

5.2.1.3 Adjective - World Class

The adjective, '*world class'* is evident in all four White Papers, without a clear definition of what it actually means. It is used to suggest '*amongst the best in the world*', based on the international ranking system used by organisations such as PISA. Some phrases including the use of '*world class'* are: '*world class public services', 'world class skills', 'world class schools', world class education system*', and '*world class teaching profession and universities'.* The repeated rhetorical use of '*world class'* could be open to a multitude of interpretations. 'World class' is an example of intertextuality as it is used for the purposes of legitimising and augmenting the argument of the writer, which in this case is the government. Parts of the White Papers under consideration were a response to international competition (i.e. PISA) and thus the availability of comparative data that has influenced the political narrative, as indicated in Chapter Three. The adjective '*world class'* was used to signify values of competition and value for money, both of which are evident in the discourse of a corporate culture. There are two contrasting definitions of world class: education for '*national supremacy'* through active competition and education for '*global interdependence'* through cooperation (Alexander, 2010). Ed Balls uses the phrase in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future*: '*is for [England] to have the best school system in the world … schools are central to our … vision … to make this the best place in the world to grow up*' (DCSF 2009b, p.2).

Recent research by Andrews et al., (2017) discusses what a world class standard really looks like in key subjects by translating international PISA data into GCSE equivalents to create a world class benchmark. They use the PISA data to identify the five highest performing countries in maths, reading and science, and measure England against this world class benchmark. The DfE states that the new Grade 5 at GCSE level represents a '*strong pass*', which is meant to be considered a world class standard by The Education Policy Institute. Andrews et al. (2017) also plan to extend their work to set benchmarks for primary attainment that define what world class performance looks like, and by focussing attention on reaching such standards hope to close the socio-economic attainment gap. The White Papers use '*world class*' as an adjective for being ranked highly on the global league tables, as this is the only clear benchmark of how well a nation is doing in comparison to other nations. If schools in England are judged to be providing a world class education based merely on our ranking in the international league tables, it may devalue the rest of what we have to offer as part of our educational provision.

Alexander (2010) has further concluded that the term '*world class*' means '*world beating*' at the international level, demonstrating aspiration with a supremacist ethic. There is also the other view mentioned above that engenders the ability to be successful and productive economically as a nation, whilst supporting the rest of the world and without taking the supremacist view. Successive governments have been keen to use this phrase, as maintaining this position will be beneficial to the UK. The main benefit will be to its economic growth, and an increase in investment and jobs that are needed. There will be advantages that the UK will benefit from, in expanding its soft power and our national security will be strengthened if we tackle global issues like poverty, when reinforcing our collaboration internationally. At present, England has been asked by the OECD to improve its provision for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. The plight of the socio-economically disadvantaged can be addressed if we take the first step and start to tackle poverty (DfE & DIT, 2019).

5.2.2. New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

The government's plan for post-recession Britain was laid out in *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (DCSF, 2009a) with repeated reference to the global market and global marketplace. To be able to compete and retain its position in the global sphere, they say England needs to be able to grasp the best opportunities in what is fundamentally a fair society. The language used in the text is extremely aspirational and the issue to be grappled with is, who would take or benefit from these *'new opportunities'* and how could they be accessed? Noticeable in this paper is the authoritative voice of the government and all it could do to enable its people, especially the disadvantaged. Through the rhetoric of extensive funding opportunities, evidencing what works, showing awareness of social inequality and how they would deal with it, the government promised *'true social mobility and social justice in modern Britain'* (DCSF 2009a: p6). Part of the title mentioned in the White Paper (January, 2009a), suggests, *'fair chances for all.'* The focus on *'fairness'* to address disadvantage is the nuanced language of choice, but at the same time the plan of action is made with definitive and detailed statements (Dockerty, 2018).

Williams (2005) discusses how the word *'skill'* has evolved from its reference to sporting or musical abilities, for example, to a wider more-encompassing context.

> 'Skills are used to symbolize something of material worth, with a specific exchange value; a tangible product, like a natural resource; social capital; or education and learning' (Williams, 2005: p.181).

This is discussed further in the section *'Policy as Discourse'*. Words portraying neo-liberalism including: *'global economy'*, *'world class', 'enterprise', '21st Century School'* and *'globalisation'* are used repeatedly in policy documents. In a system that is determined by a market-driven neo-liberal ideology, those who seek to become skilled will exploit market mechanisms to achieve their own ends, taking full advantage of market mechanisms in education and exploiting their economic, social, and cultural capital to benefit from all the system has to offer (Apple, 2013). The White Papers promote education as a private commodity to be negotiated, which promotes, rather than challenges, the inequalities that exist. Class privilege is enacted through market forces (Apple, 2013).

5.2.3.Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future

Ahead of the White Paper being published, Ed Balls (the then Secretary of State for Education) began the conversation with the community at large in the Guardian (Tuesday, 30 June 2009), using rhetoric with broad brush strokes: *"If your child starts to fall behind, we should step in straight away and give one-to-one or small group tuition."* Cognisance was not taken, or there resides a clear lack of understanding that, because of socio-economic disadvantage, some children start school already behind their peers. Consideration was not given to children who already start school 'on the back foot', struggling to adjust because of the competencies and dispositions they may come with (Kellaghan, 2001), and/or lacking the economic capital, which would negatively impact their cultural and social capital (Cahill and Hall, 2014).

In *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (June 2009b), there are extensive suggestions for improving teaching and schools, including the elimination of central government's prescription of teaching methods and curtailment of the use of private consultants for school improvement. The Paper introduces school reforms to establish a '*world class*' education system that affords each pupil the opportunity to do their very best and be successful when they become adults. There are specific guarantees for pupils and parents, based on legislation: children would go to a school with good behaviour; they would receive instruction through a broad and balanced curriculum; their individual needs would be catered for; provision would be made for sports and cultural activities and there would be a focus on their health and wellbeing. The Paper promises that there would be greater accountability for schools and a strong emphasis on school improvement. The Paper says that teachers would be entitled to CPD and schools would be given new freedoms to improve teaching standards and to use creative approaches. According to Wright (2012), when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister and Ed Balls was the Education Secretary, there was a noticeable departure from several facets of the neo-liberal discourse in the phrasing of policy in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b). There was a shift away from the '*competitive, parent-driven*' paradigm that had been advocated earlier, (Wright, 2012: p.8) to one that concentrated on school-to-school partnership and collaboration. This brief change in direction under Labour against the tide of neo-liberalism was lost along with their loss of power in 2010.

5.2.4 The Importance of Teaching

In *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), new suggestions and developments were announced in England, discussing wide-ranging changes to teaching and leadership, pupil behaviour, curriculum, assessment and qualifications, the control of schools, school improvement, accountability and funding. Accountability was a key factor in the Conservative Liberal-Democrat Coalition's policy documents, as indicated by this statement by the Prime Minister and his deputy in the 'foreword': *'The second lesson of world class education systems is that they devolve as much power as possible to the front line, while retaining high levels of accountability.'* (DfE, 2010: p.3) There was variability in the detail provided, dependent on the particular focus being discussed. Some sections, such as accountability measures in terms of Ofsted inspections, were very specific, whereas reforming vocational education was more vague. Some reforms sought to be more radical, in that they were about getting people to come together to improve their own lives, and suggesting that the individuals suffering the injustices should be responsible for getting themselves out of such a situation.

5.2.5 Education Excellence Everywhere

Educational Excellence Everywhere (DfE, 2016) discusses the huge progress that had been made in schools, but also mentions significant pockets of underperformance and the impact on the education of those young people who do not benefit from the best endeavours from schools. England's low achievement in PISA 2012 was highlighted and although its position in the 2015 PISA tests remained broadly the same, this White Paper mentions the huge improvement in the quality of provision, which did not filter down into the achievement of pupils in the PISA tests. In *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016), reference is made to the body of research that points to the significance of the country's fiscal growth and development being enhanced by higher academic achievers. This again reinforces the government's reliance on/stated desire for the creation of a workforce with specific skills to improve the economy, with education seen as the mechanism that bolsters the economy.

5.3 Analysis of White Papers

As discussed in Chapter Four in my methodology, I combine the works of Ball's policy as text, policy as discourse and policy effects, and Habermas' locutionary aspect and the performatory to examine the White Papers. I also focus on the relationship between PISA/OECD indicators given to England (United Kingdom) and the response to these propositions in the White Papers.

Overview of findings after the data exploration related to disadvantage

Table 5.2: OECD INDICATORS applied to England (United Kingdom)

These are the indicators specifically linked to disadvantage that have been provided to England once the PISA tests have been analysed.

Indicators (Locutionary Statements) related to socio-economic disadvantage *(Education at a Glance)*			
2006 Indicators	*Can socio-economic equity be reconciled with school quality?* The countries where two students of different socio-economic backgrounds had the largest difference in expected science scores. The steepest socioeconomic gradients were France, New Zealand, the Czech Republic, the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany, and the partner countries Bulgaria and Liechtenstein.	Earnings differentials according to attainment. In the UK females with a degree from a tertiary programme have a substantial earnings premium. Females with below secondary education are particularly disadvantaged.	The UK is one of the countries that have the largest intake of students whose fathers hold a higher education degree.
2007 Indicators	Can socio-economic equity be reconciled with school quality? The countries where two students of different socio-economic background had the largest difference in expected science scores (steepest socio-economic gradients) were France, New Zealand, the Czech Republic, the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany, and the partner countries Bulgaria and Liechtenstein.	This gives rise to a vital question for policy makers: to what extent can schools and school policies moderate the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on student performance? The overall relationship between socioeconomic background and student performance provides an important indicator of the capacity of education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities. However, from a policy perspective, the relationship between socio-economic background and school performance is even more important as it indicates how equity is interrelated with systemic aspects of education.	
2008 Indicators	Outcomes, policy levers and antecedents - Scholarships may be more efficient than loans in encouraging students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to study, whereas loans may work better for the other socio-economic categories.	Relative earnings from employment (2006) - Earnings differentials according to attainment. In the UK females with a degree from a tertiary programme have a substantial earnings premium. Females with below secondary education are particularly disadvantaged.	In moving their education systems forward, countries need to employ a multipronged approach to ensuring that education is adequately funded… A challenge here is to achieve this in ways that do not compromise equity...

2009 Indicators	Relative earnings from employment - Females with below secondary education are disadvantaged in the UK, with only 70% or less of upper secondary earnings. In the UK, males with below upper secondary education are in a similar situation.	Socio-economic background in England had a relatively high connection with reading scores compared with OECD countries. However, many pupils in England can overcome disadvantage and achieve scores higher than predicted by their background.	Schools and pupils - greatest achievement gap between those that were highest and lowest on the socio-economic index.
2012 Indicators	Pupils and mathematics in England - Pupils in England are better able to overcome disadvantage and achieve scores higher than predicted by their background when compared with some other OECD countries.	The more disadvantaged pupils in England have less chance of performing as well as their more advantaged peers than their counterparts in Japan. This suggests that the education system in Japan is more successful at overcoming the effects of socio-economic background. Shanghai-China and Poland are less successful at overcoming the effects of socioeconomic background than England.	UK countries on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) all indicate that on average pupils in the PISA samples in the UK have a higher socio-economic status than the average across OECD countries.
2015 Indicators	Performance bonuses can also be administered through increases in basic salary, such as in England, France, Hungary and Mexico. Additional payments can also include bonuses for special teaching conditions, for teaching students with special needs in regular schools and for teaching in disadvantaged, remote or high-cost areas.		

5.3.2 Poverty

Child poverty was acknowledged as a national priority shortly after 1997, but has been disregarded in recent years. In the first decade, there were targeted endeavours and added resources that helped in decreasing levels of child poverty and rates of worklessness for parents. Child poverty has risen since 2011 due to the recession and budget cuts, overturning some of the progress made. There is currently no prospect of the challenge of child poverty being resolved in England (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). The word '*poverty*' appears 53 times in *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (DCSF, 2009a), with the word linked specifically to disadvantage five times. There was a commitment by the government to halve child poverty by 2010 and remove it by 2020, with an emphasis on building secure foundations to create a wealthier country and fairer society, ensuring upward mobility. Some of the government's approaches during this period were: lifting children out of poverty; 'reducing', 'tackling', or 'focusing on' child poverty; introducing new legislation and improving outcomes through the introduction of specific measures to support those in poverty, such as the pupil premium grant and by delivering an effective benefit system.

The word '*poverty*' is mentioned twice in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our*

Future, but not connected directly with disadvantage. It was the government's ambition to ensure that all children could achieve success, regardless of background, with the goal of wiping out poverty and transforming lives. There is no mention of poverty in the education White Papers published in 2010 and 2016. This was due to the change in priorities of the Coalition Government, who (in 2010) discarded their original pledge to focus on the educational attainment of disadvantaged children. A detailed explanation is provided in Section 2.2.4 (Poverty and Disadvantage).

Table 5.3: Statements from White Papers linking poverty to disadvantage

New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future January 2009	*Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* June 2009
Offer more free early learning and childcare places to disadvantaged children and give extra help to families in real trouble. Invest £57 million to extend the pilot scheme to most disadvantaged two-year olds nationally. The child will then automatically be entitled to 15 hours of care per week once they turn three.	*Ensure every child succeeds at school will mean a better future for each child and allow the economy to thrive. Make sure that all children, irrespective of background, can succeed and go on to fulfilling careers and more prosperous lives. Subsequent generations of children will be less likely to grow up in poverty.*
Continue to support families more effectively – furthering their work to reduce child poverty and other pressures on parents – and provide more targeted help to communities, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.	*Breaking this intergenerational cycle would transform the lives of many and support our long-term aim of eradicating child poverty.*
A Sure Start Children's Centre in every community in England by 2010. Build on the commitment the government have made in the Children's Plan. Invest an extra £79 million a year to 2011 to provide two outreach workers for centres in the most disadvantaged areas.	
Raise parents' skill levels, so that they can access more and better jobs and increase their earnings. Examine ways to ensure that disadvantaged groups access a proportionate share of skills investment, and work with employers to help them make the most use of all skills in the workforce. Government to work with trained trade union learning representatives (ULRs) to support and encourage those low-income individuals that claim tax credits to make the most of the training opportunities and entitlements available.	
Substantial sums of money to provide extended services to disadvantaged families through the pathfinder project operating in 400 schools. They receive £300 per highly disadvantaged child to deliver life-changing services for those at greatest risk.	

