The rationality of judgement: comparative perspectives on the social role of educational assessment

Thesis

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CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSMENT AND INDUSTRIALISATION

Introduction

Chapter Two set out to examine in detail the part played by the idea of educational assessment in helping to shape the organisation and ethos of the provision of mass schooling which emerged in response to the major changes in the economic and social order brought about by industrialisation. This analysis was based on an identification of general trends in assessment procedures in education systems with very different ideological and institutional traditions in order to demonstrate that the determinative role of educational assessment was a feature of the common characteristics of industrialisation rather than simply an institutional feature of a particular kind of educational system. Chapter Four refines this argument further in making a distinction between this general role, common to all such societies, and important variations between societies in the institutional expression of this shared rationality, variations which are the product of the same idiosyncratic, national social forms which give rise to major differences in the organisation and ethos of the education system itself. Before coming to such a discussion, however, it is necessary to extend and deepen the analysis beyond simply describing the relationship between assessment and mass educational provision, to explore at a more fundamental level the common characteristics of the societies which give rise to such provision, and why it is that educational assessment has so conveniently been able to achieve such incontrovertible legitimation.

Thus the analysis of Chapter Three evokes some of the central themes of sociology in its attempt to identify those characteristics of
the transition from feudal to industrial society which may be associated with the rise of educational assessment procedures. To do this it draws briefly on the work of Weber, Marx and Durkheim, as well as that of several more recent writers, notably Bernstein, Foucault and Habermas. The chapter distinguishes between the part played by educational assessment in what might be termed the 'instrumental' demands of the new order, that is, those procedures concerned with the key issues of attesting competence and regulating competition given the selection and allocation requirements of a complex division of labour; and that part played by educational assessment in helping to provide for what might be termed the 'expressive' or control demands of that order, the legitimation of inequality and an alternative basis for social cohesion.

The Characteristics of Industrial Society

Assessment has become integrally connected with teaching and learning as we know it in contemporary educational practice simply, yet fundamentally, because in its broadest sense of evaluation - to make reference to a standard - assessment is one of the most central features of the rationality that underpins advanced industrial society itself. Assessment procedures are the vehicle whereby the dominant rationality of the corporate capitalist societies typical of the contemporary western world is translated into the structures and processes of schooling. As Cherkaoui (1977) suggests, the system of assessment that emerged with mass education systems must be understood as 'organically connected with a specific mode of socialisation' (p. 562). A mode of socialisation in which preparation for a division of labour, bureaucracy and surveillance were dominant characteristics.

Sociology has been much concerned to conceptualise the difference between 'traditional', 'pre-Modern' and industrial societies. Although
varying widely in their perspective on central issues such as the basis for social order, social divisions or the scope for creative social interaction, sociologists spanning the whole range of order/control, system/action perspectives (Dawe, 1970; Bernstein, 1977; Banks, 1978). find substantial areas of common ground in their discussion in general terms of the changes in the basis for social institutions which characterised this transition. Such changes included a number of different social institutions, notably the legal, the religious, the economic, the political and the familial. But, whilst it is relatively easy to identify associations, the attribution of causation is a good deal more problematic once the emerging capitalist order was reflexively related as both cause and effect of the changing nature of social life.

The changes made necessary by the emerging capitalist order were both 'practical' and 'ideological'. Under 'practical' would be included the necessity for a mobile workforce in which the individual - not the family or the community - would take responsibility for a particular unit or stage of production the whole process of which he might not even be able to conceptualise. This in contrast to the hitherto prevailing work organisation in which one individual was typically responsible for the whole task. Given the cost of any long term use of 'power-coercive' control strategies (Chin and Benne, 1978) it was a 'practical' imperative that this new type of worker should come to accept as quickly as possible the legitimacy of a system in which he was paid a money wage which was only a proportional return for his contribution to a system he was powerless to control.

These changes in the nature of work, its increasing fragmentation and alienation for some, expanding entrepreneurial activities for others, offered and required a degree of geographical and social mobility which brought about associated changes in the family's economic and educational
role (Coleman, 1968). This increase in flexibility and mobility was also increasingly apparent in the ascendancy of protestantism over catholicism in many industrialising countries; and in legal innovations based on the right of the individual before an impersonal law which came to replace the old feudal system of reciprocal obligation. Associated with legal developments of this kind were political movements which also had at their centre the idea of liberal democracy - the right of individuals to self-determination (Smith, 1980).

These changes reached their apotheosis in the major scientific, religious and political movements which marked the end of the Middle Ages - the Enlightenment, the Reformation and the French Revolution respectively (Parsons, 1937, 1967; Nisbet, 1967). Herein lies the link between associated changes in social forms - between base and superstructure. Although the profound changes which took place in every aspect of life at this time were legitimised and reinforced by the challenge and later, hegemonic domination of a new entrepreneurial class, the most central theme in the changes taking place went far beyond class in both its origins and its implications and, for this reason, cannot be neatly categorised as either cause or effect. This was the theme of individualisation.

The change from a predominantly communálist basis for social integration to an individualist orientation is of crucial importance since it was this new orientation that made possible changes at this time in the whole range of social institutions and legitimating ideologies. The key to these changes was the growth of a particular kind of rationality. Gordon (1980) suggests that the dominant theme in philosophy from the end of the eighteenth century concerned the nature of rational thought, a theme which constituted the heart of the Enlightenment,
"this involves the search to identify in its chronology, constituent elements and historical conditions in the moment when the West first affirmed the autonomy and sovereignty of its own mode of rationality, the rationality of the Lutheran reform, the 'Copernican revolution', Cartesian philosophy, the Galilean mathematisation of nature, Newtonian physics ..." (Foucault, quoted by Gordon (1980), p. 106)

This is the rationality of science, of logic, of efficiency and of individual rights and responsibilities.

The nature and significance of these changes is a central theme in sociology and particularly in the work of Weber, Durkheim and Marx whose very different approaches to the study of post-feudal society are characteristic of the range and significance of attempts to understand these changes within sociology. Clearly there is a monumental volume of writing now available on this subject and of necessity the discussion of it here is confined to those aspects of the work available which bear centrally upon the question being explored here - the origins of educational assessment.

Weber's analysis of the transformation from feudalism to industrial society is dominated by a preoccupation with the rationality that informed the scientific-technical progress of the age, together with the associated bureaucratic and institutional structures and the ideological legitimations. Durkheim's very different social system perspective nevertheless emphasises the same ideas of the rational, individual, hierarchical and specific allocation of roles in his fundamental distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. More recently, and building on this Durkheimian tradition, Parsons (1951) has conceptualised the distinction in terms of 'pattern variables' with 'affective neutrality', 'universalism', 'achievement' and 'specificity' replacing the 'affectivity', 'particularism', 'ascription' and 'diffuseness' of 'traditional' or 'simple' societies. These
distinctions enunciate very clearly some of the key characteristics of
the modes of social organisation which emerged. Actors were increasingly
required to perform specific, defined roles in a whole range of social
institutions, notably the division of labour. They were increasingly
chosen on the basis of their demonstrated competence as measured by some
rational criterion. In this process - assessment - in one form or
another - would henceforth be central.

The Protestant Ethic

To offer such a brief description of the changes in the social order
which accompanied the rise of capitalism is very much simpler than any
attempt to explain the source of these developments. An over-simplistic
reading of the Weberian perspective suggests that capitalism was brought
about by the associated rise of protestantism despite the fact that
specific instances can be found where both capitalism and protestantism
have flourished independently of the other.

In fact Weber's analysis suggests a more limited attribution of
causality. Weber is careful to be historically specific, linking
specific stages and types of capitalism with other specific social
formations. Thus his account of the transition from feudalism to
capitalism in Europe refers to the significance of the traditional
European distinction within the peasant household of the functions of
ownership, production and consumption - a relationship further specified
in, for example, England, by the existence of the market which was at
least partly due to the centralised state and the rational legal system
imposed by the Norman conquest (Marshall, 1982). Even the notion of
rationality itself is not used as a blanket term but as a historical
specific.
Although it would be inappropriate to go into the details of Weber's wide-ranging analyses here, the general thrust of his argument is central: that there is an important, empirically documentable relationship between a particular world view and a particular form of economic relations, between superstructure and substructure, but that the direction of causality between economic, political, legal and religious factors is not generalisable (see Chapter Four).

Weber's refusal to descend to determinism in this respect is a product of his sociological perspective; his respect for empirical reality and for detailed historical study and his lack of sympathy with deductive approaches which refer to the concrete merely to substantiate general theories. Weber's distrust of abstract theorising is based on his ideas of social action. For Weber, ideas can exert an independent influence on social conduct; understanding of the world can change independent actors' views of their material situation.

"I would like to protest the statement ... that some one factor, be it technology or economy, can be the 'ultimate' or 'true' cause of another. If we look at the causal lines, we see them run, at one time, from technical to economic and political matters, at another from political to religious and economic ones, etc. There is no resting point. In my opinion, the view of historical materialism, frequently espoused, that the economic is in some sense the ultimate point in the chain of causes is completely finished as a scientific proposition." (Weber (1924), p. 456, quoted by Marshall (1982), p. 151).

Thus, as Marshall (1982) suggests, Weber avoids any attempt to formalise his implicit theory of the relation between substructure and superstructure because he denies all forms of necessary determinism in the social sphere.

"Empirical research alone can establish, in each instance, whether ideas exert a direct and independent influence on social action (as in the case of ascetic Protestantism and economic conduct); function in the legitimation of social institutions or structures and hierarchies of
dominance (as they appear to have done at various times in Chinese and Indian history): or, serve to refract interests in the manner of 'switchmen'. All three situations are empirical possibilities. (And neither the categories nor the situations are mutually exclusive) ..." (p. 155)

"Weber was insistent that ideas became significant in history and are causally effective in shaping social conduct because, at certain points, a class or status group with specific material or ideal interests takes up, sustains, and develops these ideas, and is influenced by them. He accepts, as we have seen, that ideas are both shaped by and, in turn, help shape interests and action. As a general principle, however, the 'inner logic' of their development does not proceed independently of all other spheres of social reality ... " (p. 161)

Thus Weber's analysis is important because it emphasises general themes in the development of capitalism whilst in no way denying the significance of specific social forms in mediating the precise effect of such movements. It therefore points the way to the kind of approach being adopted here which seeks to understand how educational assessment procedures relate in general terms to education under capitalism by a study of the specific and different forms it takes in individual systems. Weber's emphasis on the independent contribution of interest groups in the process of 'structuration' Dallmayr (1982) justifies the detailed attention given to educational politics in this thesis both in theoretical terms (Chapter Four) and in empirical terms (Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

A less obvious contribution of Weber's work to this study is the way in which it underlines the importance of the political unit - the state. In his General Economic History, Weber (1923) distinguishes between rational capitalism and all earlier forms of capitalism, arguing that rational capitalism is distinguished by its systematic orientation to a mass market. He draws a distinction between antiquity in which the freedom of the cities was dominated by a bureaucratically organised
world empire and in which, consequently, there was no place for political capitalism and the modern city as it came under the power of competing national states in a condition of perpetual struggle for power in peace or war.

"This competitive struggle created the largest opportunities for modern western capitalism. The separate states had to compete for mobile capital, which dictates to them the conditions under which it would assist them in power. Out of this alliance of the State with capital, dictated by necessity, arose the national citizen class, the bourgeoisie in the modern sense of the word. Hence it is the closed national state which afforded to capitalism its chance for development ... " (Weber, 1923, pp. 334-5)

One may speculate, if Weber were writing now, how he would view the advent of yet another type of capitalism - international, corporate capitalism. The symbiotic relationship he depicts between national state and entrepreneurial capital is now being eroded by a new kind of 'bureaucratically organised world empire' based not on conquest, or, as under feudalism, on the Roman Catholic church which at times united the whole of feudalised Western Europe into one grand political system, but on technology and capitalism itself. The implications of this development are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven but it is noted here in order to identify another important strand in the analysis which is essentially Weberian, that the relationship between the economic and the political as it finds expression in the nation state will vary with changes in one or other of these dimensions, producing new pressures on associated institutions such as the education system and leading to the kind of 'crisis' which is currently receiving so much attention (e.g. Crozier et al., 1975; Habermas, 1975; Offe, 1975; Rose, 1980; Weiler, 1980).

This balance between 'the general' and 'the specific' is similarly reflected in Weber's analysis of the characteristics of protestant mentality as expressed in the dominant social form of bureaucracy - "the
institutional prototype of the emerging rationalised society" (Wilson, 1977, quoted by Salaman, 1981, p. 188). Whilst the institution of bureaucratic organisation is common to all industrial societies in some degree there is also clearly a good deal of variation between societies in the extent to which this mode of organisation is predominant. In the provision of mass education for example, elements of Weber's 'ideal type' of bureaucracy are 'necessarily manifest in every national education system, but there are equally significant variations in bureaucratic style so that notions of hierarchy, general rules, continuous and impersonal offices, the separation between official and private life must be inter-related with historically specific social situations (Gouldner, 1948). As Bendix (1952) suggests

"No attempt has been made (by students of bureaucracy) to show the sociopsychological and institutional differences in the process of bureaucratisation in so far as it can be attributed to a retarded breakdown of feudal institutions and traditions. As a result, little attention has been given to the effect of noncontemporaneous industrialisation in different countries on the rise of their respective bureaucracies. It would be very important to investigate the effect of such factors on the pattern of obedience to authority and of the degree of spontaneous public co-operation which characterises the different 'bureaucratic cultures' of the Western world. (p. 134)

Thus there are different styles of bureaucratic provision just as there are significant differences in all the other social institutions in countries which nevertheless share a common capitalist and industrial revolution.

Weber and Marx

It is this emphasis on bureaucracy which forms one of the major distinctions between Weberian and Marxist perspectives. Although both share a common emphasis on the economic interests arising out of the
ownership of property as the key to social conflict and change, the
Weberian perspective includes other important sources of social power
notably the control of organisational resources especially in state and
private bureaucracies and control of cultural resources, notably
religious ones initially, but increasingly, in secular terms through,
for example, the education system. Thus from a Weberian perspective,
interest groups and their associated struggles reflect the whole range
of economic, cultural and political divisions in society, divisions
institutionalised in terms of Weber's well-known distinction between
status and party. Collins (1981) argues that the education system
embodies all three of these struggles in its economic concern with the
production of appropriately skilled workers, its cultural concern with
social integration and the maintenance of prestige and its political
concern with the legitimation of control through certain formal
organisations. Collins argues, following Weber, that

"education, which has arisen as part of the process of
bureaucratisation, has been shaped by the efforts of
elites to establish impersonal methods of control;
the content of education here is irrelevant but the
structure of grades, ranks, degrees and other formal
credentials is of central importance as a means of
discipline through hierarchy and specialisation" (p.282)

It is this Weberian emphasis on the form or mode of control, as well
as on its purpose, which is crucial to the attempt to understand the
origins of educational evaluation. The Weberian emphasis on social
action, on multiple sites for struggle, on bureaucratic organisation and
on scientific rationality are themes which dominate the emergence of
mass schooling whilst allowing for all its variety. In particular it
provides a specific logic for the developing significance of formal
evaluation and qualifications as a logical and integral part of this
process - a theme which is taken up in similar vein, if in much more
detail, in more recent structuralist work, notably that of Foucault.
Although there are many similarities here with Marxist perspectives on the capitalist state, there is clearly a fundamental distinction to be made as to whether primacy is given to economic determinants. Marxism locates forms of struggle other than the economic in the determined superstructure in which the battle to legitimate the power relations of the status quo is waged through the ideological domination of various forms of false consciousness. It would seem, however, that most Marxists, as well as many non-Marxists, would want to concede "some measure of genuine interaction between the spheres of production and other spheres of social life ... and, at the level of individual actors, a 'dialectical' relationship between class interest and ideological representation ..." (Marshall, 1982, p. 145).

For the purpose in hand, it is less necessary to adjudicate between these fundamental distinctions than to recognise their common identification of the new forms of essentially ideological control in the changing basis of social organisation which characterised industrial society.