5.3.2.1 Economic Capital

The statements in the data set in Table 5.3 related to disadvantage are based on the following illocutionary statement from the PISA 2006 results found in Table 5.2:

> 'Can socio-economic equity be reconciled with school quality? The countries where two students of different socio-economic background had the largest difference in expected science scores (steepest socio-

economic gradients) were France ... [and] the United Kingdom, ...'
(OECD, 2007a: p.34 - Table 4.4a)

This statement about the outcomes attained by various countries, including England, considers whether the school's provision can mitigate socio-economic factors facing students of different socio-economic backgrounds. The literature review showed that the definitions for disadvantage by the DfE and the OECD focus on different types of capital. The DfE uses economic capital as the determinant of those who are disadvantaged in education, while the OECD uses economic, social and cultural capital in their identification. This difference in conceptualisation of the term is significant. Consequently, in aiming to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, different (though overlapping) groups of children will be targeted by the English government and the OECD. The OECD provides indicators to all governments to drive policy changes, but if local administrations adopt their own definitions the various country outcomes will not correspond. When trying to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, the English government will be targeting a different selected group compared to those the OECD has identified. Local variation in definitions will undermine comparability of students identified as 'disadvantaged'.

It seems evident that England's policy response to PISA was focused on providing economic capital to families. Schools have been given additional funding for disadvantaged pupils so that they can improve outcomes for these pupils. When reading through the explanation further in the same chapter in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b), it is also apparent that the government expects this economic capital to transubstantiate into social and cultural capital. The literature review found that *'cognitive competencies and dispositions'*, as affected by a person's background, are linked to cultural capital. The following quote clearly discusses parental involvement in helping to support a child's cognitive development:

> 'every parent will have opportunities, information and support to exercise choice with and on behalf of their child; they will have the information and support they need to be involved in their child's learning and development...' (DCSF, 2009b: p4)

The statement below from *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (DCSF, 2009a) shows that the government is intent on rectifying this negative picture identified by the OECD (2007). In so doing, they have proposed to direct their

attention to addressing poverty through its reduction as the research evidence (see Table 5.3) clarifies the fundamental role that government will play in reducing child poverty.

> 'We set out how the Government will continue to support families
> more effectively – furthering their work to reduce child poverty
> and other pressures on parents – and provide more targeted
> help to communities, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.'
> (DCSF, 2009a: p.20)

Government shall ensure that it removes child poverty as it is used in an interdiscursive way across this policy document (DCSF, 2009a).

The words 'child poverty' are included thirty-three times and are coupled in different phrases with the following words: reducing, eradicating, ending, tackling and halving. These words are used in conjunction with the word 'child poverty' to show their commitment to ensuring reduction is achieved, which is an illocutionary statement. The government outlines their strategy for tackling child poverty in the policy document, clearly setting out how this will be achieved, at the same time extolling their successes to add to their credibility.

'*Continue to support families more effectively*', indicates a pledge from the Labour government at this point to continue to provide support for families in disadvantaged areas more successfully. The word 'continue' presented as a matter of fact, suggests that the government have been supporting families already. This could be through the offer of free early learning and childcare places and help with extended services to the disadvantaged, meaning that the government knows better how to provide support that would be more advantageous.

'*Furthering their work to reduce child poverty and other pressures on parents*' implies that the support that they will offer to families may not be direct financial support, but as parents likely know what is most effective, this would reduce poverty for the child and alleviate difficulties the parents may be facing. The word 'furthering' is used to suggest that Government has, before now, been helping to reduce child poverty and remove pressures on parents. In 'furthering their work', the policy claims to offer yet more focused support for those in disadvantaged areas. As part of this offer, the Labour government extended the pilot scheme, offering £57 million to the most disadvantaged two-year olds nationally. Schools had to implement this proposal of

15 hours of care per week in 2013, to children who were entitled to this offer, including once they turned three years of age.

The Labour government promises that there will be a drive for every child to achieve 'in-school' success irrespective of the poverty level of the family. The government is arguing that by financially supporting families, conditions within the home should enable parents to support their children in developing, growing and succeeding in life, especially in their early years. Emphasis by the Labour government on the statement above points to the home environment having significance for the development of the child. This demonstrates the government's attempt to disrupt the inequitable economic factors in operation and realise the meaningful contribution of the home environment to the child's cognitive capability. The definition of disadvantage in this instance has only been measured in the light of economic capital, ignoring cultural capital, which is a significant aspect of disadvantage according to the OECD (Kellaghan, 2001).

The concept of cultural capital is one of the foremost theoretical contributions used to clarify educational inequalities (Lareau and Weininger 2003). As discussed in the literature review, cultural capital is principally linked to conditions that promote cognitive and academic growth, and is the most significant factor of the three types of capital in the definition of disadvantage. Cultural capital is identified as essential for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils (Bourdieu, 1984; Kellaghan, 2001) yet it is not highlighted within educational settings as a significant factor in perpetuating inequalities. Cultural capital has been particularly significant in understanding how the provision of education services intersects with class divisions to maintain inequalities (Ball et al, 1995). This is reinforced by Bourdieu (1991), who asserts that written policy could be used to reproduce inequalities as he has argued that policy makers are placed in positions of authority and pass on particular knowledge, and the parent's part in the production and use of the knowledge is constitutive. What is unclear, is whether this policy intervention mentioned above, would allow the transubstantiation of the economic support provided into cultural capital. In 2019, Ofsted included cultural capital into their framework so that school leaders, practitioners and other educational professionals understand its value and

how it can be implemented if it is not already clearly part of their curriculum. Bourdieu (1977) believes that the education system, which may appear to be holistic and inclusive, actually continues and intensifies inequalities in the system. A hidden value system operates within education which favours children from higher social classes, while children from lower social classes may often, through their habitus, exclude themselves from opportunities for progres*s.*

This thread continues in *Your child, Your schools, Our Future,* which sets out specific statements on the theme of poverty:

> 'Ensuring every child succeeds at school will mean a better future
> for each child and allow the economy to thrive. Make sure that all
> children, irrespective of background, can succeed and go on to
> fulfilling careers and more prosperous lives. Subsequent
> generations of children will be less likely to grow up in poverty.'
> (DCSF, 2009b: p.15)

According to Bourdieu, economic capital is essential in understanding social inequalities, and that it is significant, especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital. Bourdieu states that 'economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital', explaining that social and cultural capital are transubstantiated forms of economic capital' (1997: p.54). In this research, I have discovered that Bourdieu's transubstantiation of economic capital into social and cultural capital may not be possible for those living in poverty. Therefore, those children who come from homes where there is a lack of economic capital, may not necessarily come to possess the cultural capital that is important to succeed in education.

5.3.2.2 Labour Government's Approach to Poverty

When the Labour government was in power under Tony Blair (1997 to 2007), they were keen to mitigate the negative effects of poverty, committing to a raft of policies addressing poverty and disadvantage aimed at supporting children and families. *'Floor targets'* related to education, health, housing, unemployment and crime were agreed for overcoming problems and achieving success in the most disadvantaged areas. Educationally, this resulted in the Sure Start early years programmes, which are also drawn out in Table 5.3, as well as the Excellence in Cities for Education

Project (Glennerster et al., 2004). There was a focus on the creation of a 'National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' so that no one would be adversely disadvantaged based on where they lived, linked to New Labour's target to end child poverty within 20 years (Glennerster et al., 2004).

'The Children's Plan (Table 5.3), *Building brighter futures,* was published in 2007 when Gordon Brown was Prime Minister. In a similar vein, the overarching goal of his administration was the removal of child poverty with the passing of the Child Poverty Act 2010, setting out explicit targets, such as the reduction of illiteracy and anti-social behaviour to be achieved by 2020 (Glennerster et al., 2004). This Act was created specifically to apprise the public of all forthcoming policy by the government that would relate to schools, children and families. As social mobility and opportunities for disadvantaged children were low, it was uncertain whether the programmes in the Children's Plan could ever achieve the high aspirations set for them. With the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) controlling most programmes and setting regulations, funding and guidance on best practice, professionals were not given room to use their expertise. Many of the initiatives in this policy did not come to fruition because of the vast number of non-governmental organisations involved. Responsibility became disseminated to the point where it became hard to monitor and measure impact. Funding did not reach the people that these initiatives were intended to help (Chitty, 2004).

The Labour administration tabled the Child Poverty Act 2010, to shore up their commitment to eliminating poverty, setting out explicit targets to be achieved by 2020 (Lansley 2011). Labour's Child Poverty Act founded an autonomous Child Poverty Commission, with Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, administering its activities.

5.3.2.3 Coalition Government's Approach to Poverty

The trend of establishing other constituent partners in governmental policy was augmented under the Coalition government of 2010–2015, which replaced child poverty with a discursive focus on social mobility. This was a shift away from improving the plight of children living in poverty, instead giving them roles to aspire to

in the future, as Gordon Brown explicated in the White Paper published in June 2009 (DCSF, 2009b). This had already had a stimulus from the Labour government with a White Paper in 2009, *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (Maslen, 2019). The Coalition dropped Labour's 2020 poverty targets a year later and the Coalition's *Child Poverty Strategy 2014–17* (HM Government 2014, p.63) indicated an emphasis on opportunities for '*earning*' and '*learning*' as a way out of poverty. As a consequence of their approach, poverty is not mentioned in the White Papers published in 2010 and 2016, though they do make reference to the 'pupil premium'. The perlocutionary statements by the OECD on Table 5.2 indicate how the Coalition Government has been compelled to change how it addresses disadvantage, as it has been compared to countries like Japan that do well with their disadvantaged pupils, including statements about the direction that policy makers should take:

> This gives rise to a vital question for policy makers: to what extent can schools and school policies moderate the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on student performance? [...] of education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities. (OECD, 2007: p34)

The OECD is imploring policy makers using a vital question, to ensure that in writing policy for schools, they get schools to diminish or lessen (moderate) the impact of disadvantage (See full statement in Table 5.2) This is then followed with the expert information by the OECD as the authoritative body outlining to England the connections between socio-economic disadvantage and school performance, and also the capacity of education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities. The government acknowledged the link between poverty and educational underachievement indicated by the OECD and acted in accordance with the guidance provided in their 2010/16 policies. The Pupil Premium Grant ('PPG') was offered to schools through means testing for families on low income, with the intention that schools would provide added support for vulnerable pupils to make sure they have access to the same opportunities as pupils from richer families (ESFA, 2018). In contrast, at around the same time, the Sure Start Children Centre (SSCC) funding decreased significantly (Wilkins, 2015), being halved compared to 2010 (Asthana, 2018), without consideration given to what happens beyond the school gates. Funding was given to schools to support pupil premium children, but

simultaneously withdrawn from a service that was already set up and working well to support many of the same disadvantaged families in largely deprived areas (Bouchal & Norris, 2014: p.5).   The SSCCs were expected to provide a '*core offer*' '*of services which focussed also on supporting employment for families as a means of reducing poverty, and introduced childcare for centres in the most deprived areas.*' (Sammons et al, 2015: p.158). The SSCCs being gradually shut down was a deliberate *policy effect*, without cognisance given to the negative effects on those who relied significantly on the support of this type of organisation. Eradicating these SSCCs led to a disconnection from families who would have benefited from this increment in the quality of their lives, preventing improvement in their long-term outcomes. With a change in Government in 2010 came the change in priorities, with Children's Centres closing down (Walker, 2017).

The Coalition government attempted to redefine child poverty in 2012 to include wider indicators, like the behaviours and skills of parents, but this was halted after significant criticism (Main and Bradshaw, 2015). This was mainly due to implied negative connotations that were not necessarily factual. The explanations for poverty, provided by the Coalition Government that came into power in 2010, described poor parents as having bad spending habits, passing on these patterns of behaviour to their own children (Main and Bradshaw, 2015). The DWP examined the circumstances of individual children found that those whose parents who have an addiction to drugs and alcohol will grow up in poverty. However, in most cases, parental addiction to drugs and alcohol was not found to be the direct cause of poverty. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation concluded that while over 20% of the population is affected by poverty, under 5% are habitual drug and alcohol users (Bailey & Tomlinson, 2013).

The Coalition endeavoured to revise their definition of child poverty to include more comprehensive gauges, focusing on poor parental behaviours and choices. This was captured thus:

> 'A range of approaches both in and outside school can be effective,
> including in-class support, separate learning support units and
> broader parenting support.' (DfE, 2010: p.36)

The Social Mobility Commission emerged in 2016 under a purely Conservative led government (Maslen, 2019).

As discussed above, the Coalition government from 2012 changed the strategy altogether, switching the focus from poverty to social mobility, attempting to problematise parents and redefine child poverty (Main and Bradshaw, 2015). With these policy responses, where poverty was addressed, there would have been an opportunity for families to improve their situations, but with the targets being removed after the Coalition government came into power, this would have been a step back (Lansley, 2011). For economic capital to transubstantiate into social and cultural capital, policy changes have to be sustained so that the economic capital of the family is stable. Instead, policy changes with each successive government disrupts and creates instability in family circumstances. Serious policy changes to alleviate child poverty must be sustained over the long term if economic capital is to transubstantiate into social and cultural capital.

5.3.2.4 Funding to overcome Disadvantage

Each administration in power holds the key to how funding is spent and divided up across the various sectors. Part of this process would be deciding on the percentage of funding various schools should receive and how this funding should be spent for best effect. As an organisation that governments take account of, and as an institution in authority, the OECD offers solutions to the difficulties experienced within education (Breakspear, 2014). The OECD has explicitly made this perlocutionary statement, so that all partner countries, England (UK) included, would see benefits in this approach to disadvantage (Table 5.2):

> 'In moving their education systems forward, countries need to employ a multipronged approach… ensuring that education is adequately funded... [and] do not compromise equity...'(OECD, 2008: p.16)

This OECD indicator specifically refers to education being adequately funded in the quote above as it makes recommendations based on data after appraising the funding of education across nations. The statement sets out that countries should ensure that education is adequately funded, with specific reference to students from

disadvantaged backgrounds. One of the six statements that the English government included in its pledge through policy is indicative of a perlocutionary effect that they have unequivocally acceded to the directives provided by the OECD, refining how funding is allocated:

> 'We are conducting a full review of the school funding system, which currently provides £35 billion … [for the] needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils…' (White Paper, 2009a: p.54)

This was adhered to by the DfE, who introduced the pupil premium grant to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. '*Conducting a full review of the school funding system*', suggests taking into account that the funding system would need to be evaluated to look at its effectiveness so that change could be effected if needed.

> 'Children from disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers
> to achieving their potential. To tackle this problem we introduced the
> pupil premium in 2011, giving schools £6.23 billion in extra funding.'
> (DfE, 2016: p.117) Table 5.5

'*Children from disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers to achieving their potential*.' This is presented as recognition by the government that simple policy statements may not achieve the desired effects, despite government being the authoritative body. While the lead partner, Government is inviting vital partnership with agencies, schools and parents.

They then propose a funding solution, which is: '*To tackle this problem we introduced the pupil premium in 2011, giving schools £6.23 billion in extra funding.'* The policy has set out how the Government now sees this model as being more effective, while it is the schools that must make the funding count. The pupil premium policy sought to support the needs of children in poverty through the allocation of additional resources to improve educational provision (Connelly et al., 2014). According to *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), the pupil premium would encourage schools to commit to children who are disadvantaged.

The Importance of Teaching (DfE, 2010) emphasised funding being fair, with a greater allocation of funds reaching the most disadvantaged, responding to the perlocutionary statement by the OECD. This is in the lead up to the PPG being

offered to schools in 2011. The emphasis in the *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016), is on '*fairer funding through a national funding formula*'. In relation to disadvantage, this paper addresses key points around the pupil premium being paid alongside the national funding formula. Until this point, the guidance given on how this funding was to be spent had been a grey area. This paper comes approximately five years after the implementation of the PPG so any issues that arose, such as a lack of clarity, were addressed by the DfE in *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016). This has received attention based on the government wanting to improve the effectiveness of the pupil premium grant.

The Coalition government set out plans in their 2010 White Paper to establish the Education Endowment Fund to support schools, to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in underperforming schools. The Conservative government laid out their strategy in the 2016 White Paper to implement a model framework to support schools to reduce the barriers to learning for their disadvantaged pupils and provide these pupils with the evidence-based interventions, while gauging impact. School now have a statutory duty to publish their PP strategy and the impact that it has each academic year, linked with the PPG that they receive. The Conservative Government in 2015/16 made a pledge to refine how funding is spent, directing finance into schools to support the disadvantaged, whilst simultaneously reducing funding previously earmarked for struggling families through austerity measures (Asthana, 2018). In doing so, there is an implicit suggestion that the school, through the PPG, will meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and the achievement of disadvantaged pupils will improve, resulting in higher standards.

Disadvantage is inextricably linked with poverty, with the absence of enquiry into poverty connected to the exclusion of the working-class influence from the discourse of education (Leathwood & Archer, 2004). A recent report by Ofsted (2014) noted that there was still a substantial gap between the outcomes of children from lower income families and their relatively more advantaged peers, with children living in poverty having poorer language and communication skills, a limited vocabulary, and a slower vocabulary learning rate compared with more advantaged children (Sammons et al, 2015: p.2).

5.3.3 Social Mobility

Governments prioritise different policies and take different approaches to improve the economy. The UK needed to address the predicament of decreasing social mobility to levels that are significantly below most other countries (Harkness, 2017). Since 1997, successive governments have pursued higher levels of social mobility which would indicate a fairer, more inclusive society. The Coalition and Conservative Governments abandoned the poverty targets to pursue social mobility. (Social Mobility Commission, 2019).

'*Social mobility'* is mentioned 41 times in *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (DCSF, 2009a). This White Paper focuses on laying the foundations of genuine social mobility and social justice in modern-day Britain. It highlights education as being the key driver of social mobility, with a range of other related factors given consideration. Fourteen statements directly link social mobility to disadvantage, and these explicitly set out measures that will be used to narrow the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils and to create further opportunities for those who need second chances. Social mobility is not explicitly discussed in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b), but social mobility is implicit in the five statements related to disadvantage. Similarly, in *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010) there are three statements related to disadvantage also associated with social mobility, and in *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016) there are nine statements implicitly connected with social mobility. However, the last two Labour governments (1997-2010), including the Coalition government and then the Conservative administration under Theresa May talked about promoting equality and social justice, using education as a vehicle for social mobility. Yet there are still class structures ingrained within education that favour the upper classes (Wilkins, 2015; Reay, 2018; Smith, 2018).

Table 5.4: Statements from White Papers linking Social Mobility to disadvantage

New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future January 2009	*Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* June 2009	*The Importance of Teaching* November 2010	*Educational Excellence Everywhere* March 2016

Raise standards for all and by 2011 and more so by 2020, break the link between disadvantage and achievement. This is central to our Children's Plan vision to make this the best country in the world in which to live.	Address underperformance, disengagement and disadvantage so that it does not continue to the next generation, based on the correlation between parents' education and their children's employment and earnings.	Essential stages of children's education begin long before they reach school at age five, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have already begun to fall behind by then.	Children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds already achieve the highest outcomes in some schools, thanks to some of the best teachers and leaders in this country.
Fair access for all to learning opportunities, but some groups within the labour market need additional targeted support to unlock their potential. Offer second chances to the disadvantaged who did not fulfil their potential during their school days.	Prepare every child to be successful, developing the broader skills, knowledge and understanding they will need for this future. Ensure that the education we offer matches the best in the world to break the link between disadvantage and low achievement.	Teaching Leaders, Future Leaders and Teach First are drawing more of the best graduates and school leaders to work in disadvantaged schools. Academies are beginning to transform attainment in disadvantaged schools.	Reform the funding system to be fair and clear, based on pupils' needs and characteristics, and enabling everyone to see how much funding follows each pupil, including disadvantaged pupils.
Draw on findings of National Equality Panel, on how factors such as who you are, interact with your social and family background to affect life chances.	Create a world-leading school system and equip children for the opportunities of the 21st century. A school system which responds to the challenges of a changing global economy, a changing society, rapid technological innovation and a changing planet. One in which, every child can enjoy growing up and achieve high standards; and which develops every child and young person's potential and talents. Fundamentally, one which progressively breaks the link between deprivation, disadvantage, disability and low educational attainment.	Plans to establish a new Education Endowment Fund have been announced, to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in underperforming schools.	Ofsted suggested secondary schools do more to support bright disadvantaged pupils. To broaden their horizons, encourage them to apply to prestigious universities.
Children with the most additional needs must be taught by the most effective teachers to succeed in narrowing gaps. Teachers can be deterred by the challenges of working in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged children.		Research shows the central importance of the quality of teaching in enabling all children – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – to succeed. Excellent individual teaching as well as consistency in approach within school is important. Every school should have a clear teaching and learning policy so that teachers deliver that consistency.	Schools offer parents with English as a second language, chances to learn and engages them in their child's learning, improving support at home and contributing to the high attainment of disadvantaged pupils
Doubled investment per pupil, together with reforms. Results are higher standards and narrowing of attainment gap for schools with more disadvantaged pupils.			Children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds can already achieve great results.
Support and mentoring for gifted and talented pupils from disadvantaged families, enabling them to compete for places at the most selective universities and enter challenging careers.		.	Attainment gap has narrowed at school since the pupil premium. More pupil premium pupils are leaving primary school having grasped the basics in writing, reading and maths.
Improve early years provision to give children that start to unlock the talents of families, ensuring disadvantaged children have the same opportunities as their peers.			
Investment to ensure fair access. Disadvantaged students provided Education Maintenance Allowances and maintenance grants for those in higher education.			
Key to success is to join up the child's learning in the classroom, during the rest of the school day, and at home.			

The Social Mobility Commission is a public body that works in an advisory capacity and was founded under the Life Chances Act 2010. It has a responsibility to gauge the progress made in promoting and improving social mobility in the United Kingdom.

However, the sixth *State of the Nation Report* (Social Mobility Commission, 2019) states that inequality is still deeply rooted in Britain, with social mobility being almost unchanged since 2014 (Social Mobility Commission, 2019). This makes complete sense in the light of the continuing increase in poverty since 2010, with 500,000 more children in poverty than 2012, households from working class backgrounds being less likely to own their own home and with the main wage being less than that in former generations (Social Mobility Commission, 2019).

Social mobility is a theme that is evident in all four White Papers explored in this research, but it has also been placed side by side with the discourse of neo-liberalism, given that to improve social mobility has been the rhetoric of the different administrations in England since 1997. Neo-liberalism has to be considered with its implications for maintaining social inequality as the different administrations have engaged with it since its inception. The discourse of social mobility is mentioned in the 2009 'Foreword' by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and features very strategically in the 'Executive Summary', highlighting its significance within *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future*.

> 'This is the modern definition of social justice: not just social protection but real opportunity for everyone to make the most of their potential in a Britain where what counts is not where you come from but what you aspire to become, a Britain where everyone should be able to say that their destiny is not written for them, but written by them.' (DCSF, 2009a: p.5)

'*This is*' suggests that this is statement of fact assertive leadership.

'*This is the modern definition of social justice*' implies how this definition is revised to take on a new modern meaning, compared to individualism that was promoted prior to 1997.

'*Not just social protection but real opportunity for everyone to make the most of their potential*' suggests that it is more than just social protection, with the assurance that everyone is seen as significant so that they can use their potential. Some policies which claim to offer equity actually reinforce class privilege.

'*Where what counts is not where you come from but what you aspire to become*', intimates that it does not matter whether you come from a disadvantaged community, but it does matter that you have to be aspirational and strive to improve who you are.

Agency being directed to the child and family, rather than the government or school-empowerment.

'*A Britain where everyone should be able to say that their destiny is not written for them, but written by them*', implies that every individual should determine who they become and not let others determine their future. This could be seen as a 'Conservative' ethic, but Brown also emphasised aspiration.

This understanding of social mobility as a proxy for social justice is a diversion from 'Old Labour' approaches to addressing social justice. New Labour tried to focus on social mobility in order to attract votes from families who were aspirational, but also wanting greater equality of opportunities (Francis et al., 2017). According to *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future*, there was already evidence to indicate that more people from low-income families were attending university, suggesting that the Labour Party had made a difference to the social mobility agenda since 1997 with their policy of massification in HE. There was an increase in a few children from working class backgrounds going to Russell Group universities in 2012-13, yet the most advantaged are still twice as likely to enter university than the disadvantaged. (Francis et al., 2017). The following statement from Table 5.4 is found in *The Importance of Teaching* and brings up the issue of social mobility:

> 'That is why it matters so much that access to educational
> opportunities is spread so inequitably in England. Our schools
> should be engines of social mobility helping children to overcome
> helping children to overcome the accidents of birth and
> background to achieve much more than they may ever have
> imagined.' (DfE, 2010: p6)

In order to make opportunities equitable and ensure social mobility, it has been argued that disadvantaged children need an extra layer of support in schools. In neo-liberal terms, a high-quality education system is seen as critical to a nation's capacity to compete globally in the context of international markets and growing competition, promoting the claim that their education system is 'world class' (Grek, 2008).

Since 2000, the OECD has repeatedly made transnational comparisons using data from each participating country, and the UK has been positioned either at or close to the bottom of the social mobility league table. Compared to the majority of the OECD

countries our levels of mobility are relatively low, yet the notion of social mobility has become vitally important in the validation of British society. With the possibility of mobility assured to society by the administration in power, capitalist countries like the UK are able to maintain deep-rooted inequalities (Reay, 2013b). This is confirmation that over the years, the problem surrounding social mobility continues to rear its head in policy documents, but according to Payne (2012), the social mobility problem is dissected into parts, each tackled by different policies and so grasp on the underlying causes is lost. Adopting a neo-liberal position has led to a singular approach to educational success, which does not bode well, as fairness and social justice are juxtaposed with neo-liberal ideology. Even though politicians talk about addressing social mobility, they fail to attribute low social mobility to the growing economic inequalities, '*neoliberal hegemony and the workings of free-market capitalism.'* They choose to rather assign blame to the working class who they state lack aspiration and the right work ethic, and the poor quality of state education (Reay, 2013b: 668). Yet, quite the opposite is true, as Reay points out that there are plenty of studies that show high aspiration of the working class across ethnicities. The reproductive strategies of the middle and upper classes, the limitations and difficulties that the working-class youth face, and the shifting economic and social conditions (2013b) limit the high aspirations that some working-class ethnicities possess.

The reforms by the Labour administration, which had to be enacted by schools, have been extensive, from the pre-school provision and the establishment of the SSCCs (DCSF, 2009a), through to school reforms, a doubling of per pupil funding and higher education expansion (DCSF, 2009a). However, even with significant improvements in attainment in schools serving some deprived communities, the link between disadvantage and achievement remained strong. The emphasis in terms of setting policy to address inequality remained firmly on education, with the rationale that social mobility would improve if England were to improve its job prospects in the global economy. There was an assumption that developing education and skills would shift England to a superior position in the international economy (Smith, 2010). This would ensure that education provided individuals with equal opportunities, giving everyone the same chance on a 'level playing field'. It is noteworthy that the first review to come from the social mobility White Paper (DCSF, 2009b) was the

examination of access to professions, rather than a review of ways out of low pay. Policy on poverty and social inequality implied that education is the principal solution for increasing social mobility and eliminating child poverty. The government's recognition that in order to reduce poverty, job retention and progression had to be improved, led to an intense focus on policy within education (Smith, 2010). Policy could have been broadened to raising the tax threshold, thus freeing low earners from paying taxes. The second approach could have been greater interventions in the labour market, such as by increasing the national minimum wage (Smith, 2010). The policy interventions claimed to support the disadvantaged do not address the inequalities they face, so the opportunities offered in these White Papers prove elusive.

The Labour government's anti-poverty policy, targeted at removing child poverty, mirrors the concept of '*individualisation*'. The influence of '*Individualisation*' on New Labour's ideology outlook was promoted by Anthony Giddens, Tony Blair's advisor, and recognised the importance of taking personal responsibility for one's own life. There may be structural factors that influence and affect choices, but each person can still determine their own identity and life course (Smith, 2010). Thatcher's competitive individualisation has been recommended by the Commission as a solution to inequalities. '*The 'level playing field' that is supposed to help the poor is for a noholds-barred game of all against all.*' (Maslen, 2017: p.606) The 'access' that children have had since the 1950s is to a school system that is highly differentiated and segmented, with grammar selection, faith criteria and other forms of selection. The government's assertions that choice based on meritocracy is fairer only extends privilege further, entrenching social divisions rather than promoting social mobility and removing social exclusion (Francis et al., 2017).

Alan Milburn was kept on as an independent reviewer on social mobility when the Coalition government came to power. The Coalition dropped Labour's 2020 targets and in June 2014, the Coalition's *Child Poverty Strategy 2014–17* announced the emphasis on chances for '*earning*' and '*learning*' as a way out of poverty. Under the 2016 Conservative government the Commission was renamed the Social Mobility Commission (Maslen, 2019). The objective of the Commission (2014a), according to

Cracking the Code was to create a *'level playing field of educational opportunity'*, as it was a concern that success was influenced by social background in the *'race for jobs'* (Maslen, 2019).