Thus the characteristics of the social order associated with the emergence of capitalism as the dominant economic system were neither simply causes of, nor caused by, these economic developments. Rather they must be regarded as mutually dependent and reinforcing developments the lack of either one of which - as India and China for example testify - would have inhibited the development of both. It is certainly true that the central themes of this chapter - rationality and individualism - are deeply integrated with both the economic and the social order, finding their origin and their expression in both arenas. This point is well made in the following description by Marshall in which he condemns Luethy's overstatement of Weber's 'spirit of capitalism', namely:
"... no less than the entire inner structure governing Western society's attitudes, not only its economy but also its legal system, its political structure, its institutionalised sciences and technology, its mathematically-based music and architecture. Its economic modes of operation, work discipline, and accountancy methods are all regarded by him as the mere pars per toto of a whole civilisation-type for which Weber's final word is rationality - a rationality which permeates all fields of social behaviour, the organisation of labour and management as well as the creative sciences, law and order, philosophy and the arts, the state and politics, and the dominant forms of private life. This rationality, driven by its own internal dynamic, has overthrown (or tamed) every form of resistance offered by pre-rational human nature, magic and tradition, instinct and spontaneity. Finally with the Reformation, it has forced its way into the innermost temple wherein the motives behind human behaviour are generated, into the very heart of religious belief, there to destroy all the dark, magical, mysterious tabernacles - image, cult and tradition - for which it substitutes the Bible as the authentic truth, supposedly unshakeable, accessible to critical examination, and susceptible of proof." (Luethy, 1964, p. 27)

Individualism

Just as it is possible to overstate the triumph of rationality over belief, so it would be wrong to assume that one particular form of individualistic organisation is central to the development of capitalism. Nevertheless in the western world individualism has emerged as both the necessary practical basis for the rational allocation of roles and the necessary source of legitimation. As the dominant ideology it allows classes to be reduced to individual persons who are then reorganised into various imaginary and non-antagonistic unities such as the 'nation' and the 'community' (Poulantzas, 1973). Taking up this point Larson (1981) argues that:

"The penetration of market relations into all areas of life is immensely accelerated and completed by capitalism. This character inseparably links the extension of market relations to the rise of a modern class system and a juridico-political ideology which ideologically makes the isolated individual into the essential unit of the social and political orders". (p. 325)
Larson goes on to argue that this allows the principle of equality between atomised individuals to be the central basis of class, the cornerstone of the new inequality which appears to be based only on the rational criteria of will, competence and drive. In particular the existence of state education systems which apparently provide for meritocratic competition on the basis of equality of opportunity deflect the criticism of professional elites and allow them to legitimate their own position (Larson, 1981).9

If some conflict theorists like Poulantzas and Larson emphasise the advantages of the ideology of individualism as a major way of deflecting self-conscious class conflict, others have taken a more pessimistic view of it in identifying a profound contradiction arising from this dependence on individualism, between the instrumental and the expressive order, between public and private life, between general and particular interests. This contradiction is particularly evident in education since the latter plays a crucial role in both allocation and integration.

"There is a fundamental contradiction within the heart of education: while embodying and reproducing a system of domination based on hierarchical control, the form of the discourse - and hence content - in education is that of the liberal discourse of the state, according to which rights are vested equally in all members of the community. This contradictory position of education explains its dual progressive/reproductive role promoting equality, democracy, toleration, rationality, inalienable rights on the one hand, while legitimising inequality, authoritarianism, fragmentation, prejudice and submission on the other" (Gintis, 1980, p. 2)

This contradiction is not new; it is, as Habermas (1975) suggests, the perennial 'legitimation crisis' arising out of the fundamental contradiction of capital - the necessity for wealth to be socially produced whilst being privately appropriated.
"Because the reproduction of class societies is based on the privileged appropriation of socially produced wealth, all such societies must resolve the problem of distributing the surplus product inequitably and yet legitimately." (Habermas, 1975, p. 96)

Thus the education system embodies a constant contradiction between the need to differentiate pupils on the basis of an order of merit which ultimately serves to legitimate differential chances in the labour market and the contradictory need to integrate pupils, parents and teachers in a way which enables the school to be seen as serving commonly conceived purposes. While the need for the former is conceived by teachers in terms of a relatively fixed distribution of basic 'abilities' which pupils, as individuals, may be identified as possessing, the need for the latter is a social imperative which has to be worked for in terms of desirable general social attributes based on principles which may be accepted as legitimate.

"The language of this legitimation, as it is argued by teachers, draws on traditional values of interdependence and exchange of equivalents, while ignoring or obscuring the outcomes of the differential treatment of pupils which springs from the differential value placed upon the conception of their ability." (Wallace, 1982, p. 4)

This contradiction is receiving particular attention at the present time as part of sociological concern with the crisis of contemporary capitalism. There are increasingly intractable problems for capitalism and hence for the associated role of education as the price of legitimation becomes ever higher (Dale, 1982a). These problems and the particular contribution educational assessment seems likely to make in the search for a solution are the subject of Chapter Seven. Nevertheless the current crisis is only a particularly acute manifestation of the fundamental contradiction between the need to divide and yet unite, to create inequality and, at the same time, to promote social cohesion. This problem goes well beyond a Marxist
interpretation specifically in terms of class struggle, to the heart of the division of labour itself and the problems of social order.

As suggested earlier, the contradiction is essentially between the 'instrumental' function of education - the training of people for jobs both in terms of the requisite skills and knowledge and in terms of appropriate personal expectations and behaviour (Willis, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976), and the 'expressive' function of education aimed at fostering at least a minimal level of social integration despite the inevitable and disintegrative effects of the prevailing individualist 'instrumental ideology' (see Chapter Four), and the potentially even more divisive tendencies of the associated inequality. Although class-based inequality is central here; it is the form of social organisation and legitimation characterising the current basis for inequality which gives rise to this distinctive problem. Unlike other more explicitly coercive forms of economic exploitation - as found under feudalism or tribalism for example - the dilemma of capitalist society is a manifestation of the change in the nature of social bonds which has at its heart rationality and individualism. This latter point is clearly made by Durkheim for whom 'capitalism' is essentially an 'abnormal form' (O'Connor, 1980) and for whom the issue of individualism and the consequent problems of social integration was fundamental.

Solidarity and Division

The theme of Durkheim's 'The Division of Labour in Society' (1947) is the source of social solidarity and social order. He argues that the increasing work specialisation in a division of labour replaces the 'mechanical' solidarity of pre-market societies based on homogeneity by an 'organic' solidarity based on mutual interdependence. The political and social upheavals of 19th century France eventually forced Durkheim
to modify his earlier analysis to argue in Moral Education (1961) that new forms of social solidarity do not occur spontaneously but require new social institutions to be set up. He envisaged that these institutions would be a sort of occupational 'guild' which would bind individuals into special interest organisations and hence to the State. Durkheim saw a key role for schools in this - preparing and socialising individuals for their place in the division of labour and, at the same time, providing the basis for communalism and true organic solidarity.

Durkheim's distinction between social divisions arising from 'anomie' and social divisions arising from 'egotism' is useful here since the former refers to 'system integration' - the integration of social functions and the latter to the integration of people into social functions. From this distinction, Durkheim's work offers an implicit critique of the ideology of egalitarianism - income redistributions and equality of opportunity for, although it may militate against 'egoistic' social divisions, far from ending 'anomie', where "self-interest striving has been raised to social ends" (Horton, 1964) 'anomie' is increased. Rather what is required, in Durkheim's view, is a 'moral' regeneration and a fundamental change in the nature of social relationships.

Clearly there are important parallels here with Marxist theory's emphasis on the necessity for a change in consciousness, as well as economic relations, as the precursor of a genuinely socialist society. Nevertheless Durkheim's preoccupation with the problem of social order does not recognise the particular economic relations of capitalism and the separation of capital and labour as determining features of the problem. Durkheim is not specifically concerned with class struggle and what he regarded, albeit mistakenly, as the 'abnormal form' of the capitalist society which formed the context of his writing. This critique is well-made by O'Connor (1980):
"Although he tries to find the basis for solidarity outside of struggle in effect he states the conditions of unity, solidarity and some would add, morality within struggle ... Under capitalism, the social division of labour is subsumed within the industrial division of labour; tendencies towards solidarity give way to conflict tendencies; hence the fact that under capitalism his 'abnormal forms' of social relationships are really normal forms ... what is normal today in the advanced capitalist world is not the end of exploitation or even redistribution or 'equal opportunity' but rather more social regulations; more ideologies of integration; more crisis management." (p. 62, 67).

Despite its over-optimistic view of the short-lived future for capitalism, Durkheim's work provides important insights into the basis for social order and particularly the contribution schooling has to make. Later writers, such as Bernstein and D. Hargreaves, who have built on the work of Durkheim, have reinforced Durkheim's own emphasis on studying the basis of social order, even if, like him, they have largely chosen to leave on one side how far the problems identified are fundamentally economic in origin, or, alternatively, are necessarily associated with the social characteristics of industrial society per se.

In seeking to understand the associated question of the origins and significance of assessment as a social and educational characteristic, this Durkheimian emphasis is likewise valuable. In Chapter Two it was suggested that the institution of formal evaluation procedures within education was directly instrumental in rationalising educational provision into a system and, in particular, emphasised three themes which became dominant in the provision of schooling, namely the attestation of competence (including the rationalisation of syllabus content), the regulation of competition, and provision for individual and systemic control. The first two themes may readily be associated with the instrumental role of education in providing and selecting individuals for specific slots in the division of labour. The third, control, is associated with the expressive order. This control may be mediated
through one or more of the following: the apparently objective testing of individual potential (intelligence tests), assessing individual performance (e.g. continuous assessment, guidance and examinations), the evaluation of teaching or school performance (inspection and accountability) and the evaluation of the system and performance as a whole (national monitoring).

The operation of these forms of control depends upon the dominance and consequent legitimacy of an individualist rationality of personal talent, personal responsibility, personal endeavour, and personal reward. It is the unquestioned acceptance of the individualist ethos (Mills, 1979) which permits social integration and control to be mediated in this way since such judgements and their more or less pleasant consequences are seen, nevertheless to be a legitimate, rational basis for the inequalities associated with a division of labour. Thus assessment plays a central role in making the education system responsive to larger social pressures, and it also plays an equally important role in helping to minimise the effects of the contradiction between the instrumental and expressive functions of education by providing for the legitimation of the necessary inequalities.

This contradiction is that between the training and allocation of people for different jobs (both in terms of the requisite skills and knowledge and in terms of appropriate personal expectations and behaviour) and the need for social integration to be maintained despite a hierarchical division of labour and diverse pressures towards individualism (Durkheim, 1947). Both these aspects of school functioning - the 'instrumental' and the 'expressive' are informed by the dominant individualist rationality.

To explain how this change came about, Durkheim goes back to the major historical transformations which immediately preceded
industrialisation. To begin with, Durkheim (1947) protests that:

"Even the most cursory historical survey is enough to make us realise that degrees and examinations are of relatively recent origin; there was nothing equivalent in classical antiquity ... the word and the thing only appear in the Middle Ages with the university" (p. 126)

The explanation Durkheim offers for this invention is that the system of degrees and examinations derives from the corporate organisation of educational provision. He suggests that the existing feudal model of the series of initiations or stages which must be gone through before penetrating to the heart of any organisation - such as page, squire and bachelor before becoming a fully-armed knight - was a natural model for educational 'stages' to be introduced once the teachers, "instead of teaching separately, formed themselves into a corporation with a sense of its own identity and governed by communal laws" (p. 130). That is to say, the advent of certification depended on the institutionalisation of education in the form of schools and colleges. From this it was but a short step to the institution of some organised course of study or curriculum (see Hamilton, 1983).

At this stage the function of assessment was almost entirely ritualistic, a 'rite de passage' (as described in Chapter Two) modelled on traditional concepts of initiation which served the purpose of demarcating those who had reached a level of scholarship and commitment which justified their entry to the next level. The examination itself may be seen purely in terms of legitimation - a public relations exercise which confirmed a selection which had already been undertaken, informally, by the teacher. But if the university was to keep this manifestation of its corporate existence almost entirely unchanged in its essential structure until the present day, one element was to change fundamentally the use of assessment for motivating and controlling students.
Durkheim describes the situation of the young arts student in the Middle Ages who at between 13 and 15 years of age was accorded almost complete freedom from supervision or exhortation. This was a system of education which “endured several centuries, which excited intellectual life throughout Europe and maintained it at a particularly high level of intensity and in which, nevertheless, such artificial educational devices (competitions, tests and periodical formal rewards) were unknown" (p. 160)

“We are so accustomed to believing that emulation is the essential motivating force in academic life, that we cannot easily imagine how a school could exist which did not have a carefully worked out system of graduated awards in order to keep the enthusiasm of pupils perpetually alive. Good marks, solemn statements of satisfactory performance, distinctions, competition essays, prizegivings: all these seem to us, in differing degrees, the necessary accompaniment to any sound educational system. The system that operated in France and indeed in Europe, until the sixteenth century, was characterised by the surprising fact that there were no rewards at all from success in examinations. What is more, any candidate who had assiduously and conscientiously followed the course of studies was certain of success.” (Durkheim, 1947, p. 159)

Until the end of the 15th century, pupils were treated like autonomous adults. Then, in France at least, the status of pupils gradually changed. They became minors, shut off from the world in educational institutions in which they were powerless to resist the authority of those put in to teach and regulate them. Although the timing of this process was particular to the educational history of France, the link between the advent of institutionalised education organised around substantial, monastic-style disciplinary powers, and the advent of educational assessment is a more general one. "Academic discipline implies a system of rewards no less than a system of punishment" (Durkheim, 1947, p. 159).11

Nowhere was this more clearly seen than in the educational practices of the Jesuits from the mid sixteenth century. The Jesuits placed equal
emphasis on the power of competition.

"Not only were they the first to organise the competitive system in the colleges but they also developed it to a point of greater intensity than it has ever subsequently known ..." 

"Academic work involved a kind of perpetual hand-to-hand combat. Camp challenged camp, group struggled with group, supervised one another, corrected one another and took one another to task. It was thanks to this division of labour between the teacher and the pupils, that one teacher was able without much difficulty to run classes which sometimes numbered as many as 200-300 pupils. In addition to such methods of chronically recurring competition there were intermittent competitions too numerous to enumerate ... Thus an infinite wealth of devices maintained the self-esteem of pupils in a constant state of extreme excitation." (p. 261)

One effect of this policy, Durkheim suggests, was that the genuinely intensive activity which it fostered was flawed by being expended on the superficial rather than the profound, still a major criticism of the effect of exam-motivated learning.

The reason for this sudden shift from the extreme of no assessment to that of extreme competition, Durkheim suggests, was the advent of individual self-consciousness that characterised the Renaissance. Thus education too had to become individualised, no longer a uniform and homogeneous activity, the teacher must get to know pupils and be able to provide differentially according to their diverse needs. In the same way, "the individual cannot be motivated or trained to act in the same way, as an amorphous crowd, he must be convinced and moved by considerations which are specifically appropriate to him" - notably, competition.

"It is no accident that competition becomes more lively and plays a more substantial role in society as the movement towards individualisation becomes more advanced. Since the moral organisation of the school must reflect that of civil society, since the methods which are applied to the child cannot differ in essence from those which, later on, will be applied to the man, it is clear that the processes of the medieval disciplinary system could not survive; it is clear that
discipline had to become more personal and take
greater account of individual feelings and
consequently allow for a degree of competitiveness."
(Durkheim, 1947, p. 264)

Thus not only did the institution of formal assessment procedures
encourage the growth of individual competitiveness in education, it also
helped to change the quality of the teacher-pupil relations to one which
emphasised a more personal, 'formative-evaluation' in teaching in place
of the older more impersonal style.

Durkheim's analysis evokes an important general theme in this thesis
that it is the apparently benign and desirable individualistic emphasis
in assessment which also embodies new, more intrusive modes of 'surveillance'
and hence social control. Particularly significant, it will be argued,
is the political dimension to such assessment, and the way in which such
procedures covertly delineate a particular set of values. The literature
on classroom assessment, whilst technically less sophisticated than that
of psychometrics as a whole, embodies the same unquestioning commitment
to the desirability of identifying individual characteristics. 13

If Durkheim's analysis is more generally applicable than just to
French history alone, it is possible to argue that the various
ideologies of schooling that have developed - the developmental, child-centred
the moral, and the meritocratic (Hargreaves, 1979) - are all options
within an individualist rationality which emphasises personal needs,
personal responsibility and personal reward. At the present time it is
possible to identify a further stage in the development of this mode of
control in attempts to 'personalise' assessment still further by blurring
the formative-summative divide. The tendency for assessments to become
more comprehensive, and continuous, diagnostic in orientation and
sometimes even negotiated between teacher and pupil, has been interpreted
by Bernstein (1977) as part of a new, more pervasive basis for 'invisible'
control. Indeed many of the major themes of Durkeim's work on the relationship between schooling and society are taken up in Bernstein's analysis of educational codes.

Invisible Control

Bernstein is one of the very few sociologists of education who has attempted to conceptualise the relationship between the constant requirements of education systems in capitalist societies and the particular variations in the way in which those requirements are fulfilled in particular national systems. In a now well-known quotation, Bernstein asserts:

"How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. From this point of view, differences within and change in the organisation, transmission and evaluation of educational knowledge should be a major area of sociological interest."