5.3.4 Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion is not explicitly mentioned in any of the White Papers explored in this study, but there are statements related to disadvantage in each of the papers that are clearly associated with social exclusion. There are six statements associated with social exclusion in *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future,* four statements implicit in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b), and three statements connected to social exclusion in *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010). There are also four statements related to disadvantage associated with social exclusion in *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016). There is an attempt in these White Papers to address social exclusion through the creation of opportunities and solutions applied to issues that have arisen in order for disadvantaged children to succeed.

Table 5.5: Statements from White Papers linking Social Exclusion to disadvantage

New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future **January 2009**	*Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* **June 2009**	*The Importance of Teaching* **November 2010**	*Educational Excellence Everywhere* **March 2016**
Research showed that 15% of the population are both socially and digitally excluded. Providing them with ICT skills is a key mechanism to ensure all can access new opportunities in the global economy. Analysis showed a strong correlation between exclusion and social disadvantage.	*Gaps have narrowed, but there continues to be significant differences between the achievements of different groups of children and young people – most significantly between the disadvantaged and others in our system.*	*External assessment as the basis of accountability for performance has significant benefits: the OECD shows that this accountability has a positive impact on how well children do, and the disadvantaged, whose performance is under-rated by internal assessment.*	*Sutton Trust's Missing Talent report has shown that more able disadvantaged pupils are at much greater risk of falling behind compared to their peers.*
Those with low skills have fewer job opportunities and limited progression prospects. They are less likely to receive in-work training, further compounding their disadvantage, and more likely to face periods of worklessness.	*Pupils with special educational needs and those who are looked after are more disadvantaged; attainment for pupils eligible for FSM has risen in recent years, but the gap between FSM and non-FSM narrowed more slowly at both KS2 and GCSE.*	*At the end of 2009, 183,000 16–18 year-olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET) – 9.2 per cent of that age group – and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to become NEET than their peers.*	*Children from disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers to achieving their potential. To tackle this problem we introduced the pupil premium in 2011, giving schools £6.23 billion in extra funding.*

The school funding system will be reviewed to provide £35 billion per annum through direct grants to LAs and schools with changes implemented from 2011 to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable.	*Social class gaps in attainment become evident by the age of 22 months and remain constant – with pupils eligible for FSM having around three times worse odds of achieving good school outcomes, compared to pupils not eligible for FSM, at every critical point of their education after age five.*		*Publish a model framework encouraging schools to set out the barriers to learning for their disadvantaged pupils, the appropriate evidence based interventions, and how impact will be measured.*
Longstanding practices and processes can make it hard for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to break into certain sectors, despite having the skills to be successful.			*Schools that are most effective in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils identify the barriers faced by pupils and choose evidence-based interventions.*
Those who take time out of work to make a contribution to their family or community need additional support. Many are at a disadvantage when they re-enter the labour market, and often find themselves taking jobs below their skill level. For parents, this could then affect the aspirations of their children.	*Educational success has become more important – there will be few jobs for those without skills and qualifications. As the pace of change continues to increase, broader skills and qualities – the abilities to think, learn, work in teams, be creative and be resilient become more important. The education system must find ways to enable every young person, not just most of them, to succeed and achieve. Although the gaps for our system have narrowed, there continues to be significant differences between the achievements of different groups of children and young people, most significantly between the disadvantaged and others. The gap is wider in this country than in many others.*		
Those on low incomes face more limited progression prospects than other groups. They are less likely to receive training from an employer. This then affects their children who are likely to have low aspirations and suffer numerous disadvantages.			
Establish a new Inspiring Communities campaign to bring together various stakeholders to find innovative ways to raise the aspirations of young people. We will work to build confidence and motivation that young people and their families need to take up what is already on offer.			

5.3.4.1 Skills

There are two major discourses emanating from the skills debate, which are discussed in Chapter Two. In neo-liberal terms, skills are essential for employability (representing financial worth and augmented prosperity) and social inclusion (Williams, 2005). There are statements on Table 5.5 that emphasise the need for skills, so that individuals can achieve, succeed, and be socially included. Various factors have aligned educational objectives with what is required for the economy in England, with policies addressing training and the acquisition of skills, together with

the development of the knowledge economy that was expected to supersede the industrial economy (Granoulhac, 2018).

Education has been used as a way of approving an hierarchical system of rating individuals, where those with qualifications are ranked higher than those without any qualifications (Williams, 2005). This was reinforced in *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003), and continued to be perpetuated in the White Paper, *New Opportunities, Fair Chances for the Future*: '*The growing premium on skills means that those without good qualifications will struggle to share in our rising prosperity as a nation.*' (DCSF, 2009a: p.7)

'*The growing premium on skills',* suggests that there is an ever-increasing significance placed on skills in the workforce. It is pointing to the idea that school is not for learning facts, but for skilling up, as there won't be jobs for life, but a need for flexibility.

'*Those without good qualifications will struggle to share in our rising prosperity as a nation',* refers to empowerment of skills and knowledge that makes the worker an effective driver of collective prosperity. This is very clearly motivational and empowering language. It also implies that those without good qualifications, such as further education may not profit from the growing economic benefits.

The suggestion in this quote is that those with good qualifications will prosper , as there is already a predetermination that those who can access these good qualifications will do well financially, putting a premium on skills. It is important to contextualise the use of the word 'skill' in the *New Opportunities, Fair Chances for the Future,* (DCSF, 2009a), with the range of skills discussed in this White Paper referring to what is thought necessary to meet the demands of the labour market. When people have low skills this not only affects them, but can have a negative effect on the life chances of their children too. Raising the skill level of adults not only increases their income, but it also improves the aspirations and accomplishments of their children. Therefore, the government proposed bringing new measures to support those who did not get the opportunity initially or faced additional disadvantage, to receive further training.

The first two White Papers were created by the Labour administration, the third by the Coalition and the fourth by the Conservative government, with social exclusion addressed in different ways. Gordon Brown and Tony Blair both emphasised the need to improve the education system so that we could have the best economy. The other compelling force was the OECD in respect of the PISA assessments (discussed in depth in Chapter Three), which has become the international benchmark used by all the governments whose policies are under consideration here to measure and compare their performance and legitimise reforms with the OECD's help in reshaping policies (Francis et al., 2017).

> 'External assessment as the basis of accountability for performance has significant benefits: the OECD shows that this accountability has a positive impact on how well children do, and the disadvantaged, whose performance is under-rated by internal assessment.' (DfE, 2010: p.68)

In England especially, the discourse on education and skills has most frequently been related with the rhetoric of crisis and the concern of a weakening economy (Appleby & Bathmaker, 2006; Granhoulac, 2018). However, despite all these policy changes, there continue to be low rates of achievement, particularly among disadvantaged children before they reach secondary education and a basic skills deficit among young adults more generally. This has led to testing at the end of different key stages, more stringent exam requirements such as the imposition of EBacc and other accountability measures leading to academisation for those schools not reaching the floor targets set. David Cameron validated the *'education for economic growth discourse'* and accepted the '*neo-social'* vision advocated by the OECD, with economic prosperity dependent on equity in education. For the Coalition government social justice and economic responsibility had to be aligned, which was then correlated with the wider plan of the '*Big Society'* (Granoulhac, 2018). Varied provision, together with improved performance and added funding for pupil premium children was considered to promote better outcomes and improved social justice, so schools found to offer good provision would be accessible to all disadvantaged pupils. Transformation in education has also been legitimised by the rhetoric of crisis and underpinned by the need for greater productivity and cost-effectiveness in education during the period of austerity, together with the needs of the economy. In

order to reduce inequalities, there has to be much more than structural and funding reforms, which only serve to strengthen social divisions and unequal access to education even further.

According to Williams (2005), fairness was also mentioned in the White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education'* (DfES, 2003), discussed the significance of further education and training that was necessary in order to narrow the gap between the *'skills-rich and the skills-poor'*. The focus of that White Paper was on quality skills. It is important to understand how this ties in with neo-liberal ideas about a 21st century or world class education. According to the neo-liberal ideology, education systems serve capitalism in that they conform to the economic and ideological perspectives that are set as people are prepared for work, with priority given to what they should be taught so that they meet the demands of capital (Holborow, 2012). There is clearly a premium being placed on skills, and central to this notion is human capital, which supports the labour market and drives the economy (Brown and Lauder, 2006). According to Holborow (2012), government policy reports, economic reports, and increasingly the mission statements of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom all concur in the belief that the vital component for economic growth is the development of economic and human capital rather than social capital.

5.3.4.2 Human Capital and the Economy

Human capital, in the 21st century, as defined by the OECD, refers to the knowledge, skills and competencies considered essential and relevant to participate in economic activity (Geisinger, 2016). Human capital has now become the cornerstone of the neo-liberal ideology (Holborow, 2012). With it being the principal form of capital in the contemporary market, the economic success of individuals and whole economies depend on how much, and how well, individuals educate themselves (Williams, 2005). Thus education as well as capitalism are bolstered by human capital, with the needs of industry requiring specific literacy and mathematical skills. This led to universal schooling in the late 19th century, where children were socialised into the discipline and prospects promoted by industrial capitalism (Holborow, 2012). In the 20th century, the main duty of higher education was to prepare the ruling class to rule. The value and function of an individual in the marketplace, together with the

knowledge and expertise they possess, sums up human capital. However, a person is referred to as a commodity when they are reduced to human capital (Holborow, 2012). Class privilege has specific advantages, not only in terms of possessing higher skills, but also in terms of having access to economic, social and cultural capital. The acquisition of such benefits was seen to augment the possibilities of securing elite qualifications and jobs, with greater earning potential being of particular significance (Brown and Lauder, 2006).

The perlocutionary aspect, as proposed through the indicators by the OECD's, refers to the government being coerced, as pointed out in the following statement:

> 'To what extent can schools and school policies moderate the impact of socio-economic disadvantage … this is important as it indicates how equity is interrelated with systemic aspects of education.' (OECD 2007: p.34)

The OECD has used these indicators to steer policy reformation and determination (Bradshaw et al., 2010). As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, this is an accepted phenomenon, with the soft governance approach employed by the OECD that is aligned to the neo-liberal discourse. The OECD has established frameworks and indicators for examining educational systems worldwide and it is now customary to accept its advice as logical and dependable (Froese-Germain, 2010). In keeping with the neo-liberal ideology, the education system has to be transformed in order to cultivate workers for the economy, shifting it away from public sector control and into a marketised system (Robertson, 2007). The policy changes that took place during the Thatcher and Blair regimes saw greater changes in the social context, with exponential growth in the global engagement and corresponding changes in the field of education. The close association between education and the economy came to the fore when the school leaving age was raised to meet the demand for highly skilled workers. Prior to that, industry had needed unskilled labour and looked to working class schools to provide large numbers of students at the appropriate time. Government made changes within education to match the macro-economic structures of the market (Thomson, 2005).

In *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DCSF, 2009b), it is quite clear that the government wants to educate its future citizens for the global market.

'It is crucial that we address this disadvantage, disengagement and underperformance, not only for the sake of the young people directly affected but also because of the risk that it will carry on to the next generation given what we know about the correlation between parents' education and their children's future employment and earnings.' (DCSF, 2009b: p.22)

The DfE's success will be seen in the future, with an improved workforce and an improved economy. It is evident that having low expectations for working class children impedes distributive justice, but they also need to be engaged with schooling, as engagement and outcomes are closely linked. The pedagogical approach taken may focus on the basics skills in schools that serve disadvantaged groups, limiting the curriculum that is provided compared to a more inquiry-led approach in schools in more affluent areas. There ought to be a balance in addressing the gaps that disadvantaged pupils may come with, together with an enriching curriculum, giving them their equal entitlement to curriculum and exam success (Francis, 2015).

In *New Opportunities: Fair chance for the Future* (DCSF, 2009a), the Prime Minister's foreword and the first page of the 'Executive Summary' consider the significance of the global economy and the UK's investment in its children by empowering them *'with education, skills and lifelong learning to meet that challenge'* (DCSF, 2009a: p.1). This shows clearly how the economy is prioritised over the education of children as good citizens.

Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future (DCSF, 2009b: p13), underlines this precedence of economy over good citizenship, when it says:

'… to create a world-leading system of schooling which reflects the needs of the 21st century: … rapid technological innovation and a changing planet.'

The creation of a workforce for the future continues to be emphasised, as illustrated in *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010: p.50):

'We are committed to increasing the minimum age … […] education or training …This is in the national economic interest, as well as in the economic interests of young people.'

Education is not only an imperative for social justice but also for economic growth, with both social justice and economic growth treated as equivalent duties that the state must fulfil. This is highlighted in *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016: p.5): '*Education is the hallmark of a civilised society, the engine of social justice and economic growth,... the best investment we can make in the future of our country*,'

According to Francis (2015), the UK being seen as trailing behind other countries in the global arena took on a new significance when the Coalition came to power, leading to a crisis. Various voices from government and the business world identified weaknesses in the education system, which they claimed limited this country's competitiveness. Deficiencies in learning and sector skills, together with the persistent low achievement of disadvantaged children, was seen as a massive waste of human capital. The policy rhetoric around the need to raise standards in English schools is well established and has been interwoven with discursive reasoning around human capital, globalisation and improving skills through education to maintain a viable position in the international marketplace (Lingard & Sellar, 2012). Since the Coalition government took over in 2010, this discourse has been brought to bear with renewed commitment, including a potent narrative that places England as '*falling behind in the global race*' (Francis, 2015).

When examining policy direction and implementation, there are a number of issues that could be raised, particularly for those who are disadvantaged. In the 2009 White Paper (DCSF, 2009a), the Education Maintenance Allowance (worth £560m) was cancelled in 2010 and substituted by a £180m Bursary Fund and maintenance loans to students. It is uncertain how Further Education (FE) could deliver the best provision to students who overwhelmingly came from families who were disadvantaged, yet it was under-funded and suffered severe cuts since 2010. Higher education was prioritised together with the growth of the academies and free schools programme, to the detriment of FE (Granhoulac, 2018). Recent funding priorities expose a plan that is entrenched in responding to the demand for skills in a knowledge economy, due to global competition, rather than addressing social inclusion and the chance for lifelong learning, thus perpetuating inequality (Granhoulac, 2018).

Social exclusion refers to multiple disadvantages that are a direct result of poverty and is encapsulated in what Blair articulated when he launched the SEU, stating that it is about possibilities, networks and life-chances (Davies, 2005), endeavouring to set up a joined-up approach, bringing together policy interventions across departments in government, to provide solutions to complex problems of specific groups who were disadvantaged (Levitas, 2007). Not having the capacity to engage economically, socially, culturally and politically, was to be socially excluded (Levitas, et al., 2007). With the focus remaining firmly on widening access to education, coinciding with market-driven policies, the government disregarded research advising them that education performance revealed wider patterns of social and economic disadvantage (Alexiadou, 2005). The Conservative government decided to concentrate on rolling out its 'social mobility action plan', introduced in December 2017, with a focus on the improving provision for early years in disadvantaged areas and by concentrating on spreading best early years practice, which is a *policy effect*. Using this evidence-based approach, which is *policy as text*, they hope to narrow the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children (Lepper, 2018). This being the case, it is difficult to understand the reasoning behind shutting down SSCCs as they supported the whole family, especially considering that disadvantaged children start school with gaps in their cognitive development. Such joined-up thinking is crucial if the root causes of disadvantage are to be successfully tackled.

5.3.5 Social Inequality

The theme '*social inequality'*, specifically pointing out social injustices that the government is aware of, is addressed in all four White Papers. In *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016), social inequality is addressed but more definitively focused on the injustices faced by higher achieving disadvantaged pupils.

Table 5.6: Statements from White Papers linking Social Inequality to disadvantage

White Paper: New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future January 2009	White Paper: Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future June 2009	White Paper: The Importance of Teaching November 2010	White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere March 2016

Offer a bespoke school based course of CPD to support the whole school workforce in meeting the challenges with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils.	Strengthen local authorities powers of intervention. Local authorities are now clearly responsible for ensuring maintained schools are effectively challenged and supported to improve. They must champion high school standards and be intolerant of complacency or low expectations, regardless of the disadvantages children face. Only when there are high aspirations will all children do their best.	Incentivise schools to work together to raise standards, especially for disadvantaged pupils.	The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit is helping teachers with the most effective teaching methods. The EEF will continue through its role as the designated What Works Centre for education. Its work will be applicable across the whole education system, and while it will focus on **disadvantaged** pupils, it will be relevant for all pupils.
Promote awareness and take-up of the free early learning childcare entitlement for 3 and 4 year-olds, and the health, family support and other services provided by Children's Centres to improve outcomes for children under five, particularly the most disadvantaged.		Ensure that school funding is fair, with more money for the most disadvantaged, but should then support the efforts of teachers, helping them to learn from one another and from proven best practice, rather than directing them to follow centralised Government initiatives.	
Consult on a new school report card, to set clear and simple information on how schools are improving, raising standards and supporting the development and wellbeing of children, including the disadvantaged.	Launch with Ofsted a Prospectus for the next stage of the School Report Card. This Report Card will report on outcomes across the breadth of school performance: pupil attainment progress, and wellbeing; a school's success in reducing the impact of disadvantage; and parents' and pupils' views of the school and the support they receive. Prospectus considers which indicators might underpin these performance categories, with recognition of functional skills qualifications in line with the recommendation of the Expert Group on Assessment, and standards of behaviour. Consider how best to recognise partnership working and whether the School Report Card could be aggregated to recognise formal partnerships.	Ensure resources go straight to the front line and make funding overall more equitable, transparent and geared towards the most disadvantaged, to help the most disadvantaged and encourage new providers into the state school system.	The National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee concluded that the pupil premium has increased school leaders' focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, with the funding being used on effective interventions.
Prioritise continued work with providers to achieve our commitment to have a graduate in every childcare setting by 2015, and two in the most disadvantaged areas.		Provide evidence about interventions which are effective in supporting the achievement of children who are disadvantaged, such as intensive support in reading, writing and mathematics.	Local authorities also have a number of growing functions relating to the education of 2, 3 and 4 year-olds, and are responsible for delivering 15 hours per week of early education for disadvantaged.
Disseminate lessons of The Extra Mile project to raise the aspirations of children in schools with disadvantaged intakes, and extend the project to more secondary schools and also to primary ones.		Consultation on whether Academies and Free Schools should have the choice prioritise children from disadvantaged backgrounds in their oversubscription criteria to promote fair access to high performing schools.	The RSC may commission a pupil premium review if disadvantaged pupils in a coasting school's show weak performance. Pupil premium should be used to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils and schools should demonstrate its impact in a clear and robust way as part of its improvement plan.
Government will consider legislating to make clear they are tackling socio-economic disadvantage and narrowing gaps in outcomes for people from different backgrounds. This could be a new strategic duty on central departments and key public services to address the inequality arising from socioeconomic disadvantage, with this objective at the core of their policies and programmes.	The Early Years Foundation Stage will be reviewed in 2010 and set universal standards for the learning, development and care of children, with a focus on learning through play, and laying a secure foundation for future learning, ensuring no child is disadvantaged.	Coalition government sets out their intention to fund 'a significant premium for disadvantaged children from outside the schools budget', to provide additional funding, with the primary objective of boosting their attainment.	Disadvantaged pupils will attract more funding, and disadvantaged areas will receive more per pupil, than the average, to reflect their additional needs.
		Seek to focus more on how well disadvantaged pupils do, and make sure that schools are held to account for using the Pupil Premium to raise the achievement of eligible children.	The pupil premium will continue to be paid alongside our national funding formula for schools, and on top of the funding for disadvantaged children and disadvantaged areas.

The OECD notes the fact that the UK is one of the countries with the largest intake of students in higher education whose fathers hold a higher education degree (OECD, 2006: p.138). Such students are twice as likely to reach higher attainment by the end

of secondary education than those whose fathers do not have a degree, exposing social selectivity. This statement further exemplifies the OECD's influence on the United Kingdom in terms of governmental decisions:

> 'In some countries, the key issue to address … is a relatively high number of students with low proficiency in science and other competencies… in the United Kingdom...' (OECD, 2007b: p.34)

The Government responded with the following pledge to the perlocutionary statement from Table 5.2 above:

> '… to make clear that tackling socio-economic disadvantage and narrowing gaps in outcomes for people from different backgrounds is a core function of key public services.' (DCSF, 2009a: p.10)

In *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future* (DfE, 2009a), social justice is specifically addressed at least eight times in relation to disadvantage, which accounts for 21% of all statements made about disadvantage. In *Your child, Your Schools, Our Future* (DfE, 2009b), there are four statements about social justice. Gordon Brown, the Labour Prime Minister at that time, claimed that '*only the state could guarantee fairness*' (Brown, 2006), implying that although there were various institutions involved in matters of social justice, only the government could make a real difference (Ball, 2013). This is echoed in a statement made earlier that, '*it is education which provides the rungs on the ladder of social mobility*.' (Smith, 2012). Ball (2013) endorses this view, but also challenges the belief that schools alone are responsible for addressing inequity. He goes on to assert that the negative social circumstances that families face compromise the learning that could be taking place.

Gordon Brown's definition of social justice was about tangible opportunities for all to reach their full potential (DCSF, 2009a). He promised to keep at the '*pre-school revolution'* with a determined attitude, to help disadvantaged children and their families, by proffering rewards to the best teachers working in challenging schools and supporting those who wanted to improve their qualifications to secure better employment (DCSF, 2009a). In *The Importance of Teaching* (2010), social inequality is raised twice, with raising standards being implicit in the document as a measure of addressing social justice. In the opening address by the Prime Minister of the Coalition government and his deputy, reference is made to how the UK compares to

other countries in international tests and the test score being the determining factor in economic growth and success. Following the OECD/PISA survey in 2006, the suggestion was made that, as the UK had fallen in rankings, it would need to look to those countries that ranked highly in PISA to emulate their education systems in order to catch up.

A significant illocutionary indicator from the OECD in 2009 relates to 's*chools and pupils - greatest achievement gap between those that were highest and lowest on the socio-economic index.'* (OECD, 2009) The illocutionary effect by the Coalition government in the White Paper (2010), addresses the divide between the rich and the poor:

> 'The Coalition government sets out their intention to fund 'a significant premium for disadvantaged children from outside the schools budget', to provide additional funding, with the primary objective of boosting their attainment.' (DfE, 2010: p.81)

David Cameron's approach to fairness was one of providing people with what they were entitled to, based on everyone working hard and '*doing the right thing'*. He also asserted there would be some who would be richer than others in a free society. He was interested in improving the life chances of everyone through strengthening the community, and the narrative focused on the '*Big Society'* (Mulholland and Wintour, 2010). He emphasised closing the gap between the working class and the middle class In January 2016, David Cameron attempted to tackle disadvantage through employing a deeper consideration of what it means to be disadvantaged. The interventions to reduce this disadvantage are minimised due to starting points being unequal to begin with and the types of opportunities presented cannot always be taken by those who are disadvantaged (Smith, 2018). As drawn out by Smith (2018: p.12), *'they do little more than try to encourage disadvantaged children to climb the ladder of opportunity while the ladder itself is left the same.'* It is seems clear that, irrespective of the level of intervention, it is less likely that the intervention will *'transform life chances'* based on the degree of prior disadvantage.

This illocutionary statement from OECD (2012) indicators suggested that the English government needed to address socio-economic inequality. This was because the

more able disadvantaged pupils in England were not as successful as their advantaged peers. For instance, the system of education in Japan had been more successful in overcoming the ramifications of socio-economic inequalities. *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016) had two statements relating to addressing social justice. There are other statements in this paper that fall under other themes, showing that this indicator has, to an extent, been successful in some schools in England. Examples of particular settings are also given to point out excellent practice that could be replicated and enable further success across the country:

> 'Children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds already achieve the highest outcomes in some schools, thanks to some of the best teachers and leaders in this country.' (DfE, 2016: p.10)

The focus in the White Paper has shifted onto the more able disadvantaged;

> 'Ofsted recently suggested that secondary schools could be doing more to support bright pupils; to encourage the brightest students to apply to prestigious universities; and to broaden the horizons of bright pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.' (DfE, 2016: p.98)

Although the English government was doing well in terms of addressing the educational needs of those coming from most disadvantaged backgrounds, it took the decision that greater emphasis should be placed on the more able disadvantaged.

The government believed that it was essential that schools *'unlock the full potential'* of all children. *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016: p.98), clearly highlighted statistics from PISA data showing the low attainment in England when compared to other leading economies. There is also a body of research that points to the significance of the higher achievers in advancing the country's economic development and expansion (DfE, 2016). In *'The Importance of Teaching'* (DfE, 2010:18), the Coalition Government clearly state their concern about the decline in the skills that children should acquire while at school. The focus shifts onto the skill of teaching, with the emphasis on the reformation that needs to take place through the empowerment of teachers with the skills that they should possess.

> '… it is perhaps unsurprising that employers and universities consistently express concerns about the skills and knowledge of

school leavers, while international studies show that other countries are improving their school systems faster, and the difference in achievement between rich and poor is greater in this country than in other comparable countries.'

In *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016), there is a focus on developing and enhancing the skills that teachers, headteachers and governors possess, so that they are able to extend the world class education system across the country. It sounds like a piece of political rhetoric. *'Every child deserves to leave education with the knowledge and skills that open access to the best possible opportunities in life'* (DfE, 2009: p.23).

5.3.5.1 DfE 'successes' and the provision of 'equitable learning opportunities'

'The attainment gap has narrowed at both primary and secondary since the introduction of the pupil premium and more disadvantaged pupils than ever before are leaving primary school having mastered the basics in reading, writing and mathematics.' (DfE, 2016: p.118)

In the statement above, the DfE celebrates the successes they have had so far, as a result of the policies implemented. This then suggests that the education system gives all its citizens '*equitable learning opportunities*', yet one of the OECD indicators to England (Table 5.2: '*The overall relationship between socio-economic background…[…] systems to provide equitable learning opportunities…*' (OECD 2007: p.34) It was the government's ambition to ensure that all children could achieve success, regardless of background, with the goal of wiping out poverty and transforming lives: '*The challenge … for every child, to make a success of their life… to break the link between disadvantage and low achievement.*' (DCSF, 2009b: p.6)

According to the OECD (2007), from a policy perspective, equity is interconnected with systemic aspects of education and England does not yet provide equitable opportunities for all children. England proffers a wide variety of school types compared to most other countries, and this leads to the huge inequality in intake and outcomes as the full range is not at all fully accessible. It is the disadvantaged child who is disproportionately affected by this inequity in our education system. Policies in the UK have contributed to the continuing privilege of the middle and upper

classes, who are able to use their social, economic and cultural capital to access places at private schools or at one of the high-ranking comprehensive schools, and vice versa. These institutions have the chance to make their choice from the best pupils, hence bolstering class divisions. The impact on other schools is to their detriment, even though only five per cent of schools in England are classified as grammar schools. Selection also takes place within faith schools and schools that prioritise talents such as music or sports.

In *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016), the government has outlined its plan to grow multi-academy trusts (MATs) so that children can benefit from the expertise of the most successful leaders. The move towards large academy chains have also come under huge criticism from parents, teachers and even politicians. Some Labour Party members have looked at them as a move towards privatisation and a waste of money. They often have a negative effect on surrounding schools as the process allows for selection. It has been asserted that academies are pursued for school places by middle class parents, who succeed and therefore limit availability for the disadvantaged pupils they were meant to help. Three of the four White Papers analysed in this enquiry discuss the importance of clear school admissions guidance for parents, which schools and Local Authorities have had to adopt to support parents. For example, '*We intend to legislate along the lines of the Admissions Code to set out the framework for both the Pupil and the Parent Guarantee.*'(Labour Administration - DCSF,2009b: p42)

'Give local authorities a strong strategic role as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils [...] school places, co-ordinating fair admissions and developing their own school improvement strategies to support local schools. (Coalition Administration - DfE, 2010: p12).

'*We intend to make a number of changes to make it easier for parents to navigate the admissions system.*' (Conservative Administration - DfE, 2016: p67)

Each of the statements selected to indicate the Labour, Coalition and the Conservative administrations' intentions have been implemented so that parents have access to the school of their choice for their child. Parents may be intentional about the schools that they choose from, more especially at transfer to secondary

level and the Grammar School system, but schools and the local authority have clearly defined criteria that they need to implement and adhere to, with academies having the opportunity to set their own admissions criteria.

The academisation programme is referred to as a quasi-market reform with schools being seen as producers, and parents and pupils as consumers (Fenwick-Sehl, 2013). West (2015) reasoned that there is a uniquely English form of governance based on the part that the state takes in enforcing and maintaining markets in education. Our education does not provide equitable education for all its children.

It is clear from the evidence highlighted from the White Papers in relation to the various themes, that England has considered and responded to the indicators provided by the OECD specifically related to disadvantage. Even though England has responded to the indicators, the English education system does not provide equitable education for all children.

5.3.6 Disjointed categories linked to disadvantage

Language of 'class' and discussion of the concept were removed from the policy documents under consideration in this thesis, in preference for the word disadvantage and many disjointed categories I suggest are linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty. The interconnections between poverty, social mobility and social class are not always seen or linked through policy. As elucidated in my findings and discussion, with change in the political party in power, positive changes made by one party are often stripped away without thought given to how prejudicial or detrimental this may be to the disadvantaged. This shows that the different ideologies that the respective governments embody, determining their take on social justice. So with the Conservative government that popularised the '*Big Society*' in 2010 through *policy as discourse*, came the much more limited role of the state in education (Smith, 2018).