(Bernstein, 1977, p. 55)

The Durkheimian echo in this quotation is not accidental. Bernstein is preoccupied with questions of social order, social control and social reproduction. He sees the education system as a major determinant of both the strength and the nature of that order in that it regulates (a) the kind of worker produced (with all that that implies for economic efficiency and industrial relations), (b) the kind of social integration upon which social order will be based, and (c) which individuals will accede to positions of power and privilege (i.e. control). Implicit in his theories is the need for the circle of control to be made complete in that society must possess the means of determining and controlling the education system because it is to a great extent determined and controlled by it. Taken together the papers on 'classification and framing' and on 'visible and invisible pedagogies' (Bernstein, 1977)
make it clear that 'control' is not being taken in a Durkheimian, structural-functionalist sense, although Durkheim's categories of social order are used. Rather the education system is seen as working in the interests of particular, dominant class groups. It accomplishes this by being slow to change from traditional modes of enshrining privilege (e.g. the collection code), but at the same time incorporating new control techniques which allow the education system to respond to new social and economic conditions or to establish its legitimacy (public confidence) if the inequalities inherent in it are likely to become too glaring. Thus, as Chapter Two sets out, the pressure of population, the values of traditional humanism, the requirements of democratic equality and the needs of a sophisticated industrial economy (OECD, 1971) are currently bringing about international pressure for educational change. Particularly notable has been a trend towards the structural reorganisation of schools, the abolition of internal school divisions, the institution of a common curriculum and the democratisation of assessment procedures (Neave, 1980). All these dimensions of change involve a breaking-down of educational barriers in favour of a more flexible, open and democratic basis for educational competition. Assessment is central to such changes, for the shift in the basis of social order that Bernstein identifies as being reflected in such policy developments is integrally bound up with the way in which educational assessment procedures represent the changing characteristics and requirements of the social context within the provision and process of schooling.

Employing Durkheim's categories of social order, Bernstein identifies a tendency in contemporary society for there to be a transition from a social and economic order based on overt mechanical solidarity and covert organic solidarity to one of overt organic solidarity and covert mechanical
solidarity. The outward signs of this change in education systems are the current trend towards invisible pedagogies and integrated codes, the latter being defined as a movement towards weak classification and weak framing. The reason for this trend, Bernstein argues, is, on the one hand, developments in technology which have given rise to the need for a more flexible, inner-directed labour force (which may be envisaged as the product of an education system which develops pupil rather than teacher control of learning and seeks to inhibit the development of specific subject identities). On the other hand, such a development, Bernstein argues, may challenge society's basic classifications and frames (for example, assumptions about job identities, authority structures and status) and therefore its structures of power and principles of social control (which of course includes social reproduction). He suggests that if the integrated code is successful - if in producing its less specialised outputs it is successful in perpetrating effectively and implicitly an ideology which is explicit, elaborated and closed - then order based on mechanical solidarity will follow. This is exactly the same situation as that facing a team of teachers seeking to implement an integrated course in a school in which the traditional standards and controls provided by individual subjects have disappeared and hence the curriculum can only be successful to the extent that the mechanical solidarity of a common ideology and situation is adhered to by the teachers concerned. If integrated codes are not 'successful', Bernstein suggests, social order, in all its forms is immediately made problematic.

Associated with this trend, Bernstein identifies the rise of a 'new middle class' who depend upon the education system to perpetuate their status and control. For them, the need for personal organic solidarity has increased with an increasingly complex division of labour. The strength of the 'new middle class' dependence on its symbolic and
cultural control of the education system for perpetuating its status has meant a shift in the major locus of social reproduction from that of the family to the school. Bernstein argues that what is and will be increasingly found in schools is an integrated code/invisible pedagogy in primary schools - that is in the stage of mass education - but an increasingly distinct separation into visible pedagogy and collection codes in the avenues of the secondary school leading to middle class positions and a continuation of ин i ble pedagogies and integrated codes for the working class-oriented curricula and children. He argues that the type of code transmitted by the university dominates the education system and that this is unlikely to be changed in its organisational structure. He further argues that the collection code must predominate since it is the basis of existing social reproduction and to change it would involve changing the basis of culture in privatised class relations. The present system will both ensure the production of the two different kinds of worker required in the production system - the undifferentiated but committed and controlled worker and the self-consciously committed supervisory and service worker of whom differentiated skills are required.  

Associated with this, Bernstein suggests, drawing on his previous work on language codes and family socialisation patterns, is the argument that the child-rearing practices of the middle class prepare their children to be both better able to cope with invisible pedagogies and later on, collection codes because both are far removed from working class modes of relation, symbolic meanings, and understandings of education.  

A related and important point in this discussion of changes in curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation is the balance between the overt and hidden curriculum in social control and reproduction. In the overt curriculum, where a collection code operates, considerable differences
in pedagogy and evaluation are permissible because the limits of curricula and standards are so clearly set. Where such constraints do not operate, there may well have to be more explicit attempts to make content and standards defined and homogeneous if order is to be maintained. This then is the variability at the level of the overt curriculum.

Equally, however, the hidden curriculum, as mediated by both pedagogy and evaluation, varies in content significantly between visible and invisible pedagogies and collection and integrated codes. In being so much more pervasive in the latter two educational settings, and in emphasising different qualities, it may be seen as providing that extra degree of control lost in the overt transition to apparently more open and flexible curricula and pedagogy. Thus the balance between the hidden and overt curriculum in relation to control is likely to be significant in determining social reproduction and social order.

Most of this analysis offered by Bernstein, in 'Class, Codes and Control', Volume III, is theoretical. The exception is his discussion of different forms of the collection code itself in which he compares the non-specialised, subject-based 'collection' code of most European education systems with their strong classification and very strong framing with the relatively weaker framing but exceptionally strong classification of the English collection code. Bernstein argues that the key concept of the European collection code is discipline - learning to work within a received frame which is only relaxed when a pupil has progressed sufficiently far upon the academic path to be able to show those signs of successful socialisation which refute any fear that he may challenge the existing order. Thus, he suggests, following Durkheim once more, the European form of the collection code is rigidly differentiating, hierarchical in character and highly resistant to change. Bernstein's argument in this respect provides an interesting gloss on the work of
Foucault, reviewed later in this chapter, who, writing within the French tradition, is preoccupied with the concept of discipline.

By contrast, Bernstein suggests, in England (within the constraints of the public examination system, which are major) the heads of schools and colleges have a relatively wide range of discretion over the organisation and transmission of knowledge. He suggests that to produce widespread change in Britain would require the co-operation of hundreds of schools. It is important to recognise in this respect though one of the central themes of this thesis, that changes in organisation may not necessarily effect any real change in the educational code. Bernstein also reinforces the point already argued in Chapter Two, that centralisation and decentralisation do not in themselves imply a more or less fertile basis for change.

Little of the foregoing relates explicitly to assessment, since little of Bernstein's work is directly concerned with evaluation, but his emphasis on the inter-relationship of curriculum and pedagogy - of classification and frame is nevertheless highly relevant. Although not producing a concept equivalent to classification and frame for his third message system - 'evaluation' - there are many references to changes in such procedures associated with the shift from visible to invisible pedagogies and from collection to integrated codes. Fundamentally, Bernstein argues, there has been a change from overt to covert assessment and from specific to diffuse evaluation criteria as set out in Chapter Two. In visible pedagogy, the 'objective grid' for evaluation is based on clear criteria, delicate measurement and standardisation which can allow comparison between schools so that pupil, parent and teacher can all' make an apparently objective assessment of a child's progress. This very objectivity, this recourse to scientific rationality, lends to the assessment a legitimacy which makes it hard to refute.
(Outstanding in this respect are of course intelligence tests and public examinations.)

In invisible pedagogies, evaluation procedures are multiple, diffuse and not easily subject to apparently precise measurement so that it becomes difficult to compare pupils or schools. The tendency of invisible pedagogy to be associated with weak classification and framing means that there are few traditional criteria for evaluation, and there is little standardisation of curriculum content or pedagogy between teachers and schools. Thus assessment comes to be part of the pervasive and private personal relationship between teacher and taught. Bernstein suggests that in invisible pedagogies, assessment will be in terms of those dispositions of a child which become candidates for labelling by a teacher and given that in such visible pedagogies, the attention of the child is focused on the teacher, the teacher will tend to compare children in terms of motivation and interest, attentiveness, co-operation, persistence and carefulness. The judgements will usually be short, stereotyped, unexplicated and public. By contrast, the invisible pedagogy is likely to be associated with a dossier covering a wide variety of the child's internal processes and outer acts and the teacher's explanation of the relationship between the two. Not only does this latter approach allow a much more subtle and pervasive discrimination and control, it makes assessment harder to challenge and hence raises the teacher's power. The current emphasis in literature concerned with classroom assessment certainly seems to support this argument (see, for example, Black and Broadfoot, 1982; Cliff and Imrie, 1982).

Bernstein's analysis was made before the current fashion for the concept of accountability and this is evident in his writing since he does not draw out the implications that his analysis of invisible pedagogy and its accompanied informal assessment is likely to have for
maintaining confidence in the education system as a form of control and legitimization. It is clear from English and American experience that trends in the 1950s and '60s towards invisible pedagogies in basic schooling together with the decline or abolition of the external control exerted by public assessment procedures has been a direct source of calls for more overt measures of accountability (control). In England at least, such measures have helped to restore the legitimacy of more traditional educational transmissions, in Bernstein's terms: strong classification, strong framing, visible pedagogy and formal, overt assessment.  

It is at this point that the shortcomings of Bernstein's analysis become apparent in that it only relates to the one-dimensional perspective of developments in the mode of production and in the nature of the late capitalist state. It does not relate to the oscillations, the checks and balances which take place within this on-going development which are the price of popular legitimation and the manifestation of the basic contradiction of the educational site between the collectivist discourse of the economy and the individualist discourse of the state. The most cursory of studies of contemporary educational developments in two countries which Bernstein himself identifies in his analysis - England and France - reveals that whilst elements of Bernstein's predictions are certainly manifest (notably with regard to evaluation), any attempt to identify a uni-dimensional trend or to interpret current policy changes merely in terms of social control would be a grossly over-simplified and over-deterministic explanation of the diverse and complex, and at least partly autonomous, interaction within the education system.

In his more recent work, Bernstein (1982) has revised his theory to associate weak classification and weak framing with economic expansion, strong classification and strong framing with economic contraction. This
suggests that Bernstein's analysis is now more in line with current 'crisis' theory in associating educational codes with changes in the legitimating context rather than in the mode of production itself.

The inadequacies of Bernstein's otherwise highly perceptive and important theory of educational codes is an example of the tendency discussed in Chapter Four for sociological theory not to pay sufficient attention to empirical reality and to generalise from theory to substantive reality rather than the other way round or indeed seeking a reflexive relationship between the two. It is also arguable however that the problems are partly due to his giving insufficient weight to his third message system, 'evaluation', which comes over in his analysis as an essentially determined system. In fact, there is a strong indication from contemporary evidence that because assessment procedures are so closely bound up with the legitimization of particular educational practices, because they are the overt means of communication from schools to society, and to a greater or lesser extent in different societies, the covert means of that society's response in the form of control, assessment procedures may well be the system that determines curriculum and pedagogy and hence, social reproduction.

As Dale (1979) argues, evaluation must be regarded as an epistemologically and conceptually separate category since the nature of assessment procedures precludes certain kinds of curriculum and pedagogy and raises the status of others. Because it is central to both the expressive and the instrumental order, it is crucial to the process of legitimation and thus, ultimately, determining. This argument hinges upon the issue of evaluative criteria - what are the canons of desirable educational performance and where do they come from? The traditional source of such criteria as manifest in public examinations and intelligence tests was discussed in some detail in Chapter Two.
As Bernstein suggests, "The public examination system is based upon a visible pedagogy as it is realised through strong classification and strong frames" (P. 98). As such it must be regarded as the mediator of 'symbolic property' - educational goods exchangeable in the educational market. "Knowledge under collection is private property with its own power structure and market situation" (p. 97) (the traditional order of capitalism which still retains ideological legitimacy). At the present time, however, this traditional source is being eroded. Where there is weak classification and framing, there must be weak criteria of evaluation (i.e. very much more ad hoc and lacking the external legitimation provided by subject disciplines or external control over aspects of pedagogy). In this situation "neither teacher nor taught have any means to consider the significance of what is learned, nor any means to judge the pedagogy" (p. 108). Perhaps more significantly, the lack of a yardstick applies to institutions too, and even to the system as a whole.

The significance of this issue of the nature and origin of evaluative criteria has already been touched on in Chapter Two, where it was suggested that those who are in a position to define such criteria are also in a position to regulate entry to the elite and so provide for social reproduction. The change from narrow, academic, externally-imposed certification procedures towards broader, more continuous teacher-based certification procedures that was described in that chapter means that the criteria of successful performance are increasingly left to teachers to decide. Even where such criteria are externally agreed, as is still often the case, the breadth of such assessments is likely to make any effective moderation of the application of the criteria almost impossible, leaving teachers very significant power in determining life chances.
But although this increased power of teachers to identify evaluative criteria is likely to prove of considerable significance, the power relations involved in the definition of such criteria are very complex and go considerably beyond any simple dualism involving central government and teachers. That Bernstein himself has recognised both the significance of the issue and its extreme complexity is reflected in his recent work on 'Codes, modalities and the process of cultural reproduction' (Bernstein, 1982) in which Bernstein tries to provide a model for the highly complex and reflexive articulation between central government rhetoric, actual and perceived constraints and professional ideology in the formulation of educational 'modalities'. Bernstein has attempted to conceptualise what he terms the 'discourse of education' in terms of the 'primary' context, "where specialised discourses are developed, modified or changed" and the 'secondary' context where various types of educational agencies engage in the "selective reproduction of educational discourse" (p. 351). Such discourse, he argues, relates the context for primary contextualising - that is, the "positions, relations and practices arising out of production" itself with the recontextualising involved in the generation of "pedagogic theory, research and practice" (p. 351).

Although essentially a theoretically-derived analysis, Bernstein's argument here usefully expresses the idea of several interlocking, if not concentric arenas of social action through which the changing exigencies of the social and economic order are successively translated and mediated in a process which culminates in providing the context and rationale for classroom practice itself.

Assessment procedures which provide the language of accountability are a vital element in this reflexive process, since the assumptions and the priorities they ensure may be regarded as the code which is translated
into the appropriate forms of discourse at each stage of the recontextualisation. How this process actually works in practice is a highly complex, empirical question which resurrects the theme of this thesis, namely that the fundamental role of assessment procedures in advanced industrial societies is a constant but that the institutional expression of that role will vary with the social context.

The extent to which such variations are essentially determined - the different institutional mediations of a common economic order - and the extent to which such variations represent real differences in the actual content of educational messages is again an empirical question. That is to say, using a conceptual distinction discussed at greater length in Chapter Four, are the apparent differences in the organisation and provision of education systems of different capitalist societies simply reflections of different instrumental legitimating ideologies or are they at least to some extent reflections of differences at the level of the expressive order itself - the fundamental value systems of each society?

Part of the answer to this question is embodied in the rationale for the move towards more 'invisible' evaluation - the increasing difficulty of identifying educational objectives and hence, criteria of achievement, which will command support from all sections of the community at a time when the domination of liberal democratic principles has made at least the appearance of such support essential. The conflict of aims which has always been implicit in educational provision between the 'old humanists', 'new industrialists', 'public educators' and 'state bureaucrats' (Salter and Tapper, 1981) has recently been greatly exacerbated by economic recession, youth unemployment, technological change and other, equally fundamental, changes in the social order. The ensuing 'crisis' is a major theme in the contemporary sociology of
Following Habermas and Marcuse, among others, it may be argued that the 'crisis' is largely kept in check and social control maintained by the elevation of the pursuit of rationality - always a characteristic of industrial society - from being merely the means of providing for efficient social organisation (the instrumental ideology) to being the end itself (the expressive ideology). There is considerable disagreement among sociologists as to whether this trend is but one element in the hegemonic domination of a particular class and is thus still part of the instrumental order, or whether the growth of scientism and technical rationality has been such as to render increasingly anachronistic traditional definitions of class struggle. The changes currently taking place in assessment procedures strongly support this latter argument which is taken up in detail in Chapter Seven. Before proceeding to such a substantive analysis, however, it is necessary to clarify the general issues involved by identifying one final theme in this review of educational assessment in industrial society, that of technological rationality.

Rationality and Legitimation

This emphasis on the form of social life and its significance for social control is dealt with at length in the writing of the German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas. Although some kind of distinction between the 'instrumental' order (normally economic) and the expressive (normally social) order is common to a wide range of sociological theory from both conflict and functionalist perspectives\[^1\] Habermas' distinction between the 'practical' (praktisch) and the 'purposive rational' (zweckrational) is particularly relevant to understanding the role of educational assessment.

Habermas defines the 'practical' as the basis for symbolic
interaction within a normative order - the level of feeling, consciousness and volition and the associated level of ethics and politics (loosely, 'superstructure'). The 'purposive rational' is action which is directed towards specific purposes (loosely the economic and administrative 'base'). Habermas' 'zweckrational' links closely with Weber's concept of rationality which he used to define the form of capitalist economic activity, bourgeois private law and bureaucratic authority. Habermas (1968) argues that as social labour is increasingly industrialised, the criterion of rationality penetrates ever further into other areas of life through such developments as urbanisation and the technification of transport and communication. Indeed it may be argued that the growth of rationality has been of more importance than that of capitalist production itself and that the story of modern history is essentially that of the growth of bureaucracy: "apart from the opaque line of technological rationality, social life is drift and habituation" (Gerth and Wright-Mills, 1952, p. 165).