The *policies* in view give no consideration to what takes place beyond the school gates and how economic cutbacks could be affecting the lives of the children who are disadvantaged in their homes (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). The dilemma in reducing child poverty is attributed to two issues. While tax credits were discontinued, in

favour of a renewed approach providing other benefits, these were inadequate, so there was an increase in child poverty as well as other costs of the recession. The second factor relates to the dynamics of poverty and the employment market: though it is understood that being in work gives a route out of poverty, the work must be of a nature that makes escape from poverty permanent, providing continued economic security through a sufficient and stable income (Smith 2010). Changes to pay and pensions' policies, welfare cuts and funding for other services all have an impact on families (Spicker, 2018). Policymakers need to consider the repercussions of social and economic policy on families as any negative impact on the family filters down and thus disadvantages the child.

5.3.6.1 Cultural Reproduction

All four White Papers draw attention to the role of the parent in their child's schooling, which ties in with the cultural reproduction theory. Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction emphasises the conversion of capitals, and this involves the transmission of advantage across generations. This means that class differences in attainment are perpetuated through cultural reproduction, with the more privileged in society more adept at taking advantage of all the resources at their disposal, using their ability to gather all the necessary information to make informed decisions in pursuit of their choices (Ball, 1993). The cultural capital that parents possess in relation to education might determine how they engage and take advantage of opportunities presented by the education system as a result of policy changes, placing them in either an advantageous or disadvantageous position. Parents' investment of economic and cultural capitals in their efforts to increase their children's institutionalised cultural capital is important as regards cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1997).

> 'Parental involvement helps to develop secure attachments, establish personal skills and support cognitive development in a child's early years. Parental engagement in the home learning environment is important for children's education, and parental involvement has a bigger effect than school quality on pupils' attainment at age 11.'
> (DCSF, 2009a: p.80)

Policy as text in the White Papers clearly places parents at the forefront, regarding parents as significant in the education of their child. '*Parental involvement*' is an abstracted way of talking about elevating their children as the most significant partner in education. '*Develop*' suggests that parents have become the most significant individuals in helping the child develop. '*Secure attachments*' involves dispositions and the hearts and minds of children, which clearly draws in the cultural capital from the family. '*Establish personal skills and support cognitive development*' implies that the development of the child both in terms of their personal skills and cognitive development is reliant on the parent being involved with the child, otherwise, these may be challenging to establish, however good the teaching received may be. '*Parental engagement in the home learning environment is important for children's education*' suggests that the parents' commitment and obligation to continue with their child's learning at home makes an important contribution-development of cultural capital at a deep level. '*Parental involvement has a bigger effect than school quality on pupils' attainment*' indicates how much more significant the role of the parent is, compared to that of the school as parental involvement has a more noteworthy impact on the child's attainment. This is also observing that progress is not all the responsibility of the government, schools or teachers, motivating and defending that the onus is on parents. The field of influence of the school here is reduced in comparison to the parent who seems to be foremost in the education of the child.

The different administrations have attempted to engage with parents as revealed the White Papers explored as part of this enquiry. This would mean that parents would play an active role in their child's schooling, establishing parental involvement, which in turn would have a positive effect on their child's achievement. These are other excerpts taken from the White Paper to illustrate and validate this point:

'*The evidence… to ensure parents are centre-stage in their children's schooling*'. DCSF, 2009a: p.7)

'*… will increase parents' ability to make meaningful choices about where to send their children to school*'. (DfE, 2010: p.66)

'*… enabling pupils, parents, and communities to demand more from their schools*'. (DfE, 2016: p.8)

These messages are communicated to parents in the White Papers, making it policy as text, but also a policy effect. The government expects parents to be active participants in their child's schooling in a range of capacities. Parents would have been aware of this expectation through the different forms of the media, as well as through various fora and media to schools. Bourdieu explained school success not by the talent or achievement of an individual, but by the amount and type of cultural capital received from the family environment (Reay 2004a). Whether it is through choice of school (Ball, 1993; Reay, 2004); parents participating as active consumers who can recognise the educational provision on offer (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995); or support at home with school-based activities (Jaeger 2010), the continuing advantage of middle-class families is made certain by cultural capital working on their behalf in the education markets (Reay 2004a).

Individuals and groups in society position themselves in social and political hierarchies, using their cultural capital to maintain their advantageous position, thus disadvantaging others. Language is used in policies to determine and maintain power and control, and this is seen in the White Papers, which gives parents permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, thus advantaging those who have cultural capital with the transmission of such capital across generations. Those who do not have the cultural capital are unable to navigate the educational world confidently, with the system thereby maintaining inequality. Policy initiatives by the government attempt to tap into the cultural capital of families and in doing so, they unintentionally further improve the position of children from advantaged backgrounds due to cultural reproduction.

'Parents make a critical contribution to their children's success at school …[as they] have a strong voice at all levels of the system'. (DCSF, 2009b: p.80)

The *habitus* is thus a system of enduring dispositions internal to the individual, giving rise to practices that influence a person's expectations of social life, are reflected in their actions and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1978) and is closely connected to social class (Hastings, 2015). Parents' *habitus* determines their participation in their children's education, especially their success in engaging with teachers and these differences are powerfully entrenched in cultural capital (Reay, 2004a; Murphy & Costa, 2016).

Cultural reproduction begins within the concept of field(s) and in the struggles that occur within and across them (Reay, 2004b).   Fields are spaces of social forces with struggles trying to either sustain or change the configuration of these forces (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu argues that the cultural capital that parents possess in relation to education determines how they engage and take advantage of all opportunities presented by the education system based on the policy changes. Fields, which in this instance is the education system, are spaces for domination of those less powerful by the more powerful (Pryor, 2005). Bourdieu states that the *habitus* obtained within the family forms the basis of the assimilation of the classroom message. This places them in either an advantageous or disadvantageous position within the school setting based on the cultural capital that they possess (Bourdieu, 1997).

The messages communicated to the parents, directly and indirectly in the White Papers are policy as text, underscoring parental access to information and the policy effect is parents becoming active participants in their child's schooling, while class divisions likely maintain inequalities through cultural reproduction. The White Papers as policy as text appear holistic and inclusive, but actually maintains the inequalities (Bourdieu, 1977) in the system as the policies may be bound up with class dominance (Bourdieu, 1991), and with the value system of the educational institution favouring children from higher social classes. Parents who are able to regulate ways of acting according to a field may characterise the *habitus* of advantaged social groups which are the middle and upper classes (Hastings, 2015). The advantaged groups learn the rules and how to play the game, which become embodied as *habitus*, which is a set of dispositions to know, be and act in specific ways (Thomson, 2005). Positions in the field vary and reconfigure, thus requiring particular dispositions (Bourdieu,1988, p. 176). Social interactions take place within them and change continually as those in positions of dominion in a given field posture themselves favourably. As the game is played the dominant players can transform the rules to a greater or lesser extent (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: p.99), through the use of symbolic violence. As elucidated by Bourdieu, this is an effectual act as the dominant group goes about their normal daily activities, adhering to rules of the

system that permits them to maintain their advantageous position and allowing the system to take its course (Bourdieu, 1991).

In this context, the capitals of the more advantaged families came into play, as they seized the opportunity to benefit from the support offered by the SSCCs. This demonstrates that the more privileged in society are adept at taking advantage of all the resources at their disposal and using their ability to gather all the necessary information to make informed decisions in the pursuit of their choices (Ball, 1993). Even though the opportunities were also available for the disadvantaged, they did not possess the cultural capital to use the SSCCs fully to their advantage, in the ways the more advantaged families did. The closing of the SSCCs could be seen as a policy effect. The SSCCs alleviated a degree of disadvantage, with highly disadvantaged families having used the centres and accessed specialist services, for five months and 38 hours longer than lower disadvantaged families (Sammons et al, 2015). According to Ball (2008), the Sure Start programme enabled parents from the middle class to a greater extent, while parents from the working class received some benefit.

Based on statements in all four White Papers, there is the prospect then for the parents of the lowest achieving pupils to intervene on behalf of their child and support them with their schooling, but would they possess the cultural capital to do so. In whatever capacity, parents participate as active consumers in recognising the educational provision on offer, continuing the advantage of middle-class families by using their cultural capital in the education markets (Ball, 1993; Reay, 2004b; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Jaeger, 2010; Reay 2004a). The language in the policies under consideration gives parents the permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, thus advantaging those who have the cultural capital with the conversion of these capitals in transmitting advantage across generations. Those who do not have the cultural capital are unable to navigate the educational world confidently, and hence inequality is perpetuated. Working-class mothers were unable to fully support their children with any educational matter due to their lack of academic and cultural competence, and they relied completely on schools to educate their children as they felt ill-equipped to do so (Reay, 1998).

In order for this situation to be rectified, there needs to be a significant shifting in the educational system as well as across society. The issue is not just about adopting the right educational strategies and having the economic and cultural resources, as we are aware that cultural capital gives those who have it the chance to navigate the educational sphere with confidence. According to Reay (2004a), there needs to be a change in the behaviour of those from the middle-classes, as has been the case with some middle-class parents who have been intentional and have actively invested in inner-city comprehensive schooling, even though they had the economic and cultural capital to act more independently in their own interests. There also needs to be a transformation of the hegemonic educational discourse that lauds the *'individualized, rational, self-interested middle classes.'* (Reay, 2004a: 84) This is about imploring society to act in an ethically and morally upright manner so that it is not always about selfishly getting the best for your own child, but rather to mobilise cultural and economic capital for the greater good of society.

5.3.7 Policy Effects

Policy effects would bring to the fore the ideological hegemony, which includes global markets and other neo-liberal choices, appealing to all those who would want to grasp opportunities to improve their position on the social ladder. This would inevitably widen the gap between classes (Ball, 2006). Class domination would maintain particular practices based on the dominant hegemony. Since the government changed hands in 2010, seeing a coalition form between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, there has been a prevailing narrative about recreating stability and improving the economy, correcting the problems caused by the previous government, with a specific focus on austerity measures.

In order to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap when compared to non-disadvantaged pupils, a separate PPG was assigned by the Coalition government, directly to each school. Disadvantaged children are prone to find school challenging and are very likely to only stay at school for the compulsory education phase. The intention of this targeted reform was to make school funding more progressive. Schools are held accountable for the achievement of

disadvantaged pupils, even though they may choose to spend this funding as they deem necessary.

5.3.8 Examples of Policy Effects

5.3.8.1 Lack of joined-up thinking

Between 2003 and 2004 the shift from SSCCs allowed for children's services to be joined-up, with a clear focus at school on aiming to close the achievement gap of disadvantaged children and, in doing so meet the objectives of the policy, diminishing social inequalities and bringing child poverty to an end (Bouchal & Norris, 2014; Sammons et al, 2015). The SSCCs were established in deprived localities in the late 1990s to support infants from disadvantaged families prior to starting school. In the White Papers published in 2009 (Table 5.3), there was considerable investment pledged by the Labour government to continue these SSCCs. The dismantling of the SSCCs began in 2010, with 350 centres closing down and only eight new centres opening. The shift in priorities is evident and the reduction in spending on these SSCCs was very much dependent on the political party in power. This emphasises the point about how the agenda could change and run contrary to a government's pledge to reduce child poverty and improve the life chances of disadvantaged children. The government was seen to be working at cross purposes in this regard, as the lives of the most socially and economically vulnerable groups in England were affected by the shutting down of these centres that they had come to rely on for support. The most economically disadvantaged families faced further disadvantage, leaving them in a worse off position financially and socially.

5.3.8.2 Academies Programme

The marketisation of education, through the introduction of the academies and free schools programmes, has indicated a change to a neo-liberal system, making a U-turn back to its historic roots (Ball, 2013). This new model of education shows a shift in how schools are run as market enterprises, with one of the key priorities being to raise standards in the sense of outcomes for children.

The United States and Sweden have been mentioned repeatedly when employing quasi-market reforms in the English education system. Thus 'policy borrowing', a concept discussed in Chapter Three, has had an important part in the development of the English academies programme (Fenwick-Sel, 2013). From 1997 to 2010, the Labour government took the approach of steering school improvement by closing 'failing' secondary schools in disadvantaged areas and setting up academies. These were similar to City Technology Colleges, sitting outside the control of local authority and being supported by non-profit trusts, funded directly by central government (West, 2016). This also included initiatives for improving the curriculum, driven from central government, with additional funding for schools in disadvantaged areas, other initiatives specific to given regions, an increase in the range of vocational qualifications for wider participation and achieved an increase in qualification rates (Francis et al., 2017). The 2006 Education and Inspections Act reduced the role of local authorities and changed the funding arrangement, introducing the Dedicated Schools Grant (Fenwick-Sehl, 2013).

The set up and expansion of the academies programme marks a clear change of stance, showing government policy aiding the developing marketisation of schools. This is highlighted in *New Opportunities: Fair chance for the Future*:

> … the roll-out of one-to-one support and personalised learning and the
> continued expansion of academies will all help achieve these goals.'
> (DCSF, 2009a: p.45)

This focus on developing the academy structure is continued with fervour, stating all the benefits, including tackling under-performance to raise standards; secondary schools with a range of specialisms, spreading effective leadership; and bringing with it expertise and challenging thinking. This is reflected in *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future*:

> 'Building on the success of education institutions sponsoring
> Academies, we will extend the powers… [to?] Academies and
> propose new schools.' (DCSF, 2009b: p.8)

In *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), academies are given extensive coverage, extolling all the wonderful success they have had so far**.** The academies programme is offered to all schools and it is promised that the bureaucracy generally

imposed on institutions will be removed. The Coalition government had even more ambitious plans for the academy programme. It legislated to allow high performing schools to convert to academies and for the establishment of free schools. Changes were made in funding arrangements and greater control was given to central government in England (Francis et al., 2017). Schools rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted were fast-tracked through the system and through the Academies Bill. All primary schools who were underperforming had to become sponsored academies during 2012/13 (West, 2016).

In *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016: p.15), showing a decisive shift: '*This White Paper sets out how, by the end of 2020, all remaining maintained schools will be academies or in the process of conversion'*. The Conservative government had plans under David Cameron in 2015 to expand the academy programme further. Headteachers and school leaders have greater freedoms to make decisions about targets, curriculum, salaries, and the allocation of funds in the best interest of their schools. Schools can focus on raising standards, whilst centralising the managerial structures of HR, finance, etc. Academies are seen as a vehicle for driving up educational standards in disadvantaged areas through internal accountability systems, with schools operating more like a business. This shows how the academy conversion process is to become final and act as the vehicle that will drive neo-liberalism.