There is a clear Weberian legacy here. In 'The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation', Weber draws a distinction between the simple, undifferentiated society accepting the traditional authority which embodies prevailing social values; the charismatic leader able to inspire the kind of collective value consensus to which Durkheim attached such importance and thirdly, the 'routinisation' of that value consensus into institutional structures and practices. Weber argues that such an active 'moral consensus' is a temporary phenomenon inevitably to be replaced by the much more enduring and essentially impersonal authority of institutional process and bureaucracy (Weber, 1947).

But there is equally a Durkheimian legacy in Habermas' conception. Durkheim describes the gradual change from 'humanism' to 'realism' in the
content of education from the seventeenth century onwards, a change in
the legitimating ideology of education which has endured until the
present day. Humanism in one or other of its forms, Durkheim argues,
was the guiding spirit of all education in the Christian era until the
early seventeenth century, or in France, where change came later, the
eighteenth century. In this perspective, he suggests,

"Things were not intrinsically interesting: they were
not the object of a special study carried out for its
own sake, but were only dealt with in connection with
the human beliefs to which they had given rise. What
people wanted to know about was not how the real world
actually is but rather what human beings have said
about it ... Between the things of the world and the
things of the mind falls the text, which acts as a partial
veil between them" (Durkheim, 1947, p. 279)
(author's emphasis)

The traditional, humanist paradigm, Durkheim suggests, resisted the
incursion of any form of science, of finding out about the real world,
into the curriculum. "There even seems to be something contradictory
and profane about thus seeking to educate conscious man in the school of
nature and modelling the noblest part of reality upon the basest"(p. 283).
By contrast, the new perspective that Durkheim describes as being
inspired by writers such as Comenius is designed to create good and
useful citizens. It is 'realist', concerned with the study of things,
with preparing men for every possible action and giving them insight
into the world in which they live.

Although a complex and confused tradition, subject to many
re-interpretations and changes of emphasis, it is still essentially the
educational 'realism' of Comenius, Montaigne, Rousseau and others which
provides the contemporary legitimating rhetoric of 'scientism' which is
one of the major strands in the analysis of this thesis. At the same time,
as Durkheim suggests, the alternative, humanist tradition of the study of
man, his interpretations and his creations has never been eclipsed, the
struggle between the two perspectives constituting a persistent theme in educational theory and educational policy.

Whilst Durkheim clearly welcomes the advent of non-'bookish' learning which was so long struggling for a place in the French curriculum alongside the still definitive French scholarly tradition of abstract Cartesianism, he could not foresee, writing in 1904, just how pervasive this 'realism' would become in the years ahead; that with the accelerating technological development which allowed the products of such knowledge to intrude ever more prolifically into daily life, the old 'humanist' tradition might be in danger of being totally eclipsed. That the study, and by implication, mastery of 'things' should become the prevailing ideology, the study of the nature and essence of man and of the ultimate good correspondingly devalued.

Durkheim suggests that there is no precedent for such 'realist' philosophy. Whilst classical antiquity had a similar preoccupation with understanding the world, it was nevertheless fundamentally different to 'realist' ideology since it was the world itself that was taken to be divine, man's mind the profanation of the absolute and supreme creation. Christianity took the opposite view in locating man's consciousness, his soul, as the direct emanation of the divine. The world around him was thus profane and vile so that the gulf between the mind and the material world is equivalent to that between the spiritual and the temporal. But in the development of realism, it is the logic of knowledge generation itself which takes the place of earlier theist philosophies so providing for debates about values to be reduced to debates about techniques.

There are echoes of Durkheim's argument in Pirsig's popular classic, 'Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance' (Pirsig, 1976), in which he distinguishes between the technological, rational, scientifically-organised 'classical' mode and the imaginative, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive,
'romantic' mode - the motor cycle and the 'unlogic' of Zen. Pirsig too suggests that history may be in large part understood in terms of the shifting balance of power between these two cultures. Under the 'classical' mode - predominant since the Enlightenment and increasingly evident in the all pervasive influence of science and technology, the 'person' is excluded in favour of the abstract 'operator'; notions of 'good' and 'bad' are replaced by 'facts'; and the organisation of reality itself is an arbitrary but significant 'carving up' of perception. "The passion of contemporary society is to eliminate human unpredictability; it seeks to promote technological change not just to increase efficiency but also to control human beings - human judgement and initiative. Such technological control is achieved at the price of human warmth."  

Thus the progression from feudalism to capitalism and, in particular, from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism, may be seen as one in which the ever increasing power of technical-scientific rationality structures not only the ideology and organisation of production, but is more and more pervasive in the ideology and organisation of social life as a whole. Reimer (1971) puts the point with some force:  

"School has become the universal church of a technological society, incorporating and transmitting its ideology, shaping men's minds to accept this ideology and conferring social status according to its acceptance. There is no question of man's rejecting technology. The question is only one of adaptation, direction and control. The role of the school teacher in this process is a triple one combining the functions of umpire, judge and counsellor" (p. 19).  

Associated with the depoliticisation of social life and the rise of normative and hierarchical forms of control is a change in the basis of social divisions. Not only has the recent growth in technological determinism mystified the relationship between schools and the social relations of production (Finn, Grant and Johnson, 1977), Giddens (1980, p. 290) cites Ossowski's theory that the classical Marxist concept of
class can be no more usefully applied to the analysis of the class
structure of the Western societies which have moved far away from a
situation in which private property 'rules' than it can be to those
societies in which private property has been formally abolished.

"In situations where the political authorities can overtly
and effectively change the class structure; where the
privileges that are most essential for social status,
including that of a higher share in the national income,
are conferred by a decision of the political authorities;
where a large part or even the majority of the population
is included in a stratification of the type to be found
in a bureaucratic hierarchy - the nineteenth century
concept of class becomes more or less an anachronism,
and class conflicts give way to other forms of social
antagonism" (Ossowski, 1963, p. 184)

This point is also made by Marcuse (1964), who argues that it is the ideological
power of technocratic consciousness which now provides for an unacknowledged
political domination.

"In industrially advanced capitalist societies, domination
tends to lose its exploitative and oppressive character
and become 'rational' without political domination thereby
disappearing" (Marcuse, 1970, p. 16)

Thus it is not ownership, but control and participation which are central
determinants of class (Gintis, 1980). As Dahrendorf suggests in 'Class
and Class Conflict',

"in every social organisation some positions are entrusted
with a right to exercise control over other positions in
order to ensure effective coercion ... in other words ...
there is a differential distribution of power and authority
... this differential distribution of authority invariably
becomes the determining factor of systematic social
conflicts of a type that is germane to class conflicts
in the traditional (Marxian) sense of the term. The
structural origin of such group conflicts must be sought
in the arrangement of social roles endowed with expectations
of domination and subjection" (Dahrendorf; 1957, p. 165)

'Authority', following Weber, is defined as the legitimate right to
issue commands to others: 'domination' represents the possession of
these rights, while 'subjection' is exclusion from them. Within
'imperatively co-ordinated associations' - i.e. groups which possess a definite authority structure (e.g. the state, an industrial enterprise) - possession of, and exclusion from, authority generates opposing interests.

Thus the effect of the increasing dominance of bureaucratic forms of organisation in both base and superstructure is to discourage individuals from coalescing into interest groups. As institutional life becomes more hierarchically and pervasively ordered, social life becomes correspondingly fragmented. Not only, as Dahrendorf (1957) suggests, does the existence of high rates of social mobility serve to transform group conflict into individual competition, the effects of the extension of a hierarchical division of society renders it increasingly difficult for common interests and values to be identified as the basis for informal, democratic, collegial, that is horizontal forms of organisation (Bates, 1980a, c).

Habermas too suggests that in advanced capitalist societies, deprived and privileged groups no longer confront each other as socio-economic classes. Although class distinctions still persist in the form of subcultural traditions, life styles and attitudes, the scope for normative activity - political initiatives, debates about the nature of the 'good life', the ability for conscious action as a class, are increasingly drowned in the technocratic consciousness.

"Today's dominant, rather glassy background ideology, which makes a fetish of science, is more irresistible and farther-reaching than ideologies of the old type. For with the veiling of 'practical' problems it not only justifies a particular class's interest in domination and represses another class's partial need for emancipation, but affects the human's race's emancipatory interest as such ... technocratic consciousness reflects ... the repression of 'ethics' as such as a category of life." (Habermas, 1971, p. 112)

Or, as Marriott (1983) suggests,

"I fear (even more) that the rationalistic ideology has come to be spread so wide that Man himself is in danger of losing those features which so clearly distinguishes the human from other levels of being" (p. 5).
The legitimation for this process, according to Marcuse, is the constantly increasing productivity which keeps individuals living in increasing comfort.

"In this universe, technology also provides the great rationalisation of the unfreedom of man and demonstrates the 'technical' impossibility of being autonomous, of determining one's own life. For this unfreedom appears neither as irrational nor as political, but rather as submission to the technical apparatus which enlarges the comforts of life and increases the productivity of labour ..." (Marcuse, 1964).20

One example of this process is that:

"The liberation from the old poverty has been paid for by the expropriation of those precious intangibles (a shared response to a common predicament, a recognition of the universality of certain human needs) and the transformation of them into marketable commodities ... It is cruel enough to replace human consolations with a dependency on things that can be bought; but it is far worse to create such dependency and then deny people the means of expressing it. This is the essence of modernised poverty." (Seabrook, 1981, p. 9).

What is being described here then is the phenomenon of 'one-dimensional man' - the logical development of the process of individualisation and rationalisation associated with the development of capitalist economic relationships. As capitalism has itself become more and more institutionalised, into various kinds of state and corporate capitalism, its ideological legitimation has equally moved from the hegemonic domination of a particular class to the predominance of a common prevailing rationality per se, where science and technology are both base and superstructure. If earlier, ownership and control of the means of production were crucial to effective domination, increasingly it is the bureaucracies of production and of administration which have become both controlling and self-determining. In this sense, class is not a tangible entity but rather the form of relations between interests and individuals (Hogan, 1981). The rise of corporate capitalism has witnessed on the one
hand the growth of a new 'technocratic' middle class of bureaucrats and technicians and, on the other, a related shift in power from the legislative to the executive branches of government in the rise of corporate management styles (Gerth and Wright-Mills, 1952).

What started as a desire to understand and, hence, harness the material/natural world for the means of production is increasingly being extended by both technocrats and bureaucrats alike into an attempt to extend 'technical' control into the realm of social life itself. This takes the form of new and more pervasive techniques for the surveillance, monitoring and control of both individuals and organisations.

“The economic take-off of Western Europe began with techniques that made possible capital accumulation, methods for the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off, as the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power were superseded by a subtle calculated technology of subjection ... The establishment of a coded, formally egalitarian constitution supported by a system of representative government. But this 'Enlightenment' politics had its dark underside in the ever-proliferating network of disciplinary mechanisms ...” (Foucault, 1977, pp. 201)

Foucault (1975) suggests that the 'scientific method' of observation and evaluation was related to a growing post-enlightenment preoccupation with rules and normality. It was this tradition, heralded by earlier, more extreme attempts to impose a norm, as found for example in the Spanish Inquisition, which has also come to underpin the acceptability of making judgements on others in relation to prevailing norms. It is this aspect of scientism that has become a characteristic feature of contemporary, social institutions such as schools, prisons and hospitals. More significant even than the evaluation of individuals according to some arbitrary social standard, disguised in the language of apparently objective science, is the bureaucratic style of administration that this makes possible. In practice, this means that issues which are in reality
questions of alternative values are perceived as technical problems to which a 'right answer' - an 'optimum solution' exists waiting only to be discovered.

Structuralism and the Power Relations of Discourse

Foucault's structuralist perspective adds a new dimension to that of Durkheim, Weber and Marx. Durkheim has been criticised for not recognising the ideological basis of all societies; that even the 'chiefs' embodying the "collective sentiments of societies characterised by mechanical solidarity have their own material interests" (O'Connor, 1980, p. 67). Similarly, Weber's emphasis on impersonal, bureaucratic and in his view, benign authority to provide a legitimated use of power for the rational organisation of large-scale institutions becomes in Foucault's analysis an emphasis on coercive disciplinary mechanisms which embody the particular configuration of power relations at the heart of modern industrial society and in particular its capitalist manifestation.

Foucault's theories have much in common with the emphasis of Marxist theory on the crucial role of false consciousness in the ideological legitimation of capitalism. Foucault differs strongly, however, in his identification of unequal power relations as the inevitable feature of any social intercourse, rather than a particular manifestation of capitalism (Donald, 1981). Thus structuralism is located somewhere between the freedom of interactionism and the determinism of much macro theory.

"'Structuralism, then, involves deconstructing the subject'. Certainly the individual remains at the centre of the analysis: what he or she 'knows' is the starting point. However, the subject is not seen as a free agent, centre of his own self creating and conferring meanings on the social world around him. Rather the approach effectively 'deconstructs' the subject, explaining meanings in terms of a structure which lies beyond the individual's
comprehension and control ... this necessitates a perception of the individual act as a representation of the underlying structure ... (p. 6) ... a node through which language and the social formation speak ... " (p. 7) (Webster, 1981)

As such, the structuralist debate embodies the central dilemmas of sociology between action and system, voluntarism and determinism. As Grimshaw, Robson and Willis (1980, p. 74) argue, the need is for a 'post-structuralist' perspective in which structuralist reaction against an excessive voluntarism is balanced against their 'theoreticist' tendency to ignore the diversity of human behaviour.

One of the main strengths of Foucault's analysis in this respect is his commitment, like Weber, to empirical study and his attempts - such as his recently published biographical study of the 19th century French hermaphrodite, 'Herculine Barbin' - to map in detail the outcomes of specific human actions. His work defies neat categorisation, straddling the normal boundaries of history, philosophy, politics, sociology and the history of science. It has grown in significance recently partly in response to the vacuum created in France at least, by the discrediting of both Marxism and 'reformism'. There is no conspiracy theory in Foucault's work. His essentially phenomenological approach argues that all types of social form from sexuality to penology and the law, are relationships of power. He thus locates power, not in particular social structures, but as an effect of the operation of social relationships between groups and individuals. Hence power cannot be located as emanating from any particular point such as 'the State' since Foucault sees the state as a composite of a multiplicity of centres and mechanisms of 'micro-powers' such as hospitals, schools and factories. Thus the strategic aims of the state apparatus, in particular, must be understood in relation to these 'micro-powers'. Far from being the currency of the ideological superstructure in relation to the economic base, power and
the political transformations it informs "are not the result of some necessity, some imminent rationality but the responses to particular problems combining not in a totalised, centralised manner but by serial repercussion" (Sheridan, 1980, p. 218).

"Political power from this perspective, is not the possession of a social class, but a proliferating, anonymous force which cannot be attributed to the ideological self-expression of a unified economic group ... disseminated through many and varied discourses and institutions, power possesses no single determining centre and cannot be identified with a monolithic state apparatus which it largely outstrips ... his [Foucault's] work invites a radical rethinking of such notions as the neutrality of scientific truth and the progressive acquisition of knowledge through trial and error, just as it challenges us to re-examine the idea that political power is increasingly centralised within the state and that power emanates from ideological oppression and ownership of the means of production." (Hill, 1981, p. 7)

It is clear from this that in Foucault's view power and knowledge are two sides of the same process; knowledge cannot be 'pure' but is necessarily political, not because it has necessarily political consequences or utility but because "knowledge has its conditions of possibility in power relations ... knowledge is not true or false but legitimate or illegitimate for a particular set of power relations ..." (Sheridan, 1980, p. 20).

Thus Foucault's work challenges the very basis of modern rationality and science which have, according to this argument, the same ignoble origins as the lunatic asylum - one of Foucault's favourite subjects of study. People are only mad and in need of containment when they lack the power to assert the legitimacy of their version of reality, their knowledge over that currently prevailing.

In Foucault's work there is no conception of historical determinism or of 'false' as opposed to 'true' consciousness. Although for him, history is not simply the product of human interaction; it is nevertheless
incomprehensible except as the outcome of human projects. Clearly there are strong links here with Giddens' notion of 'structuration' (Giddens, 1976) in which he conceives structures as existing "out of time and space and impersonal for purposes of analysis but structures which (nevertheless) only exist as the reproduced conduct of situated actors with definite intentions and interests" (p. 127). Indeed Giddens' more recent work explicitly acknowledges the influence of Foucault. In Volume One of his 'Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism' (Giddens, 1981), Giddens pursued Foucault's emphasis on covert domination as the basis for social control, identifying two of Foucault's principal themes - the commodification of time and the use of surveillance as a form of social control as central in his own analysis of the characteristics of modern industrial society.  

In his 'Two Lectures' (Foucault, 1976), Foucault argues that one of the great inventions of bourgeois society and industrial capitalism is that of disciplinary power. This new type of power, he suggests, replaced the rule of law which was a conception derived from the monarchic pre-history of modern industrialised societies. This nevertheless continued to exist as a 'legitimating ideology'. This ideology of right, the organising principle of legal codes, persists as "a ritualised spectacle to pacify social conflict and to blur the effective history of political power" (Hill, 1981, p. 7). The perpetuation of these traditional forms allows a system of rights to be superimposed on a mechanism of discipline; to conceal it and the domination inherent in it; to "guarantee to everyone by virtue of the sovereignty of the state, the exercise of his proper sovereign rights" (Gordon, 1980, p. 106). The parallel with Marxist analyses of the role of the liberal discourse of the state (see, for example, Gintis, 1980) is evident here.
"Modern societies, for Foucault, function not as societies of repression, but as societies bent on normalisation and technical control ... power needs to be understood as a positive and productive resource, as a technology which has vitally transformed both ourselves and the world we inhabit. Power asserts itself creatively and produces, under such names as criminality or sexuality, new areas for scrutiny and control, new tactics and techniques for subjugation."

(Hill, 1981, p. 7)

In 'Discipline and Punish', Foucault describes the emergence in France of a whole range of new 'disciplines' between 1760 and 1840 as an army of technicians - warders, doctors (and later) psychiatrists and teachers, came to replace the executioner whose crude retribution is replaced by processes of assessment, diagnosis and normative judgement covering not only explicit offences but the "whole range of passions, instincts, drives and desires, infirmities and maladjustments" 25

(Sarup, 1982, p. 15).

These new tactics of disciplinary power involve two principal techniques. The first, 'hierarchical observation' involves a "permanent and continuous field of surveillance". The second, 'normalising judgement', involves the novel concept of a norm which serves as the basis for categorisation. The initial, negative role of these emerging disciplines which was simply to protect society rapidly gave way, Foucault suggests, to a more positive emphasis on 'socialisation' to reinforce the norm.

Foucault's analysis of the way in which 'delinquency' is 'neutralised' and deprived of any potential political content by the operation of total institutions such as prisons, has some common ground with the work of Durkheim who also stressed the significance of the public identification of deviation not so much for the protection of society but crucially for the reinforcement of social norms among the majority of the population. The two Frenchmen share a common interest
in the techniques evolved by industrial society to provide for the division of labour and, at the same time, for social order. They have both been criticised for not distinguishing adequately in their analysis between the specific social configurations of France (O'Connor, 1980; Sarup, 1982) and its more general applications.

Nevertheless, Foucault's preoccupation with the micro-processes of power as they emerge from the whole range of interactional discourse, separates him fundamentally from Durkheim's etatist and benign view. Although based on the specific micro-politics of France, Foucault's arguments offer insights which are generally applicable to societies undergoing an equivalent transformation of the social order to that of France. His description of the way in which the new 'disciplines' rapidly became attached to the new class power which developed with industrialisation and its central concern with reproducing national security, the power relations of the status quo through the maintenance of the expansion of production and the provision of a docile and appropriately skilled work force would appear to be valid for industrialising societies generally.

Crucially though again, Foucault rejects a Marxist analysis which locates power within the economic relations of capitalist society. He explains the emerging disciplinary mechanisms through the technical requirements of mass production in industrial society itself (Sarup, 1982, p. 24). His work is thus more in line with that of other contemporary scholars such as Marcuse, who, despite his Marxist orientation, emphasises the characteristics of social life under capitalism and the implications which transcend questions of class struggle and inequality. Thus Foucault argues, like Marcuse, that there is a :
"Proliferation of 'judges' who take the form of technical experts - teachers, doctors, psychologists, guards, social workers. As they operate in a sphere well protected from judicial or popular intervention, an antithesis has developed between discipline and democracy. Disciplinary power co-exists with democratic forms and undermines them from within. The roots of discipline are so deep in the organisation of modern society that the subordination of discipline to democratic control is increasingly difficult." (Sarup, 1982, p. 24)

It is this emphasis on the significance of the form of social life itself rather than on the specific balance of power relations, which makes Foucault's work so central to this thesis. More particularly, Foucault has himself identified educational examinations (i.e. assessment) as one of the more significant disciplinary mechanisms to have emerged. For Foucault what might appear to be only a harmless technique of knowledge is in fact, simultaneously, a technique of power. By combining each of the two principles of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, the examination becomes one of the major instruments for locating each individual a place in society. It both helps to establish the 'truth' and deploys the force to maintain it. The student is controlled through a system of 'micro-penalty', the constant giving of marks which constitutes a whole field of surveillance.

Foucault's own analysis of the nature of this discipline is drawn predominantly from French examples. He describes a school of drawing for tapestry apprentices in 1737 emphasising the detailed ordering of every minute of time, the regular, individual and carefully-graded exercises, the supervision, assessment and subsequent allocation of individuals. The essentially monastic model of elaborate and detailed prescriptions for curriculum and pedagogy for each minute of the day is, and has remained, characteristically French. Although it made a significant, if relatively brief appearance in England under Bell and Lancaster's tightly structured monitorial system England has not typically provided generalised rules for such detailed curriculum
structuring. The differences between the two countries, with regard to the commodification of time, stress the importance of identifying those other themes of control which are generalisable in Foucault's work.

In this respect, observation is much more critical than time. Drawing on Jeremy Bentham's architectural concept of 'The Panoptican', in which the isolated individual is constantly visible to a central authority, Foucault extends Bentham's idea that the perfection of surveillance makes the actual exercise of power unnecessary - the visible and unverifiable power will make the individual 'self controlling' as he is conscious of being observed, assessed and classified. There is again an echo of Marcuse in the following:

"Panopticism appears to be merely the solution of a technical problem; but through it a new type of society emerges, a society not of spectacle but of surveillance. This is done through the disciplines, those tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical. The disciplines characterise, classify, specialise; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchise individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate." (Sarup, 1982, p. 20)

Very few individuals, except perhaps those in some prisons or mental hospitals, are now subjected to an explicit 'panopticism'. Although 'open-plan' schools were, arguably, a brief resurgence of the panoptic idea which characterised much of 18th and 19th century school architecture, the panoptic function is now largely symbolic, carried out pervasively and efficiently with little real opposition not least by examinations and various other forms of assessment and accountability. As Foucault suggests, the age-based organisation of the school, the graded curriculum, the marks for performance produce an ensemble of compulsory alignments, some physical, some mental by means of which individuals replace each other in a space "marked off by aligned intervals" (Foucault, quoted by Sarup, 1982, p. 18). The examination
is the fixing, at once ritual and 'scientific', of individual differences.

Hoskin (1979) sets out in detail one example of how Foucault's theory may be applied to the empirical reality of the development of examinations in England. He suggests that the traditional 'transmission' model of western education offers no challenge to the prevailing rationality since in both England and France the most prestigious exams reinforce this 'banking' approach, that is, demonstrating the acquisition of established disciplines. As Bourdieu (1977) has so cogently set out in his discussion of cultural capital, the pinnacle of the French education system - the 'Agregation' - which is the most sought after teaching qualification and competitive examination is "the highest educational expression of the legitimate manner of using the legitimate culture" (p. 143). It rewards the reproduction of existing knowledge and forms of arguments. Hoskin suggests that this long-standing scholastic emphasis on rationality and authority became fused by the 18th century advent of the examination into one 'rational authority' which became the distinguishing characteristic of modern schooling. The advent of print and the explosion of knowledge was associated with the development of examinations based on individual questions, marks and syllabuses. The giving of marks for individual questions 32 constituted a major step towards establishing a mathematical model of reality, a step which was in Hoskin's view arguably as important as the invention of the alphabet in that "the science of the individual was now feasible, for the principle had now been articulated that a given 'quality' could be assigned a quantitative mark" (p. 144). It was therefore possible to weigh up the individual and compare him to others.
"Stricter evaluation, narrow specialisation and examination based on the principle of testable knowledge became the new parameters of undergraduate education. Gone was the sociable Georgian idea of a liberal education, and imperceptibly in its place was a new intellectualist ideal, what we now call proficiency or the acquisition of skills."
(McPherson, 1980, p. 145)

Closely following Foucault, Hoskin argues that the new technique of disciplinary power emerging from the fusion of traditional rationality and authority into 'rational authority' finds its archetypal form in the examination. It is the examination which lies at the heart of the control function of schooling. Equally it is clear that the principles of examination - quantitative, particularistic, pseudo-scientific evaluation for specific purposes, are not confined to education, their growth in that sphere being reflexively related to a developing 'rational authority' in industrial western society as a whole.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven pursue Foucault's concept of 'discipline' as embodied in educational assessment, and draw on the experiences of two quite different societies in an attempt to show the integral relationship of such practices to industrial society.

Industrial Society, Capitalism and Evaluation

The complex and wide-ranging analysis of this chapter has been directed at understanding some of the deepest societal characteristics that underpin the now widespread use of educational assessment procedures in all societies with mass education systems. An attempt has been made to understand the role of educational assessment in representing the demands of the instrumental order and of the prevailing ideological basis for social control.

Some questions necessarily remain unresolved. The intention has
been rather to draw, eclectically, on the common and relevant insights of often contradictory perspectives in addressing a specific question, rather than undertake the inevitably vain project of seeking to reconcile fundamental divisions in sociological perspective or, equally undesirably, to ignore many valuable insights in seeking to maintain the coherence of a unitary perspective.

Thus despite many conflicting perspectives, a number of central issues have emerged as the basis for an understanding of the growth of evaluation. These may be summarised as follows:

1) **individualism** - instrumental and expressive social functions are now organised on the basis of the individual. Thus both instrumental and expressive legitimating ideologies, the whole basis for social integration and control, are now defined in terms of the individual.

2) **rational authority** - traditional, coercive authority is replaced by a rational and impersonal (scientific) basis for hierarchical control. This authority increasingly takes the form of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement (i.e. evaluation) which, with the growing dominance of a technological rationality, the individual is increasingly powerless to resist.

3) **contradiction** - despite the carefully concealed power-relations underlying the institutions of rational authority, the fundamental irreconcilability between the need to provide for social integration (by 'buying' commitment, through economic growth, by 'moral socialisation', by the arguments of scientific rationality, or by disciplinary mechanisms) and the need to maintain inequality, leads to a continuing tension, not to say crisis, within capitalist society.
It is because educational assessment is central to all three of these characteristics of capitalist societies that it has become so central to contemporary social organisation. In education, as in other areas of social life, the advent of 'normalising judgement' makes possible the idea of fixed definitions of competence. This normalising judgement combines with the idea of 'hierarchical observation' to provide the 'rational authority' for competition and selection. The new 'panoptic' surveillance in which individuals learn to judge themselves as if some external eye was constantly monitoring their performance, encourages the internalisation of the evaluative criteria of those in power, and hence a new basis for social control. Competence, competition and control, as Durkheim (1947) so well illustrated in his description of Jesuit education, are the characteristic themes of the new disciplinary power which education provides in industrial societies.

As well as being central, assessment is also necessarily flexible as an allocation and legitimation technique. That this is so is best demonstrated by illustration from the wide range of empirical practice. Before turning to this part of the analysis, however, it is necessary to complement the foregoing general discussion of the social role of educational assessment with a conceptual analysis capable of addressing the issue of systemic variation. This is the subject of Chapter Four.
Notes to Chapter Three

1. 'Rationality' is here taken to refer to both forms of logic and ideology.

2. These terms embody a Marxist conceptualisation of the relationship between economic and social relations (see, for example, Williams, 1961).

3. Although some industrialising societies, such as Japan, retain a 'collectivist' rather than an 'individualist' orientation, in general, underneath this there is intense individualist competition provided for in what is now regarded as an excessively competitive educational system (TES, December 1983). As Weber points out in 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', there are major national differences in the impact of capitalism. The Japanese case usefully emphasises the point that whilst the provision of a rational means of allocating individuals to differential social roles and hence, educational assessment, is a necessary feature of an expanding division of labour, the precise way in which this process is organised will be specific to the societal context. Japan arguably still represents an extreme case of 'sponsored' mobility (Turner, 1960) in that once selected for elite educational institutions, the individual no longer needs to compete for status. After entry, such status comes from seniority.


6. Marshall (1982), p. 133, cites the examples of Italy, France, Spain and Portugal which had capitalism long before the Reformation and conversely, where ascetic Protestantism seems to have given no impetus to capitalist development in Switzerland, Scotland, Hungary and parts of the Netherlands.

7. This is comprehensively demonstrated in Margaret Archer's analysis of 'The Origins of Educational Systems', Sage, 1979.

8. Matthews (1980) argues that pre-capitalist society was also essentially pre-ideological society, the term 'ideology' being coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in 1795.

9. Hence the conservatism of the teaching profession identified by Durkheim and Bourdieu.

10. The three levels of the mediaeval French university - the Baccalaureat, the License and the Agregation are still essentially the same today nearly eighty years after Durkheim remarked upon this (Durkheim, 1947, p. 129).
11. The link with the ideas of another French writer - Foucault - are explicit here. Foucault's analysis of the increasing tendency of society to remove into institutions the criminal and the insane in order that they might be subject to hierarchical authority and normalising judgement strangely echoes Durkheim's analysis of changing social attitudes towards another only semi-socialised group - the young, who were at this time also increasingly subject to surveillance and enclosure.

12. For a description of the Jesuit system, see Durkheim, 1947, p. 260.

13. The title of Derek Rowntree's book, 'Assessing Students: how shall we know them?', is particularly revealing in this respect, but the tone is essentially similar in any of the standard works on classroom assessment techniques. See, for example, Dunn (1967), Jackson (1974), MacIntosh and Hale (1976), Schofield (1972), Summer (1982).

14. Recent educational policy initiatives to provide a greater measure of vocational training for lower-achieving pupils may be read in terms of this argument, notably the development of TVEI courses in schools (DES, Autumn 1982) and the growth of the MSC who in three years time will have a quarter of the budget for further educational provision. Commons Statement 1/2/84 and White Paper 'Training for Jobs', DES 1984.

15. It is important to note that it was the prevailing rhetoric, far more than the practices themselves, that changed - more traditional pedagogy now being supported by a legitimating ideology which is the product of recent years of recession and disquiet.

16. The trend towards graded-tests and grade-related criteria in England, even in the most novel assessment schemes such as the Oxford Certificate of Education Achievement initiative (OCEA) and the detailed curricular objectives laid down in France in the 'Code Soleil' suggest the issue is less the identification of criteria as such but their implementation.

17. See note 2 above.

18. The significance of this trend for social control - notably in the growth of corporate management styles is taken up explicitly in Chapter Seven.

19. Commentary on documentary on BBC 2, 5/1/84, '40 Minutes: Life in 1984'.

20. Quoted by Habermas (1971), p. 84. See also Schostak, 1983.


22. An interesting parallel with the context for Durkheim's work.

23. There are echoes here of Ivan Illich's concern with the effects on social life of total institutions such as schools and hospitals.
24. See also Giddens (1982), 'Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory', Macmillan, Basingstoke, Chapter 15.


27. Bell and Lancaster's monitorial system is described in Foucault (1977).


29. Foucault cites the example of the most gruesome public executions - the supplice, reserved for the greatest crime under the 'ancien regime' - regicide in which the poor victim was tortured in various ways before being hung, drawn and quartered. Foucault (1977), p. 3.

30. In some Victorian school buildings such as Greenock Academy in Scotland, elements of this panopticism are still visibly represented and in current use in the architectural design of a large central hall and an encircling gallery to allow for supervision.

31. The significance of such 'self-control' is discussed in Chapter Two in relation to accountability where it is argued that the exposure of teachers to both public and bureaucratic 'surveillance' is a great deal more effective in influencing how teachers set their own canons of moral and professional accountability than the more formal authority of a central bureaucracy.

32. Hoskin gives 1792 as the date when this practice was first instituted at Cambridge University on the advice of one of the moderators, William Farish, Oxford University reforms not beginning until 1800 with a more thorough oral examination and the institution of written examinations in 1807.
Chapter Three was concerned with the way in which assessment techniques have evolved in the education systems of advanced industrial societies to provide for the complex socialisation and training made necessary by a division of labour and the breakdown of the social homogeneity and traditions which had formerly provided the basis for social order and control. It is readily apparent, however, that despite institutional similarities, there are major differences in the provision and practice of education in such societies. At the level of educational process, there are different emphases in relation to both the form and content of the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. At the level of provision, too, there are differences in the organisation of educational institutions and in the power and associated budgetary structures which link central, local and institutional functioning.