Each White Paper has been trying to make ideological changes based on the political party's stance on what is best for education, rather than reflecting on what realistically needs to be improved.

5.4 Disadvantage used as a proxy for class

When defining the middle class in this recent research, the OECD used parent's income, employment and consumption as the determining characteristics. It is indicative that the phrase 'middle income class' was used rather than 'middle class' (OECD, 2019). When determining advantage/disadvantage, the OECD uses the '*Index of economic, social and cultural status'* ('ESCS') (OECD, 2019; Knowles and Evans, 2012: p.3). This is a measure of the socio-economic profile of the student,

using a continuous scale called the PISA index of ESCS, which uses a combination of a range of information on parents' education, employment and home possessions (Knowles and Evans, 2012). There is a broad overlap between the measures of social class and disadvantage in this definition by the OECD, and to an extent there is a conflating of social class and disadvantage in this context with a very subtle shift in language to show any differentiation between the two concepts. 'Parent's income' is indicative of 'parent's education'; the characteristic 'employment' is the same across both definitions; and consumption and home possessions also conflate. This indicates that these measures are so closely interrelated that they would lead to similar measures across both social class and advantage/disadvantage, meaning that socio-economic background determines the measure for social class and advantage/disadvantage. As has been established in Chapter Two, the definition of disadvantage in England takes into account social and economic factors which to an extent conflate with social class, yet class is only mentioned in the English government's White Papers published in 2009, when reference is made to social mobility (DfE, 2009a; DfE, 2009b). All the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects in the White Papers in response to the OECD in relation to disadvantage do not bring up class, with any inequalities in educational opportunities only falling under the wing of disadvantage. Social class does not seem to be the issue that needs addressing to tackle inequalities in education in the White Papers, principally due to ideological politics.

With the OECD driving policy sharing and suggesting policy changes through illocutionary and perlocutionary statements, attempting to replicate the characteristics of high performing education systems may not work. The educational landscape is being subtly transformed over more than twenty years through the implementation of related policies to change the educational landscape by almost imperceptible incremental steps. This means that neo-liberalism is certainly embedded into current UK education policy making, as education has become a support mechanism prioritising the economy. Social mobility is stated as a priority area in the White Papers, but due to other policies across the bureaucracy being implemented, such as the dismantling of the welfare state, enabling practices in increasing social mobility have been negated.

5.5 England's engagement with PISA and OECD

England has engaged with PISA and OECD results and has accepted the indicators provided for the English education system to address. This has included indicators related to disadvantage, correlating to educational policy documents on aspiration by the English Government and other reports discussed further in this chapter. There is extensive information from newspaper reports (Young, 2010; Gove, 2011), the White Papers (DCSF, 2009b; DfE, 2010; DfE, 2016), other research and educational documents that give serious consideration to the indicators provided by the OECD. This has subsequently been used for political advantage to defend changes to policy. During the review of the English and Mathematics curricula, it has been recommended that England look to the East Asian education systems for guidance on best practice, so that England can achieve success in this area (Jerrim & Choi, 2014).

In relation specifically to disadvantage, the OECD (2007) has indicated in one of the 2007 indicators (Table 5.2) and has also been affirmed in the OECD's report, *Equity in Education – Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility* (OECD, 2018a) that our education policies should clearly aim to provide more equal opportunities for all children so that disadvantaged children are supported and have access to early childhood education and care. This situation would be difficult to reconcile, given the fact that human capital has become the cornerstone of neo-liberalism. The OECD and PISA help drive neo-liberalism, which is focused on economic and social transformation to enable greater efficiency and effectiveness, through the human capital agenda and the focus on skills that are discussed in detail in my findings (Holborow, 2012). The premium placed on skills is based on the notion that human capital supports the labour market and drives the economy as followed by neo-liberal governments (Brown and Lauder, 2006). A person is referred to as a commodity when they are reduced to human capital (Holborow, 2012) and class privilege has specific advantages, not only in terms of possessing higher skills, but also in terms of having access to economic, social and cultural capital. Having these benefits would give those in positions of privilege, a better chance to obtain the best qualifications

and with the ability to earn more, being of particular significance (Brown & Lauder, 2006).

According to Grek (2008), a high-quality education system is seen as critical to a nation's capacity to compete globally in the context of international markets and growing competition, acknowledging the need to show that their education system is 'world class' (Grek, 2008). The Education Policy Institute has created a new set of benchmarks to help policymakers establish the achievement they ought to expect of disadvantaged pupils in England so that they can achieve 'world class' education (Andrews et al., 2017). The EPI report by Andrews et al. (2017) attempts to benchmark the 'world class' standard using PISA comparative data, and extends their work to set world class benchmarks in primary attainment, hoping to close the socio-economic attainment gap. The EPI report by Jerrim, et al. (2018), identifies that only 10 per cent of the disadvantaged pupils in England attained the equivalent GCSE maths score of 7 to 9, compared to 18 per cent of disadvantaged pupils in Singapore. Poor performance amongst disadvantaged pupils in England has been an ongoing issue that successive governments have been trying to address with little success. This is evidenced in the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, which is approximately one whole GCSE grade in England. In the PISA 2015 assessment, England was been placed 27 out of 44 nations based on its socio-economic gap. The analysis of 2015 PISA data shows that high performing countries like Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Hong Kong and Macao also have high equity (Jerrim, et al., 2018). According to Jerrim, et al. (2018), improving the GCSE outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in England would show that England was developing a 'world class education system' benefitting socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.

Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future (June 2009b), introduces school reforms to establish a '*world class'* education system that affords each pupil the opportunity to do their very best and be successful when they become adults. This links with what both EPI reports have attempted to do in terms of setting 'World Class benchmarks', which is expected to help policymakers establish the education standards that should be expected of disadvantaged pupils in England, *'in terms of their absolute*

performance and the size of 'gap' relative to more advantaged peers'. (Jerrim et al., 2018; p.9)   This bears testament to the lengths to which the English administration will go to excel in the PISA assessments without considering how this might devalue all that is excellent about our provision as it stands.

Neo-liberal policies have begun to change the face of education and the global governance of the OECD has significant leverage in continuing to advance in its agenda. The policies driven by neo-liberalism marketises and subsequently has a negative effect on education, particularly that of the disadvantaged in England. The indicators provided by the OECD overlooks factors that are particular to a system. The structural inequality in society beyond the education system is unique to each country that participates in PISA, yet these are omitted when the results are published, with broad overarching indicators. Countries are asked to emulate other education systems that perform well on the PISA league tables, to improve outcomes for their pupils, without consideration given to their unique circumstances. England has given due consideration to the OECD indicators, thus actively participating in this neo-liberal ideology by allowing the OECD to determine some of our policy changes. As asserted by Cahill (2015: 303), *neo-liberalism creates the ideal conditions for hegemonic inequality*, thus dissipating equality. Jerrim (2012) observes that the OECD's PISA is a single study, held once every three years, yet we accord so much of significance to this single study. This is due to the fact that the OECD has notable prominence internationally and because it marketises itself really well, has become too big to ignore.

5.6 Summary

This chapter offers glimpses into the way the White Papers have prioritised the intentions of the different governments in power. The focus on disadvantaged pupils in this inquiry has helped to determine whether this inequality is addressed through policy and whether the outcomes that are intended are realised. An analysis of the English government's engagement with PISA results in relation to disadvantage has confirmed that some policies are determined with a view to outcomes in international assessments. References are made explicit in some White Papers, where the

English performance in international tests has been drawn out through comparisons with other countries and recommendations made about interventions needed. In other White Papers, it is through specific statements based on indicators flagged up by the OECD. According to these White Papers, if outcomes for pupils improve through various interventions and support, England can expect to achieve economic growth and success.

Bourdieu's process of transubstantiation of economic capital through the constitution of a person into social and cultural capital has been illuminated as significant in this thesis. Furthermore, the role of the parent in their child's schooling has been brought to the fore and highlighted as extremely significant in all four White Papers, as this means that class differences in attainment outcomes are perpetuated through cultural reproduction.

An exploration of the nature of disadvantage and how policy has been used by the English government to address disadvantage, which are to an extent illocutionary and perlocutionary effects, my policy analysis revealed that '*social class*' is not used in these White Papers, except on a few occasions in relation to social mobility (Payne, 2012). The near-erasure of social class from policy is one way in which language and discourse has been manipulated to reconfigure our thinking. Disadvantage is used as a euphemism for social class with the refusal to recognise class at a societal and political level, furthering the hegemonic view that everyone is equal according to the market (Cahill, 2016). The elimination of class from policy helps to replicate prevailing inequalities by legitimating an ideological policy perspective where class is masked and consequently irrelevant. This means that the government can problematise the disadvantaged and under the prevailing current status quo, they do not need to change the social class structure that is enabled by such policy and legislation. Government can also control the workforce and maintain certain people in particular job roles based on class structure, giving government the upper-hand. This is in keeping with the neo-liberal ideology, where human capital is an important commodity for the economy as discussed in Section 5.3.3.2

Social class was replaced by the concept of social inclusion/exclusion and 'disadvantaged' groups, and it continues to remain relevant within the discourse of 'poverty' and socio-economic disadvantage (Leathwood & Archer, 2004). In Irish policy documents, '*disadvantage*' is commonly used to suggest social class difference and as pointed out by Cahill the exclusion of class from official discourse is not new (2016). The complex interplay between disadvantage and poverty, social exclusion, social mobility and social inequality are clearly communicated in statements specifically linked with disadvantage. Moreover, whilst there are many positive considerations and opportunities evident in the White Papers, these were evidently not made available to improve the plight of those who are disadvantaged. Besides, as I showed in Chapter Two, it is manifest that based on the most recent academic investigations, these interventions have not had an impact on the disadvantaged, but rather have disadvantaged some communities further.

An exploration of the way policy determines that schools will enact stipulations made to overcome disadvantage that may impact on pupil learning brings to the fore many discourses that may not necessarily support or develop disadvantaged pupils. The academies programme serves to provide hope to areas of the country that have failed to deliver sound educational outcomes for pupils and promises freedom from certain bureaucracy enforced on institutions by the local authority. What is not immediately obvious is that the OECD is inherently neo-liberal in its approach, and in engaging with the changes that they advocate we make to our education system. Hence, we are actively participating in the marketisation of education, supporting neo-liberal aims, where the effects of neo-liberal influences are seen in dissipating equality.

This concludes all the theoretical and methodological arguments derived from the preceding chapters, which are key to analysing the evidence within this study. The findings have been analysed in relation to the theoretical framework and other research, and have been considered so that the research questions could be answered based on the evidence constructed. Chapter Six concludes this thesis with consideration given to the limitations and implications of this inquiry.

6 Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Findings

Here are the key findings from my research, under the three main questions:

How has the government in England engaged with PISA results in relation to disadvantage?

England's engagement with PISA and OECD specifically related to disadvantage is treated with seriousness by all administrations in the survey period, and have been shown to correlate to educational policy documents on aspiration by the English Government and other reports/documents discussed further in this chapter.

How has policy been used by the English government to address disadvantage?

The conceptualisation of the term 'disadvantage' differs between the English administration and the OECD. This is noteworthy as the OECD provides indicators to the governments to inform policy changes, yet how these administrations define this concept do not correspond precisely. The definitions for disadvantage by the DfE and the OECD are different and I suggest that they focus on different types of capital. Cultural capital is seen as essential for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, however, it has not been highlighted historically within educational settings as fundamental. One of my key insights is the process of transubstantiation of economic capital through the constitution of a person into social and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, economic capital is essential in understanding social inequalities, and that it is significant in education , especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital.

It is quite evident that the policy response by England to PISA is focused on providing economic capital to the family by all or some administrations, but when reading through policy documents (DCSF, 2009b), it is also apparent that the government expects this economic capital to transubstantiate into social and cultural capital. In the literature review, *'cognitive competencies and dispositions'*, which are affected by

a person's *habitus* are linked to cultural capital as it is the *habitus*, the system of enduring dispositions, internal to the individual, which gives rise to practices influencing a person's expectations of social life and are reflected in their actions and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1978). English governments have deployed funding in different forms to support the family in order to disrupt the inequitable economic factors in operation and enable the meaningful contribution of the home environment to enhance the child's cognitive development. England's policy responses to poverty differ based on the political party in power. As an example, the Labour administration attempted to reduce child poverty with the passing of the Child Poverty Act 2010, setting out explicit targets, while the Coalition dropped Labour's 2020 poverty targets a year later, with the administration providing the PPG funding for disadvantaged pupils in schools.

Society at large in England has become accustomed to social class being eliminated from policy, without anyone questioning this approach by those who are in power. The near-erasure of Social class from policy has meant that the language and discourse is manipulated in order to reconfigure our thinking. Disadvantage is used as a euphemism for class. Following the removal of the word 'class' from most policy documents came the word disadvantage, and several disjointed categories linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty. Disadvantage is generally not specifically linked with poverty, social mobility, social exclusion and social inequality in the policies. The interconnectedness between poverty, social mobility and social class is not always seen or linked through policy.

How has the English Government expected schools to enact stipulations made in policy to overcome disadvantage that might impinge on pupil learning?

The role of the parent in their child's schooling is very significant as this means that class differences in attainment are perpetuated through cultural reproduction. The language in these policies gives parents permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, thus advantaging those who have the cultural capital with the conversion of these capitals helping transmit to advantage across generations.

Schools have been provided with many initiatives, clearly stated in the White Papers that have been considered in Chapter Five, to ensure that there is a good level of

engagement with parents, so that parents can fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Schools also have statutory duties, such as the administration and strategic use of the PPG grant and the implementation and adherence to the determined admissions criteria.

6.2 Value of undertaking policy analysis

I would like to begin my conclusion by pointing to Davies & Bansel's (2007) reference to Foucault's theory of governmentality, which refers to the '*art of government'*. They assert that governments not only decide on governmental structures and processes, but also attempt to direct the conduct of individuals, groups and society. This includes deliberately planned '*modes of action'* which are unfolded through the introduction or setting of new discourses, which become the accepted social order. This is precisely what the White Papers I've explored have set out to do as they are an exercise in writing to set out their proposals for future legislation in education. The language and discourse selected have been purposefully chosen not to simply call for change in structures, systems, processes or practice, but to change people so that they are '*reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives.'* Davies & Bansel (2007: p.248) As we have been examining policy that is determined by the English governments' various ideologies found at the heart of their decision making, we see through the theory of governmentality the attempts to control society by these policies through the ideological hegemony of the dominant class.