As part of their central concern with the problem of social order, social scientists have long been preoccupied with tracing the relationship between education, the economy and social structure. Such analyses, Pusey (1980) suggests, have typically been couched at a general, abstract level which "confines itself to an extremely condensed, macro-level theoretical discussion which only very occasionally makes reference to concrete situations in particular nation states" (p. 45). Archer (1981a) takes the view that "the single most neglected question in the vast literature on education concerns is the educational system itself..." (p. 261); that is, "... the nationwide and differentiated collection of institutions devoted to formal education, whose overall control and supervision is at least partly governmental and whose component parts
and processes are related to one another" (Archer, 1979, p. 54). In particular, Archer suggests, "The defining characteristics of a state system are in it having both political and systemic aspects" (1981a, p. 261). Whilst the term education system is not necessarily synonymous with the national level - Fuerter (1982) for example distinguishes between micro, meso, macro and meta-systemic levels (loosely, institutional, regional, national and international)¹ - these are not strictly independent systems but more or less autonomous, interaction 'sites' of the practical outworking of national provision. Thus whilst in empirical terms they are an essential part of the conceptualisation of 'relative autonomy' (Hargreaves, 1983) they do not contribute to an analysis of educational provision between the state as the principal determining context for economic, political and social institutions and hence of cultural tradition and legitimating ideology. The questions which arise from this relationship, "Questions both of the origins of structural variations and of their consequences for educational effects and other social variables remain relatively unexplored" (Ramirez and Meyer, 1980, p. 380), and are the concern of this second theoretical chapter in which an attempt is made to draw up a conceptual framework on which to base an analysis of the relationship between specific social formations and the more general characteristics of education under capitalism as they are expressed in assessment practices.

Such an analysis is necessary, for two reasons. First, it avoids an over-deterministic perspective. It allows the particular events of national educational history such as the contemporary accountability movement in England to be interpreted as manifestations of more general developments in the contemporary social order but not subsumed within them, thereby retaining a vitally important voluntarist dimension in the analysis, a dimension which allows for the creative effects of the
interaction of individual actors. In so doing it also guards against the more obvious dangers of 'armchair theorising' and forms a rich inductive basis for examining and developing a more general analysis of the role of educational assessment in modern educational systems. These points are, once again, well made by Archer (1981b) - a leading exponent of this perspective in her criticism of the work of Green et al. (1980):

"imputation dispenses with analysis of social interaction and the interests actually salient in it at the time. For these are the real processes which drive the system - which are responsible for structuring it and for its re-structuration ... to deal only with abstract interests (e.g. parents seek the best for their child, the State has an interest in a minimum level of civil disobedience within the total population) prevents interests from a) ever being seen as vested interests in a particular structure that is firmly anchored in time and space and conditioned by that specific educational reality and b) as elements whose results depend exclusively upon interaction taking place in that context" (p. 213, original emphasis)

Two further points made by Archer are worthy of note at this point.
First, she suggests that such an over-theoretical perspective endows educational development with rationality and is artificially to absolve it of the accumulation of unintended consequences. This is what Davis (1961) refers to as "the unrecognised social consequences of an action as leading by their unrecognised effect ... to the continuous reinforcement of that action" (quoted in Edwards, 1980). Secondly, Archer takes issue with the use of terms such as 'the nation state' and 'the educational system' which are not defined, when her own work on the origins of education systems (Archer, 1979) shows clearly that systems emerge in different ways with important consequences for the role they play in articulating the activities of various power bases and interest groups within any one society.

Hargreaves (1982a) makes a similar point in his criticism of "'macro' level statements about dominant patterns of social relations, forms of
hegemony, features of the capitalist mode of production ... ambitious explanations of the nature and effects of capitalism in a search for 'deeper underlying forces' (Anyon, 1981) without in any way specifying how these broad social structural forces are filtered down to the school level...". What such theories, Hargreaves suggests, lack, is an extra political dimension - in particular an analysis of educational policy, the state and capitalism, as important providers of the context in which teachers and pupils do their work (p. 117). Indeed, this political dimension is much harder to ignore at times, like the present when educational contraction is making it more explicit (Dale, 1983).

In the light of these arguments, this chapter attempts to provide a theoretical basis to link the current and historical developments in educational provision in two such nation states with the more general analyses of Chapter Three. The aim in so doing is to substantiate the foregoing general, theoretical arguments about the centrality of an evaluative rationality whilst demonstrating that the institutional form of its expression may be very different.

Historical Precedents for Systemic Analysis

The neglect of comparative studies of the social context is a relatively recent phenomenon in the sociology of education. A succession of otherwise very different paradigms have helped to reinforce this neglect whether it be through the arid theorising of structural functionalism, the tendency to extreme relativism of the 'new sociology of education' and ethnography or the left-wing radicalism of the even more recent fashion for political economies. Thus Parson's (1951)'pattern variables' belong to no real society. In his later 'developmental' or 'evolutionary'works (see, for example, Parsons, 1966) Parsons writes as if societies as divergent as the hunting and gathering
groups of the Kalahari, on the one hand and the contemporary United States on the other, can be analysed using exactly the same conceptual, theoretical and explanatory framework (Marshall, 1982, p. 158). But the more recent and highly influential work of, for example, Willis (1977) or Bowles and Gintis (1976) can equally be criticised for not distinguishing adequately in empirical terms between analyses of the nature of education under capitalism in general and the detailed social worlds of particular groups or the specific educational arrangements of particular nation states.

In arguing against the essentially mechanistic model of the relationship between capitalism and education which Bowles and Gintis set out, Dale (1980) identifies the concept of 'relative autonomy' as a useful way of approaching the independent life of educational systems, that despite the constant demands that capitalism, patriarchy, racialism and tradition make upon education, they are not defining. In a later article Dale (1983) suggests that

"education systems are to be seen rather as the arenas, with their own boundaries and historical specificities, and housing their own sets of interests within which the separately and collectively contradictory sets of demands are mediated into educational practice" (p. 187)

The growing contemporary concern with the study of education systems (see, for example, Seidman, 1980; Laska, 1979; Arnove, 1980) echoes the earliest traditions of sociology. The ethnocentrism of recent decades would have found little favour with the 'founding fathers' of the discipline, who typically showed a much greater commitment to comparative social studies. Their concern was the induction of general theories from the very variety of empirical reality rather than the application of a hypothetico-deductive paradigm to a specific social world as is so often the case now.
Durkheim (1977) puts the point with some force:

"When one studies historically the way in which education systems have been formed and developed, it is apparent that they depend on religion, political organisation, the degree of scientific development, the state of industry etc. If one detaches them from all these historical causes, they become incomprehensible. Educational institutions are social institutions" (p. 42)

But the context for such developments is not confined to the nation state, as Wickham (1980) outlines, referring this time to the effect of broader international influences,

"it has proved difficult to relate abstract state theory to the concrete world of a particular national system. Rather the tendency has been to show how a particular education system relates to the requirements of 'the state' (these requirements being 'induced' in the process), the 'state' is thus taken as equivalent to the specific empirical reality of a particular nation state without adequate attention being paid to the role of particular foreign and domestic forces ... similar external influences will not have the same effects with different nation states ... the way that such forces are taken up and articulated with national interests will vary" (p. 322)

The significance of this difference is seen clearly in the work of Marx himself whose early work, notably 'The Communist Manifesto' (Marx and Engels, 1973) can be criticised for having no adequate discussion of the relationship between the economic and political aspects of class and the specific expression of such interests in the struggles of a particular society leaving, in Hall's (1980) words, "a gap through which the abstract error of a Lukacsean historicism constantly escapes" (p. 206). By contrast, in Marx' later discussion of the class struggles in France and in the Eighteenth Brumaire, Marx' detailed study of the specifics of a particular struggle convinced him of the existence of a degree of autonomy between political and economic spheres. He identified the "unrelenting application of 'determinations' which objective conditions
place over the political resolutions" (Hall, 1980, p. 229). A century later Althusser was to echo this same point,

"The capital-labour contradiction is never simple but always specified by the concrete forms and circumstances in which it is expressed. It is specified by the forms of the superstructure ... by the internal and external historical situation ... many of these phenomena deriving from the 'law of uneven development' in the Leninist sense" (Althusser, 1969).3

Still more recently, Whitty (1983) has again echoed this tradition in his criticism of the structuralist Marxist focus upon the reproductive effects of the articulation of economic, political and ideological instances' (p. 8), in suggesting that "theoretical issues cannot usefully be considered independently of studies of ideological practice within historically specific conditions of existence" (p. 8).

To establish the importance of such a perspective in which attempts are made to explain why particular educational practices emerge and are maintained (Edwards, 1980) does not itself suggest how this might be done. Any consideration of the relationship between general sociological insights and the substantive realities of a particular social world, raises in an acute form the central debate within sociology itself between determinism and voluntarism, structuralism and interactionism, system and action, macro and micro perspectives.4 "No easy or instant synthesis can be expected between the 'old' and the 'new' traditions; any possibility of synthesising them would involve creative work of considerable theoretical sophistication" (Archer, 1981a, p. 265). In recent years, there has been some progress in the sociology of education in the provision of conceptual frameworks that offer some mediation, between these perspectives - notably in concepts of 'resistance and social transformation' and 'relative autonomy'. It is the "struggling with abstract problems in relation to substantive areas of enquiry"
which is likely to provide the best basis for progress in this respect in revealing greater understanding of the determinants of social action. This point is reinforced by Hargreaves (1982b) who argues the necessity of reconciling the diversity of policy outcomes within ostensibly similar economic and political conditions. Nevertheless the articulation of abstract with concrete remains a central dilemma.

Among neo-Marxists in particular there are major disagreements regarding the interpretation of Marx's central metaphor of 'base and superstructure'. The issue here boils down to one of establishing precisely what determines what, how, and why. Marxist theory, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, offers at least two fundamentally different interpretations of the key term 'determine'. 'There is, on the one hand', he writes, 'the notion of an external cause which totally predicts or prefigures, indeed totally controls subsequent activity. But there is also ... a notion of determination as setting limits, exerting pressures.' Whereas earlier, more mechanistic Marxists tended to adhere to the former viewpoint, more recently it is the latter which has become fashionable. Nevertheless, the parameters of disagreement within even the 'limiting conditions' interpretation are still large, and currently include versions of idealism, structuralism, functionalism, culturalism, and a number of loosely related attempts to reconcile these and apply a sophisticated 'non-deterministic' Marxist analysis which accords due weight to 'consciousness' and 'agency', in addition to 'structure', to the study of empirical problems of both historical and contemporary relevance. There are, it seems, fundamental issues yet to be resolved. How 'autonomous' is 'relatively autonomous'?" (Marshall, 1982, p. 143)

There is an enormous literature on the relationship between action and system, a thorough exploration of which per se is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather the intention here is to discuss briefly those theories which are most concerned with the constituting and reconstituting of organisational structures and educational systems in particular within the dynamic articulation of major changes in the social context and the associated changes in individual consciousness and volition.
Archer (1981a) reviews the potential contribution of several major theoretical perspectives in this respect. She is not sanguine about the scope for systemic insights from the accumulation of ethnographies or other interactional studies - "about the utility of any hybrid combining the atomism of methodological empiricism with the episodic character of interpretive sociology" (p. 263). By contrast, she suggests, neo-Marxism has tended until recently to be over-deterministic and limited in its preoccupation with class struggle, undervaluing in so doing the independent role of the system per se and historical conjunctures. Parsonian functionalism is criticised for seeking to solve problems about institutional operations and origins by theoretical fiat. Although Archer gives a guarded welcome to the neo-functionalism of Merton, Gouldner and Etzioni among others, for giving far more weight to the interdependence, autonomy and consequent strain of different parts of the system, such theories still fail, in her view, to distinguish sufficiently between actors and institutions. Two later developments of functionalism - general systems theory and exchange theory - notably in the work of Blau, are by contrast much more positively evaluated by Archer. Their contribution to her own theoretical perspective is evident in the latter's central concern with exchange and bargaining, with the way in which interaction contributes to the formation of social structures and the question of the way in which the different structures of educational systems originated in different countries (Archer, 1981c).

Archer's highest praise however is reserved for Bernstein and Bourdieu as the most likely "harbinger(s) of a new synthesis" (Karabel and Halsey, 1977). Both afford theoretical importance to 'structure' as well as to 'action', "viewing the former as shaping the contexts in which the latter takes place and conditioning the objective interests and subjective outlooks of the actors involved" (Archer, 1981c). But still,
Archer suggests, both writers neglect the educational system as such. They ignore the relationship between the education system and the historical social context in which it operates. To ignore the major differences between systems in this respect, as Bernstein and Bourdieu do, is to assume that they have no independent effect, the result is that, as in the 'old' sociology of education,

"The system is just an administrative shell, in so far as it is anything more than the sum of component schools and colleges ... it does not selectively filter the demands of groups or interests to which education proves responsive. Instead the system is held to operate as a fully permeable membrane which can thus be by-passed when formulating the cultural transmission thesis" (Archer, 1981c, p. 266).

As set out in Chapter Three, Bernstein is concerned with how the power relationships created within the wider society influence the transmission agencies of schooling. The crucial relationship is that between school and society. That between system and society is of relatively little significance.

Bourdieu on the other hand is explicitly concerned with conceptualising the power relations between groups or classes as the basis for the 'symbolic violence' of schooling. Like Bernstein, he too has little to say about the processes by which such power relations are converted into cultural reproduction. Indeed Bourdieu is quite explicit in this rejection of the comparative and historical context, analysing education systems in terms of those basic functions which are not "reducible to the essentially historical search for the social conditions of the apparition of a particular educational system" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1976, p. 15). Thus, Archer (1981a) suggests, "in this theory there can be no variation in the relationship between education and society, variations in education systems thereby being reduced to the status of functional alternatives" (p. 267).

Although both Bernstein and Bourdieu assume the dominance
of a particular group or class, no explanation is offered of the interactive process by which such supremacy must have been achieved. The process of educational politics, struggle, negotiation and debate between rival interests anxious to influence the provision of education which is so evident in any empirical study of systemic functioning, is ignored - there is no struggle for educational control "power then operates as a passive conductor, perfect and without resistance, linking social domination to educational control" (Archer, 1981a, p. 267).

Instead, Archer argues that what is required is a "proper theory of educational politics within the context of the educational system [which] would provide a) a detailed specification of the processes producing educational change and stasis which are structured in different ways by different educational systems and b) a theory of the conditions under which different social groups can influence the prevailing definition of instruction through the above processes" (Archer, 1981a, p. 268).

In such a perspective, no relationship can be simply assumed; it must be both theoretically and empirically argued. In Archer's view, Bernstein is particularly open to criticism in this respect for trying to capture the basic principles of each 'code' by intuition rather than through any detailed, empirical study.

Thus it may be said that studies of the education system have suffered a relative neglect in recent decades during which the sociology of education has been preoccupied with the debate between system and action perspectives (Nieben and Peschar, 1980). Now, however, it is increasingly being recognised that there is a need for comparative sociological studies couched within a theoretical framework which is sensitive to both action and system, as these are related at institutional, national, and supra-national levels. Such studies must combine the best of the comparative education methodology (Holmes, 1982)
with its emphasis on empirical research and its refusal to countenance any unilateral transferability of concepts and institutions (Almond and Verba, 1963) between national systems with the powerful theoretical perspectives of sociology and the latter's insistence that an educational system must be understood as a dynamic whole which is substantively different from the sum of its component parts (Broadfoot, 1977a). This perspective is well summarised by Therborn (1978) who argues that the problems facing any particular state cannot be identified theoretically alone since they do not always appear in the same form and must be identified by detailed empirical analysis of each separate social formation.

"The ability of a particular bourgeoisie (or fraction thereof) to hold state power is ... structurally determined by : 1. the stage reached by capitalism in the society in which it functions; 2. the central or peripheral position, and the advanced or retarded stage of the capital it represents, as well as the expansion, crisis or contraction of international capitalism as a whole; 3. the manner in which its relations to feudalism and petty commodity production, as well as its own internal cleavages, have historically evolved and currently manifest themselves in the given constellation of forces; the international conjuncture facing the social formation - the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of the latter within the international configuration of harmonious and conflicting forces" (Therborn, 1978, p. 163, quoted in Dale, 1982).

Thus the state is simply "a type of formal organisation ... distinguished by its specific functions ... coercive defence, political governance (by supreme rule-making), administrative management (by rule-application) and judicial regulation of a given social formation ... a formally bounded system of structured processes within a global system of societal processes" (Therborn, 1978, p. 37).

Thus whilst analyses such as those of this thesis, which are couched in very general terms in an attempt to identify and account for the constant presence of assessment procedures in mass education systems
are necessary, to be adequate, such analyses must also be extended, conceptually and empirically, to take account of the detailed processes of systemic development. In particular, some attempt must be made to explain why individual societies have evolved different and, sometimes, what appear to be counter-productive procedures for achieving these same general goals. A model of educational politics is necessary to underpin the case-study material, presented in Chapters Five and Six, which focusses upon the struggle within the education system, to win control of the various procedures for educational assessment. These instruments are a critical element in regulating access to power and privilege in society on the one hand and on the other inform the discourse of educational accountability and thus provide for control of the ethos of the system as a whole. For, as Clegg and Dunkerley (1980) argue, "any concrete social formation does not contain just one hegemony, but many" (p. 496). What this model might look like is discussed in the rest of this chapter.

The Social Construction of Education Systems

The dynamic functioning of education systems may be understood as the product of three interacting rationales. First there are the requirements imposed upon the system by the nature of the capitalist state as discussed in detail in Chapter Three. These may be loosely summarised as first, the provision of an appropriately skilled workforce and the provision of an appropriately socialised workforce. Second, there is the requirement for the system to legitimate itself - a process which may be distinguished from the legitimation the system provides for the social structure as a whole and which may well require the toleration of practices within education which are at best irrelevant
and at worst counter-productive to the main purposes of 'manpowering' and 'socialisation' (Dale, 1980). Ramire and Meyer (1980) suggest that "structures are often the results of such compromises between competing ideologies ... The emphasis in centralised systems upon egalitarian ideology (Clignet, 1974) is balanced against that of efficiency-oriented central planning of educational allocation" (Giles, 1979).

Compromise is not confined to the level of ideology, however. 'Micro-politics' (Hoyle, 1982) at the level of practice ensure that decisions ... result not from

"the application of well-tried rationales enabling pre-specified ends to be realised through uniquely appropriate means, but from a quasi-political process which allows policy to be discovered through negotiation, objectives to arise when choice points are reached, and accommodations to be found which enable competing belief-systems to achieve a modus vivendi" (Shaw, 1975, p. 31)

There is then, thirdly, the creative and independent life within the system itself which can never be entirely constrained. In practice, these last two dimensions are frequently conflated. The 'relative autonomy' enjoyed by educational personnel is thus partly the inevitable product of social interaction and partly a deliberate sacrifice to enable traditions important for legitimation to be maintained.

"The nature of the functions of the state does not imply the forms in which they are carried out. The same broad functions can be met in many different ways, and the study of the ways is not only valid but essential for a comprehensive understanding of the education system. Similarly I would not want it to be thought that everything that goes on in schools can be related back to one of the functions of the state" (Dale, 1981).

Dale further refines his argument in identifying three different levels of social functioning - the legitimation of societal goals, the legitimation of societal process and the educational contribution to
those societal processes. Level one is legitimated by expressive ideologies - the conception of societal goals which, in the case of capitalist society ranges from economic theories to theories of personal motivation such as acquisitiveness and personal responsibility. Levels two and three are legitimated by instrumental ideologies - accepted conceptions of how to reach the defined goals. These latter conceptions are nationally specific and the product of a specific historical social formation. Thus although the mode of production itself - in this case capitalism - is not a specific national configuration, its existence leads to certain requirements and problems to which the potential responses are as varied as the differing national contexts.

Each of the three levels of social functioning identified above must thus be seen as a compromise between function and legitimation whether it be the capitalist mode of production itself or the education system which is associated with it. Education's contribution to control is thus a function of this relationship between levels two and three, between education and the societal process and not at the level of expressive ideology which is above this. The state is the context for the educational contribution to societal process (function and legitimation) but some form of this relationship will be a constant feature of all capitalist societies.

Thus the educational codes determining the characteristics of curriculum pedagogy and evaluation are informed by and in turn reproduce the ideological discourse which is the basis for instrumental legitimation. Such discourse is also a reflection of the characteristics of the overarching expressive ideology.

Thus in this thesis it has been suggested that particular forms of evaluation are characteristic of the expressive ideology of
industrial society; that the individualism which was a defining characteristic of the advent of industrialisation, and which is the legitimisation of societal goals (i.e. level one), is translated into societal processes based on 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalising judgement' (level two). This legitimating ideology finds expression at the level of educational discourse (level three) in various forms of individual and institutional assessment whose precise form varies in response to changes in the broader instrumental ideologies characterising level two.

The distinction Dale and others provide between the over-arching requirements of capitalist societies and how these requirements find different expression in particular societies suggests certain inadequacies in theories which lack either one of these two defining elements. Thus Archer's elaborate model of educational systems might be criticised by neo-Marxists for its failure to address the characteristics of the over-arching capitalist order (level one). Equally, Bernstein is typical of those writers who are open to criticism for ignoring the realm of educational politics and the instrumental ideologies of level three. Or, as Whitty (1980) puts it:

"even if we are to understand recent developments in education as attempts to secure the conditions of existence for a new phase of capitalism, they are not in any straightforward sense a determined effect of capitalist economic relations. Thus, they have to be established via ideological discourse and political struggle ... It is also clear that since it is difficult to be specific about the ideological requirements of capital beyond the most basic level and since, as Dale says, 'the nature of the functions of the state does not imply the forms in which these functions will be carried out', a variety of contents and forms of schooling can be accommodated without any threat being posed to capitalism" (p. 71).

Thus it is suggested, following Dale (1980) that "the common problem of supporting the process of capital accumulation will present
itself in very different forms, not only between social formations but within them as well" (p. 13). Indeed without such a theoretical perspective, it is hard to see how the very real differences in national systems could be accounted for. The detailed empirical studies of national educational policy-making that exist (see, for example, Archer, 1979; Pusey, 1980; Ranson et al., 1980, Salter and Tapper, 1981; Lodge and Blackstone, 1982; Hargreaves, 1982; Nagy, 1982) underline the importance of 'institutional archaeology' in mediating such general trends, and highlight the multicausal, pluralistic conflict, administrative complexity, and historical inertia which deny the validity of any simple determinism. Careful empirical documentation of these processes can reveal much more about the complex nature of educational decision-making and state policy than mysterious invocations of concepts like 'centralisation' which simply tend to gloss over these differences and subtleties.

Detailed policy analyses can demonstrate the existence of diverse social and educational motives leading to multiple conflicts in the policy-making process; they also illuminate the way in which any specific policy proposal is selectively filtered through the system to eventual implementation or rejection and the important constraints exerted on educational policies by the material and ideological legacies of the past, as well as the economic and political demands of the present. Analyses at all levels of the education system - the micro-politics of school policy-making (Hoyle, 1981), local authority initiatives such as that described by Hargreaves for the West Riding (Hargreaves, 1982b) central government policy-making (Tapper and Salter, 1981) or the fate of those system-wide attempts at policy-innovation more characteristic of the centralised system (e.g. Duclaud-Williams, 1982), point to the independent contribution of specific situations and actors to the
construction of educational practice and hence the dangers of a narrowly deterministic approach to the understanding of contemporary trends. For this reason, too, it is important to view resistance to policy changes as a mixture of long-term and short-term, often contradictory and counter-productive stances.

Whitty (1980) provides a good example of this tension. He argues, quoting Nowell-Smith (1979), "a full analysis of, say, the changes in the examination system must take into account the way the requirements of capital accumulation make themselves felt in the education sector ... But the ideology of examinations cannot be 'derived' in any adequate way from the logic of capital and the capitalist state". Whitty stresses the importance of documenting the struggles within the prevailing hegemonic ideology between different 'fractions of capital' (p. 185), the outcomes of which in terms of examination policies are not all equally useful for capitalism. In the same way, Whitty too stresses the importance of distinguishing between capitalist societies in this respect in order to take into account the considerable and varying degrees of autonomy which characterise examinations policy in each case. Whitty (1981) argues that

"whatever imperatives may be identified as emanating from corporate capitalism via the state ... Outcomes are achieved via ideological discourse and political struggle and there is considerable scope for resisting such imperatives at a political and discursive level" (Whitty, 1983, p. 182, 184).

What Dale (1983) refers to as a 'political sociology of education' requires a preparedness to come to terms with the outcomes of the many different layers of social action which comprise national educational systems. Such a task is greatly facilitated by tracing the common and the idiosyncratic ways in which such systems have developed in different capitalist societies.
The balance between 'relative autonomy' and the determinacy of state and, ultimately, economic requirements, is a central issue in the sociology of education and an issue which is frequently over-simplified. A comparative, empirical analysis of educational systems reveals both the necessity and the difficulty of what Althusser (1977, quoted by Hall, 1977) called "hanging on to the two ends of the chain at once" (p. 11). The willingness to accept the articulation of structure and action on which the study of educational politics is necessarily based helps to focus attention on the process of negotiation and legitimation which constrain the process of structuration and thus provides a conceptual framework for understanding how such national differences emerge.

**Archer's Model of Educational Systems**

Archer (1979) has provided one of the most developed and empirically based models of this process of negotiation. Archer's work is particularly relevant to the discussion of this chapter since it is specifically applied to the emergence and operation of four national educational systems, two of which, France and England, are also the bases for this thesis. Archer focusses upon the reflexive relationship between structure and action, the social structures which shape the context in which interaction and change occur and hence result in the emergence of particular forms of educational provision. A crucial element in Archer's perspective is the emphasis on the present as well as the past so that the social context is, in this view, not only the result of historical interaction, but also the result of contemporary behaviour and individuals or groups who cannot or will not change these structures. This perspective enables Archer to open up the whole area of 'educational politics' and the 'internal strains' which lead to change. According to Ramirez and Meyer
(1980), these are

"the ideological and organisational inconsistencies that characterise the present systems [and which] produce competing structural consequences. There are individual demands and social priorities, market forces and central planning, state bureaucracies and professional rules of autonomy" (Ramirez and Mayer, 1980, p. 383).

The focus is thus on interest groups, on the processes of exchange, negotiation and consolidation — within more general changes in the social context. It is these more general changes variously conceptualised as functional incompatibilities by Merton and structural contradictions by Marx which lead to strains and a pressure for change which has repercussions throughout the system because of its interdependence.

Building on what is clearly a Weberian perspective, Archer distinguishes between privilege, authority and power which she links in educational terms to achievement, organisation and curriculum respectively. Beyond this basic currency of analysis however, Archer's focus is specific rather than general, concerned with developing a conceptual framework which can explain the historical idiosyncrasies of individual education systems within the more general pattern of their growth in post-feudal societies.

Drawing on Blau's concept of exchange theory (Blau, 1964) in which the possession of various kinds of resources allow competing groups to trade off against each other, the major distinction Archer makes between societies is in terms of their degree of centralisation. Such differences are taken to be a product of whether state involvement in education was the result of a deliberate attempt on the part of a political group to gain control over education (restriction) or whether the state was historically reluctant, dragged into the educational debate by one particular interest group as provision expanded and thereafter fought over as a prized ally as its role became one of creating some
kind of system out of these competing interests. Archer argues that successful control of the emerging system depended upon monopoly ownership of educational facilities (thereby preventing others from converting financial and human assets into schools and teachers). This was achieved through convincing competing groups they lacked the right, ability or experience to provide education. This is a combination of the operation of a legitimating ideology based on traditional charismatic or rational grounds and symbolic or coercive protective constraints. Where, as in France, the elite was sufficiently homogeneous to operate such a restrictive approach successfully the result was a highly centralised bureaucratic system specifically designed to reproduce the culture of the dominant group. Where, as in England, no one group could establish such a monopoly, the education system was decentralised. Its character changing with the shifting alliances (substitution) between competing groups.

Archer’s analysis is open to criticism for not giving sufficient weight in this respect to inter-societal forces which can help explain cultural markets, how and why they change and the ways in which national social structures are related to world systems (Wallerstein, 1974). In an analysis of the Israeli education system for example, Yogev (1980) argues that the character of the education system is a product of two components. One, following Archer, is the power structure of indigenous ethno-cultural groups. The other is the dependence on an external nation which enhances the emulation of a particular normative model of education. In less developed countries in particular, congruence between these two sources is likely to lead to centralisation, conflict to decentralisation. Thus the international context must be a crucial variable in the analysis. Nevertheless, the basic currency of Archer’s analysis is still valid, as is the utility of her model of a complex
series of exchange relations which govern the different internal
dynamics of each type of system.

Archer draws a distinction between emergent and established
education systems. As the system becomes consolidated, there are
structural changes within the education field itself which she terms
'unification', 'systematisation', 'differentiation' and 'specialisation'.

'Unification' is not equated with centralisation although more
explicit in such systems. Rather Archer identifies unification as an
inevitable feature of state-provided education. Unification is closely
linked with the systematisation embodied in national exams which
delineate the boundaries and levels of the system, and are a vital
part of the regularisation of teacher recruitment, training and
certification. In contrast, the decentralised system is characterised
by differentiation and specialisation. Differentiation reflects the
diverse interest groups involved, a politico-educational alliance
which repulses the emergence of a strong central authority and in which
in contrast to the centralised system, legislation can only be at the
level of the lowest common denominator. 7 Archer argues that
differentiation and specialisation lead to increasing professionalisation,
and a teaching body conscious of the power provided by its expertise to
take part in negotiations over the nature of educational provision.
Critical in this respect is the devolution of power over public
assessment procedures to several interest groups rather than one central
bureaucracy. "The net consequence of multiple integration for education
is an increase in autonomy ... the capacity for internal determination
of its operations" (Archer, 1979, p.22). In Archer's view, the character
of the education system based on differentiation and specialisation, is
determined by negotiation based on internal initiation (from within the
system), external transaction (resource based) and political manipulation
(power based); that is from both pressures and characteristics in the system itself. In this respect her analysis has some similarities with Dale's emphasis on different levels of legitimating ideology (see p. 163).

Archer's elaborate and empirically-based analysis of the common and variable characteristics of education systems highlights a number of themes already discussed in this chapter, notably those of relative autonomy, ideological legitimation and negotiation - in short the ingredients of educational politics. But it is Archer's identification of the centralisation-decentralisation continuum as the principal defining characteristic of educational systems which adds an important conceptual dimension for the analysis of the case studies reported here. The fact that Archer explicitly identifies national examinations as one of the crucial ingredients of central control makes her model even more relevant. If individual evaluation and accountability are definitive characteristics of all education systems, as argued in Chapter Three, Archer's theory allows this general concept to be refined differentially in centralised and decentralised systems. Thus in centralised systems the ideological homogeneity of the prevailing legitimating ideology allows the dominating elite to design a system of centralised control procedures including a variety of assessment procedures such as public examinations, inspection and bureaucratic accountability which carry the legitimating rhetoric on which that status is based. In so doing it also reinforces it. To the extent that reality falls short of this ideal type of central control, as in decentralised systems, there is likely to be conflict between the substantive interests of different social groups, one expression of which will be a struggle to influence the legitimating rhetoric and hence, the content of education. Thus, following Archer, it is possible to argue that in both decentralised and centralised systems assessment procedures have a different but equally
central role to play in providing the explicit articulation of this legitimating rhetoric; that there is typically an on-going struggle between the different interest groups involved in the education system who seek to establish control of the content of education, one crucial element of which is control of the public assessment apparatus in its several forms.

But in centralised and decentralised systems alike, the education system has a measure of autonomy which is the result of the social construction of its participants and the processes of interpretation, and action they undertake in the light of their perceived 'micropolitical' interests. One of the most significant groups of participants in this respect is the teaching profession on whom devolves the task of carrying out the work of the system, of making a reality of its more or less explicit and contradictory objectives.

The significance of teachers 'resistance', of the possible boundaries of their autonomy, has recently received considerable attention (e.g. Grace, 1978; Barton et al. (1981) from other sociologists of education who, like Archer, reject the determinist perspective of, for example, Bourdieu and Bernstein, in which teachers are seen simply as passive agents of reproduction. Although some interactionist accounts (e.g. Sharp and Green, 1975) have tended to cast teachers as victims of a double-bind from which there is no escape, detailed classroom studies have revealed considerable creative action by teachers (e.g. Woods, 1981). Lawn and Ozga (1981) are typical of more policy-oriented studies of teachers which focus on the power teachers have been able to wield as a group through political and interest group pressure and the monopoly they have been able to build up over scarce and necessary expertise and internal initiatives. Archer (1979) analyses the conditions which determine the strength of the profession
in a bargaining situation, distinguishing between the apparently powerful but in practice relatively powerless, confrontational stance among teachers in the centralised system and the more 'sales-oriented' approach of teachers in the decentralised system which emphasises stimulating consumer need, offering a high quality product and restrictive practices (Duclaud-Williams, 1982). Archer's model of how teachers have won for themselves a measure of professional 'space' reinforces Bourdieu's explanation of why they so rarely use this power to challenge the status quo. Teachers are not simply 'cultural dupes' but are acting in terms of their professional vested interests and the protection of their own bargaining currency.

Once again the relevance of this analysis to understanding the social role of assessment procedures is apparent, since one of the most important 'goods' that teachers have to 'sell' is their ability to prepare candidates to acquire valued qualifications. On occasions such as at the present time in France or during the 1960s in England, they actually become the direct as opposed to the indirect arbiters of such awards. To the extent that teachers are entrusted directly with the responsibility for assessment - rather than being employed simply as markers for a nominally independent agency - that power is increased.

The Ideological Context

But whilst Archer's model readily embraces the conceptual approach to assessment procedures on which this thesis is based, it may also be criticised for under-emphasising the more covert, ideological forms of power struggle and social control in comparison to that based on more obvious currencies of power such as the law or financial resources. A slightly less mechanistic approach to such negotiation is that afforded by Salter and Tapper (1981) in their
emphasis on ideology as the underlying determinant of power relations, such that if legimitation is the necessary instrument of power, ideology is the necessary instrument of legitimation (Larrain, 1979).