There is a concentration of power/influence with ministers of education and other elected officials having greater control over education and the direction that it takes, rather than leaving it to those who have expertise and noteworthy experience in this area. Key changes in policy are addressed through the different forms of the media, as well as strategically-timed initiatives communicated through various fora and media to schools. Shifts in policy do not take place in isolation and there are many instances where areas of education are problematized so that policy solutions can be created. So that we have clarity about the text, discourse and social practices behind them, it is vital that critical policy analysis takes place (Woodside-Jiron, 2011).

6.3 Overview of Thesis

This thesis has contributed to the literature by analysing how disadvantage is effectively addressed, or not, by policy makers in England in the Education *White Papers* between 2009 and 2016 and how the English government engages with the OECD indicators in relation to disadvantage in policies. The expertise of those in the field of education and the voices of the disadvantaged in England are ignored, with an external organisation like the OECD involved in making decisions regarding our policy, and the system the English government should emulate or practice it should follow. I conclude from my analysis that Neo-liberalism has a significantly negative impact on the education of disadvantaged pupils. The neo-liberal system only serves to prejudice disadvantaged pupils further as the ideology supports the wishes of the upper echelons of society, while our education policies focus heavily on promoting a marketised system. The English government has engaged with the OECD indicators that promote a standardised approach without developing a sufficiently localised policy that considers our cultural context.

This thesis has presented evidence to show that England does engage with PISA and OECD specifically related to disadvantage, as there is evidence that correlates directly in the educational policy documents. With PISA and the OECD increasing their influence on participating countries and the educational discourse, England uses the indicators provided by the OECD to determine how to improve outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged so that their life chances are improved.   Habermas locutionary aspect and performatory content supports critical understanding of our government's response to the indicators provided by the OECD. The illocutionary and perlocutionary effects in the White Papers acknowledge that the propositions by the OECD are true and carry weight.

In empowering our pupils to achieve their potential and giving them the opportunities to progress and succeed, we shall not only be promoting their wellbeing, but also the economic capacity of our country together with a more cohesive society. Policymakers ought to be focusing their efforts on what works well for our education system and our economy, based on our own internal scrutiny, rather than using a single data set once every three years that may not be valid and reliable. It would be

prudent for policymakers to consider how they use the PISA and OECD data, without negating the invaluable work that some of our educational establishments are already engaged in. Supported by my analyses, it is clearly evident that we should not determine policy changes based on a single set of data that is gathered only once in three years, but rather look to research of local contexts and incorporate other international assessments, such as TIMSS and PIRLS and thus make a more broadly informed and balanced decision.

This thesis has shown that the conceptualisation of the term 'disadvantage' differs between the English administration and the OECD; this needs to be addressed urgently. These definitions are used to identify and categorise disadvantaged pupils, but the definitions in identifying this group do not correspond to each other. This definition was framed in 1998 by the OECD, and since then none of the administrations in power thought it right to revise the definition of disadvantage. The differences in the conceptualisation of educational disadvantage need careful consideration, as the definitions used by England and the OECD need to be aligned in order for us to properly use suggestions made through indicators by the OECD, since England makes key policy decisions based on their advice. A useful consideration in defining disadvantage would be giving due consideration to parents' education, employment and home possessions as measured by the PISA index of ESCS. Disadvantage could be more appropriately measured using the economic-socio-cultural profile of a pupil.

I have tried to show how the definitions for disadvantage by the DfE and the OECD are different in terms of the focus on different types of capital. Cultural capital that is encompassed in the definition by the OECD is seen as essential for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, yet it has not been highlighted within educational settings as fundamental. The significance of cultural capital within policy documents needs to be developed as this is significant in terms of improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Schools should be focusing on developing cultural capital across the curriculum to support all children in developing embodied social attributes so that they can begin to navigate the world of education with greater competence. Ofsted including cultural capital into their framework to judge the quality of education

when they examine how the curriculum gives all pupils *'the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life'* is crucial to what educational institutions will do to improve the plight of our disadvantaged pupils (Ofsted, 2019: p.10). This change in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework is a significant shift in the inspection landscape as the focus of the evaluation will be wider than just the aspect of the curriculum measured by test and exam results. It is admirable that this is included in the *Ofsted Framework*, but the next important and defining stage would be how this is explicated so that all schools have a firm grasp of what cultural capital is and how they could develop these competencies and dispositions in children in the classroom. The Ofsted inspection will hopefully take on a more holistic view of the education setting. Ofsted has defined 'cultural capital' in the Inspection Handbook (2019) in paragraph 203, as:

> '... the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said, and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'

This is beginning to capture the attention of school leaders and other education professionals. The concept now needs to be fully explored so that all educational institutions embrace the significance of cultural capital and properly develop their knowledge and understanding before they implement it as part of the school provision (Ofsted, 2019: p.10). It is imperative that anyone involved in education understands the various forms that constitute cultural capital (competencies and dispositions, embodied and institutionalised), so that they can have a positive impact on all individuals who attend that educational setting, most especially for those who are disadvantaged. There needs to be a shared understanding of this concept based on sound evidence-based research.

There is definitely a role that schools can play in enhancing each child's *habitus,* though some factors are more challenging, such as inequalities that start early in life, the home environment, working within the limitations of the school day, and so on.

Some families face multiple disadvantages and evidence reveals that the gap in the performance of disadvantaged children widens by 9.4 months at primary and

increasing to 18.4 months as they progress through secondary education, suggesting that social inequalities are hard to reverse *(Crenna-Jennings, 2018)*, once they have emerged so it is best to address this within the early years of the child, and in partnership with the family. This thesis has established that the White Papers I have considered, in attempting to engage parents with their children's schooling, give parents implicit and explicit permission to position themselves as active consumers in education, thus advantaging those who have the cultural capital, with the conversion of these capitals in transmitting advantage across generations. In engaging with parents, it is an expectation that school will comply with initiatives to enact stipulations made in policy to overcome disadvantage so that pupil learning is impacted in a positive way. In providing parents with the tools to navigate the education system so that they can understand and make proper use of the system, it is the advantaged that benefit most from the support provided. Those who do not possess the cultural capital to take advantage of these opportunities are significantly disadvantaged.

The cultural capital of the parent could be perpetuated through cultural reproduction in their children so class differences in attainment will remain significant unless they are interrupted and redirected through effective policies and policy changes. According to Bourdieu, consideration of economic capital is essential in understanding social inequalities, and that it is significant, especially in its transubstantiated form as social and cultural capital. The process of transubstantiation of economic capital through the constitution of a person into social and cultural capital could be addressed through government addressing policy to remove poverty so that there is greater social inclusion, which in turn would improve social mobility. The eradication of poverty should necessarily include working-class voices in education. This means that policies to eradicate poverty would be the first step and once poverty is tackled then that will lead to the transubstantiation of economic capital into social and cultural capital for all. This again points to joined-up thinking required by all government departments involved in supporting the family that will be necessary for educational institutions to make a transformational difference to the life chances of disadvantaged as well as more advantaged children.

Schools engage positively with policy guidance, especially in relation to disadvantage as these are prescribed by the government, such as the strategic use of the PPG grant. There are many statutory obligations that schools must fulfil to ensure there is a good level of engagement with parents, so that parents know they are getting the best provision for their child. Schools also have other duties that they have to take responsibility for, such as the implementation and adherence to the determined admissions criteria and revision of the curriculum where the discourse on education and skills has most frequently been related to the concerns of a weakening economy. The focus on skills has been tied to the economic and ideological perspectives that gives priority to the labour market and the economy.

Social class inequality in education in the 21st century also remains something of a mystery as it is never discussed in these dialogues, being discretely omitted from all education policy documents, yet it is a social ill that is still ever present and pervasive in the impacts that it has across all educational institutions, in some shape or form. With the removal of the word 'class' from most policy documents, came the proxy 'disadvantage' and all the disjointed categories linked to disadvantage, such as social exclusion, social mobility and poverty. The White Papers address disadvantage repeatedly and somewhat fittingly, but the attempt to address disadvantage in isolation, removing the significance that poverty, social exclusion, other social inequalities and the life of a pupil beyond the school gates, is an incomplete equation for which a solution will need to be found. The PPG is now provided to the school, with much of the financial assistance withdrawn from families, which leads to further disadvantage in their homes and day to day lives. As suggested by Payne (2012), policy should commit to decreasing social inequalities of condition and on development of the child as learner and citizen, leaving social mobility to take care of itself.

Removing social class from policy has meant that language and discourse has been manipulated in order to reconfigure the country's thinking. The erasure of class as an active category gives license to legal and institutional structures to ignore not only the present struggles of the working class, but to deny its very existence. This is therefore a policy effect, as it has not been easy to get socio-economic disadvantage

recognised in education. England is progressively inclined to see the working class, and class in general, as a residual category, only to be recalled as something that had taken place in the past. The issue to be grappled with is that social class is deliberately excluded from policy documents and, as revealed by Payne (2012), that apart from the odd reference to social class on a few occasions in party documents, even at a cursory level, there is insufficient discussion about this area. The root causes are obscured as *'the class structure of the UK is conveniently hidden away in the detail of the ways a subset of young people are socially disadvantaged'.* (Payne, 2012: p.69)

The links to disadvantage are not made with poverty, social mobility, social exclusion and social inequality with the interconnectedness not always seen or linked through the policies under consideration in this thesis. This is crucial if we have to significantly improve the plight of the disadvantaged. Those who are disadvantaged are socially excluded in numerous ways, while it was hoped (so it was claimed) that education could succeed in creating a socially inclusive society through strategic policies. The joined-up thinking that is needed for those experiencing social exclusion would be difficult to achieve if poverty masks social exclusion, and market-driven policies take precedence over authoritative research findings that educational performance shows wider patterns of social and economic disadvantage (Davies, 2005). This suggests that some of the problems of social exclusion are that it is removed from the root causes of poverty, which are not addressed. Education policy has to work in tandem with the coordination of social policy, and with the agencies and services that serve all communities. Education of the child cannot be separated from the implications of social policy on the family and community.

6.3.1 Limitations

The study has many strengths as qualitative research, however it has limitations from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective. From the evidence I have gathered, it was difficult draw definitive conclusions as there are limited comparable policy analyses of these White Papers. There is a heavy dependence on interpretation by this single researcher and more attention has been given to the 2009 White Papers. The policies could have been interpreted using a wider range of methodologies which

might have suggested different interpretations depending on the conceptual framework used. Researcher subjectivity and my limited understanding of the wider field mean the findings and interpretation are somewhat limited. I have not fully explored the many elements that need to be changed and improved at school level, as suggested by the White Papers.

6.3.2 Reflection and Implications

This enquiry will be of interest to anyone who is interested in developing a wider grasp of the White Papers in Education published between 2009 and 2016. It will also be of interest to those interested in improving outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged.

This study has been an interesting journey as it has brought up many elements that need to be changed and improved at school level. My next step would be to delve further into understanding how schools can further promote embodied capital. This is due to the fact that embodied social attributes can be used in an endeavour to acquire institutionalised cultural capital, by applying the relevant cultural knowledge to education. Researching this area further, using a school setting as a case study, would provide us with invaluable insight in supporting disadvantaged children develop their competencies and dispositions to a greater extent. Giving pupils this cultural capital would empower them to a degree and so reduce disadvantage. As an outcome of the further research, I will attempt to contribute to the preparing of Ofsted schema that needs to expand with research-led understanding of cultural capital. This will help with schools having a sound understanding of what will be expected when they are being inspected, and more importantly, using this framework will support them in having a sound grasp of improving this area within their school.

There should be a fundamental shift in how individual children and families are treated in classrooms so that children are not marginalised at school due to their social class. Teachers should examine their own assumptions of social class positions so that they can support all their students equitably (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). This is a blind spot in the White Papers as it is crucial that those who work with the

disadvantaged have a clear understanding of their circumstances and the support that they need. Hunt & Seiver (2018) also discuss the significance of teachers knowing their students and understanding their lives, together with their social class identities, in order to combat deficit identities. To address disadvantage, appropriate interventions and policies are necessary to make sure that the '*life chances*' of those who have the challenge of negotiating their way in the '*majority culture'* are supported. According to Ball (2013), schools ought to be places where social and economic inequity are challenged, without being the sole solution to this phenomenon. Pressure is placed on schools to make a difference, but the negative social circumstances that families are faced with somewhat compromise the learning that could be taking place for these children. Getting all those I work with and probably wider still, through professional development, to recognise and desist from deficit views of all children who are disadvantaged is essential. Far too often, disadvantaged children and their families are problematised by educational professionals, who may not possess a sound understanding of the contextual influences that are the lived experiences of this disadvantaged group. This will provide professionals with the knowledge that they would need in identifying and changing elements of school culture and curriculum that may disregard &/or mitigate for class differences. This would also support educators in recognising and challenging deficit views of economically disadvantaged students and families.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the greatest concern for those who work in schools and all other relevant stakeholders is the loss of learning that all pupils have experienced, most especially those who are disadvantaged. Various studies have been carried out to establish the degree of the learning loss that pupils have faced. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have experienced the greatest loss during Covid, based on the report published by the DfE (2021). The analysis conducted by the EPI and Renaissance Learning revealed that based on the reduction of in-person teaching following the pandemic, the gaps between the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils have become wider. Data from last year's (2021) analysis by the EPI showed the following: researchers found that disadvantaged secondary

school pupils would be more than 18 months behind their non-disadvantaged peers by the time they take their GCSEs – similar to five years ago; disadvantaged primary pupils would be more than nine months behind their non-disadvantaged classmates, with the gap widening for the first time since 2007; and disadvantaged reception pupils are nearly five months behind their non-disadvantaged peers, which is the same as in 2013 (Hutchinson et al., 2020) This picture showing widening gaps sounds dismal but in addressing this issue with disadvantaged pupils who have fallen further behind, we need a joined-up approach if this learning loss is to be addressed in the most efficacious way. For schools to continue the programme of curriculum recovery, a swift solution from the government through generous funding is needed, not just for schools but for homes where the financial loss has had an impact on the social, emotional and mental health of both parents and pupils. The recovery of learning loss requires a holistic approach, due to the fact that the lived experiences of pupils since the pandemic began and the depth of the learning loss, vary greatly.

Policies need to reconceptualise poverty as it has been in the policy changes over the last two decades that has increased the number of people living in poverty from 30% to 56% (Reay, 2019). If poverty is a critical determinant of attainment, then children from poorer families will be less likely to do well in the education system, and this will become a self-perpetuating cycle. Solving poverty will require joined-up thinking from the government and business with reform taking place at all levels. Disadvantage will thus be reduced, enhancing social inclusion and significantly improving the '*life chances*' of those who have been identified in this category.

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