Whitty (1980), following Johnson (1979) and Giddens (1979) makes a two-fold distinction between ideology as 'lived existence' and ideology as 'discoursé', between what may be loosely referred to as culture and the way in which the content and form of discourse works to produce meaning and structure consciousness. Matthews (1980) also focusses on the relationship between ideology at the level of objective social consciousness and its transition into subjective private consciousness through general exhortation, reification or selective application of concepts (p. 131). Despite the foregoing criticism of his work, Bernstein (1982) offers a useful examination of the nature of educational discourse in this respect. He relates the process of ideological repositioning between the social relations of the production of 'discourse and the resources' and the various stages of recontextualising and secondary contextualising which determine how the discourse is received and hence the social relations of reproduction. In education this relationship is embodied in the transactions that take place in curriculum content between the original perpetrators of knowledge and the eventual form it takes in the learner's mind.

As has already been suggested, although the relationship between the ideological function of such a model of discourse and the nature of the state is only very loosely drawn in Bernstein's analysis, and reflects no particular social formation, the links with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) more substantive analysis of the 'habitus' and the 'pedagogic arbitrary' are clear. Particular conventions of educational practice and of knowledge are so structured into the system that 'the habitus' is readily legitimated by both tradition and apparent rationality,
its ideological power rarely questioned. Thus an analysis of educational discourse is necessary to emphasise the process of negotiation and construction between rival ideologies and the extent to which 'commonsense' can be made to conform to the necessities of production, consent and political order (Whitty, 1980, p. 17). In this model of ideology, then, there is room for the various legitimating traditions — political, religious, moral, nationalist, utilitarian, economic and technicist (see Chapter Three) and the possibility of a series of compromises and contradictions in response to changing historical conditions, people's lived experience and the struggles that ensue. But, at the same time, this is only flexibility within a defining political agenda. Such 'hegemonic ideology' (Whitty, 1980) defines the issues and terms of debate ... it has its 'structuring silences' (Bacharach and Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 1974. Kellner (1978) stresses the need to study "specific regional ideologies in specific societies, uncovering their production, transmission and interaction...". What emerges is a degree of autonomy, in which ideological, political and economic policies mutually provide each other with their broad conditions of existence ... "a degree of relative autonomy for different levels and instances of the social formation, culture and ideology included" (Barrett et al., 1979, quoted by Whitty, 1980). Thus although the 'educational apparatus' can be said in general terms to be geared towards the reproduction and legitimation of capitalist social forms, this 'educational apparatus' has also a complex life of its own, which is the product of the changing historical context and inter-group power relations.

This rather abstract discussion of the social construction and legitimation of education systems is usefully translated into more specific terms by Dale (1981b).
"The aims of education in any society cannot be plucked from the air, nor do they develop in hermetically sealed units ... It is also the case that what it is taken for granted education is capable of achieving, what we might call the feasible expectations of education are not wholly the product of deliberate rational calculation but are themselves also rooted in existing ways of doing things in a society, in its existing pattern of social institutions. Hence we might expect the feasible as well as the normative expectations of education to vary culturally, to be affected for instance, by, among other things, the degree of centralisation of state activity, by the proportion and strength of various religious groups within the society, and by the existing development of educational provision within the society" (p. 12).

That is to say,

"the cultural choices involved in the selection of content have an organic relation to the social choices involved in the practical organisation" (Williams, 1965, quoted in Dale, 1981b, p. 12).

But it is not just the aims of education which will express the diverse and perhaps contradictory ideologies of different sites. Institutional structures and practices such as the curriculum and pedagogy are equally affected by the ideological power of different social forces. Gramsci and Althusser among others have been criticised (Salter and Tapper, 1981) for failing to recognise that ideology is locked into the institutional structure itself and not just into member's consciousness. A major and often overlooked consequence of this institutional incorporation of ideologies is the degree of 'inertia' in the system to which it leads. Practices which play no obvious ideological or practical role but which are simply the more or less haphazard hangovers of tradition (Hargreaves, 1982b) may result in the system being slow to change and unresponsive to larger societal pressures. A good example in this respect is the contemporary failure of the school system in both England and France to respond adequately during the 1970s to government pressures for a greatly increased vocational emphasis and hence the setting up of alternative 'youth
training schemes. 10

The concept of 'relative autonomy' partly explains why, despite having instituted one of the most carefully designed and highly-centralised education systems ever devised, Napoleon was forced to recognise how "by force of circumstances it [the Napoleonic school] was to elude what he hoped for from it and to form its own traditions and physiognomy and to acquire its own distinctive character in spite of the surveillance to which it was constantly subject' (Durkheim, 1977, p. 307)

Giddens (1979) addresses the phenomenon of institutional inertia in his concept of 'structuration'. Starting from an ethnomethodological perspective of the way in which interaction is shaped by actors' taken for granted meanings, Giddens uses the concept of 'structuration' to conceptualise the way in which existing deep-seated bases of orientation operate as shared assumptions about how to evaluate and interpret situations. These assumptions are the result of and in turn create what Femia terms those

"myriad ways in which the institutions of civil society operate to shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and affective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate social reality" (Femia, 1975, p. 31).

Ranson et al. (1980) also explore this Weberian problematic of the relation between cause and meaning, between determinant and voluntary in the relation of structure and action. Like Archer, they are specifically concerned with structures from a 'neo systems theory' perspective which focusses on the interaction between meaning, power dependencies and contextual constraints. Unlike Archer, however, the five sources of change which Ranson et al. identify as contributing to "the structuring of organisational structures" are embedded at the level of culture and ideology. Thus they suggest change is likely:

1) if organisational members revise the provinces of meaning, the interpretive schemes which underpin their constitutive structuring of organisations.

2) if there are contradictions between the purposes, values and
interests behind the strategic implementing of structural features.

3) if there are significant changes in resource availability and in other key sources of organisational uncertainty which undermine the power bases of dominant coalitions.

4) if there are major changes in situational exigencies such as technology and environment, this will require changes to be made in structural arrangements.

5) if there are contradictory imperatives in situational constraints, this will entail change in structural arrangements.\textsuperscript{11}

Ranson et al. stress the importance of locating such contradictions among meanings, power, structure and context in a temporal dimension if the determining influences are to be unravelled. Following Braudel (1973) and Perrow (1967) they distinguish between the uncertain day-to-day experience of organisations - in which the actor and interaction patterns are dominant; the medium term in which the emergent regularities of size, technology and environment are more apparent; and the long term in which meaning, value and belief, 'sedimented' into institutional structures, provide for the dominance of a cultural system.

"In short, the closer the 'horizon' the more visible the actor but constrained by his context, in the longer time perspective, actors become less 'visible' but their frames of meaning, the product of their structuring, more determinate: constituted structures have become constitutive" (p.17) \textsuperscript{12}

Thus it would be quite wrong to anticipate any neat correspondence between systemic requirements, cultural norms and educational practice. Rather what is required is a reflexive theory capable of conceptualising the articulation between action, system and context over time.

This is the rationale for the empirical chapters that follow which trace the social role of assessment procedures in two different national systemic settings. Taking the very general theoretical framework outlined
in Chapter Three of the defining characteristics of industrial societies and the more detailed analysis in Chapter Two of the different parts assessment procedures play in making schooling responsive to the needs of such societies, Chapters Five, Six and Seven set out to trace the different elements of this relationship in two contrasting substantive contexts.

The organisation of the analysis follows that already identified in Chapter Two in distinguishing the themes of competence, content, competition and control, the last being further divided into its individual and systemic, micro and macro aspects. But there the resemblance to the approach of Chapters Two and Three ends for the analyses of Part II are also informed by the arguments of this chapter which stress the need to avoid any simple determinism in accounting for the development of assessment procedures. Thus Chapters Five and Six, if Chapter Seven rather less so, are accounts of educational politics and of the way in which the emerging state apparatus of assessment in two very different societies reflected both the common pressures experienced by all industrialising societies and nationally-specific cultural norms which combine to form the context for micro-political struggle. Although analyses couched at the level of educational systems typically address the whole range of educational politics, no attempt is made in this thesis to provide such a comprehensive study. The aim is rather to provide an understanding of the characteristic part educational assessment plays in such systems rather than to provide an understanding of the system per se. Part of the reason for this chapter however has been to justify the quite substantial excursions into the realms of culture, control and pressure-group politics which even this limited remit requires. Much of the foregoing argument has not been directly concerned with the question of assessment procedures as such but has been concerned rather with the more general question
of the articulation between action, system and context over time, which determines the development of specific assessment procedures.

The arguments of this chapter underline the need to understand the evolution of assessment procedures in terms of the prevailing legitimating rhetoric and the way in which the various interest groups involved in education succeed in defining the values and ethos of institutional practice through their influence on the language of accountability. The study of such discourse reveals that whilst the attestation of competence and the regulation of competition; the 'selection and certification' functions of assessment - are informed by a common legitimating rhetoric of education which is a product of the individualisation and rationality on which industrial societies are based, the 'control' function reflects a much more idiosyncratic legitimating rhetoric which is bound up with political rather than economic exigencies and the specific national traditions of government.

Thus, for example, whilst the provision in both England and France of a national educational inspectorate may be read as a reflection of the assumption of normalising judgement and hierarchical authority which accompanied the increasingly powerful expressive ideology of individualism in both societies, the nature and function of that inspectorate varied considerably at different times both within and between systems. Not only have French inspectors always been concerned with individual teacher quality whilst their English counterparts have been charged with inspecting schools, the character of each inspectorate has itself changed radically over time in the ebb and flow of educational politics. It is only recently, for example, that HMI in England have thought of themselves as a national service concerned with standards in general as much as the rolling inspection of individual schools. Similarly, in France, the impact
of educational policies on the National Inspectorate may be traced in its increasingly conciliatory and benign stance in which 'animation' rather than judgement takes precedence. 14

Why these and other changes in the character of assessment procedures in the two systems should have come about are questions which are addressed in detail in Chapters Five and Six. Before moving to such a substantive level of analysis, however, it is necessary to provide a rather more explicit bridge with the very general discussion of most of this chapter which has been principally concerned with establishing the need for such an approach. Thus the final part of this chapter attempts to provide a conceptual framework with which to approach the different parts played by assessment procedures in advanced industrial societies. As such, the analyses of Chapter Four complement those of Chapter Three which were concerned with the common and constant part played by educational assessment in such societies.

**Modes of System Control**

It has been suggested that much of the variation between educational systems can be understood in terms of the different patterns of power relations that characterise them; that the complex interaction between ideological tradition, institutional inertia and changing social pressures produces a unique mediating context for determining how education will be provided. At the same time, however, it is also possible to categorise at least some of these differences systematically (see, for example, Arnove, 1980; Ramirez and Meyer, 1980). Often this is done in terms of a particular variable such as patterns of social mobility (Turner, 1960; Hopper, 1968) or stages of development (Beeby, 1966). One of the most common categorisations used is also one of the
most significant as Archer (1979) has demonstrated, namely the centralised/decentralised dichotomy.

In systems categorised as 'centralised' power to control educational provision and process is taken to reside in central government. In systems categorised as 'decentralised', such power is taken to be dispersed among various competing interest groups including local government, the teaching profession, other interest groups and local communities.

In Chapter Two, it was suggested that such power to control is ultimately bound up with assessment procedures to the extent that it goes beyond mere coercion, since any rational authority depends on a two-way flow of information. Not only does it require 'accounts' of how far policy is being achieved, it also needs to inculcate criteria of self-accounting on a 'normative-re-educative' basis. Indeed, given the difficulties of enforcing bureaucratic control, it is this latter sense of 'moral' accountability which is likely to be the more important source of constraint. Thus it was argued in Chapter Two, the critical influence on the identification of educational goals and practices is likely to be that interest group which has the power to determine the criteria for self-imposed, 'moral' and 'professional' accountability. In a strongly centralised system this is more likely to be central government. If goal-setting is not enforced by some form of evaluation, however, the mere articulation of priorities is likely to be largely a rhetorical exercise.

For where a strong central bureaucracy closely prescribes the form and content of education and yet does not monitor whether its directives are being followed lower down the hierarchy, the demand for information about such activities to be produced is reduced and with it, the control that the need to give an account provides. Although nominally it may
still be correct to regard teachers in a centralised system as closely controlled employees where their colleagues in a decentralised system are autonomous but accountable professionals, this distinction does not necessarily reflect the reality of control. To assume "that the declaration of national goals for education is the same as ensuring that learning takes place" (Chanan, 1976, p. 24), is to adopt a mechanistic model of systemic activity in which the identification of objectives is taken to be synonymous with the educational process itself (Church, 1979).

Thus, despite the long-standing assumption that in 'centralised' education systems such as those of France and Sweden, teachers' practice is more closely controlled that in 'decentralised' systems such as that of England or the United States, this is misleading. The equation of strong control with a high degree of centralisation fails to take into account less obvious and generally much more powerful sources of control and constraint, notably that of assessment - the collection and evaluation of information about the system.

A more useful way of identifying differences in control in different types of education systems is in terms of the different assessment procedures employed within those systems since in any sort of mass education system, assessment procedures act as one of the greatest constraints on classroom practice. In this sense, much of the variation between systems in terms of their dominant patterns of control can best be understood in terms of the particular form that control by assessment takes in each case. Such differences in control cannot be reduced simply to differences between centralised and decentralised systems. Assessment procedures vary on grounds other than this. They may, for instance, be informal or formal, school-based or external. This does not mean that the importance of assessment factors
makes the centralisation issue irrelevant to the study of control. Indeed, a centralised, government-controlled, external assessment apparatus possesses great power to enforce the pursuit of a centrally-determined curriculum. But the distinctions between different forms of assessment are much more subtle than this; more than a dichotomy between school-based (decentralised) and external (centralised) procedures of assessment. For where a number of more or less independent institutions like the English examination boards and the Schools Council provide for external assessment, control can be both tight and uncentralised.

It is therefore important to distinguish between the degree of assessment control on the one hand (strong or weak), and the source of that control (central or local) on the other. This distinction is crucial, for the tendency to conflate strong control with central control within the concept of centralisation has led to an over-preoccupation with administrative variables in the study of differences between educational systems and a consequent disregard for how that control is actually mediated and ultimately experienced by teachers in the schools.

Thus apparently different education systems such as those of France and England, which are often taken to be classic instances of centralised and decentralised systems respectively (Archer, 1979), may, despite initial appearances, be characterised by a remarkably similar degree of systemic control. At the same time, differences between the systems in the form that control through assessment takes and where power over those assessment procedures is located is likely to be significant (Rodmell, 1977). In so-called centralised systems, there has traditionally been a great emphasis on assessment by 'process evaluation', by the exertion of control through the bureaucratic relationships of
accountability to which teachers are subject. This is essentially the control of inspection of the quality of the educational process itself. By contrast, within the very strong traditions of curricular freedom and professional autonomy which have characterised decentralised systems, control over teachers' behaviour and the basis of their accountability has, in the main, been via 'product evaluation' - by evaluation of educational products as expressed in various forms of measurable pupil achievement. 16

On the question of where power over assessment procedures is located, this too is associated with the form of evaluative control - process or product. In process evaluation, power over assessment procedures resides in that part of the education system which controls inspection - usually central but to some extent also local government. In the case of product evaluation, power is located more within those institutions which control the design and administration of assessment procedures - usually in central government together with local government authorities to whom some limited power has been devolved, and also, in decentralised systems, in a large number of other non-statutory bodies such as examination boards and their clients (notably parents, pupils, employers and, of course, teachers themselves).

Thus a consideration of the nature and amount of control over their practice experienced by teachers in terms of assessment procedures demands a more complex conceptualisation than the traditional centralised/decentralised dichotomy. In particular it requires a theoretical model which is based on the way in which the education system actually works rather than on its formal administrative arrangements alone (Zeldin, 1979). Only such a model, which takes the form and location of assessment procedures as determining criteria, can explain the increasing convergence in the form of control between societies at the present time, a
convergence which, as the following section sets out, cannot be explained simply in terms of movements along the continuum between centralisation and decentralisation.

**Control by Assessment: A Model**

It is widely accepted that education systems in advanced industrial societies are becoming increasingly similar in their organisation and objectives (Sutherland, 1977).

"It is possible to wonder, today, whether a certain degree of centralisation is required for the efficient running of education systems given the nature of their objectives. At a time when we are rightly asking ourselves in France about the advantages of a greater degree of freedom and thus of a greater degree of deconcentration, other countries with different traditions look with interest towards a more centralised model better adapted to the achievement of equality in education. The decade which is now beginning could be marked by a greater homogeneity of structures within education systems ..." (Garrigue, 1980, p. 3).

The reason for this increasing similarity, it is usually suggested, is that the central governments of countries like England are exerting ever-more centralised control on a whole range of educational provision, most notably on curriculum, assessment and finance, while countries such as France are moving in the opposite direction towards decentralisation (deconcentration) in finance and administration. (See Fig. 4.1).

**Figure 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONG CONTROL</th>
<th>WEAK CONTROL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>central funding</td>
<td>local funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centralised curriculum</td>
<td>curriculum autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process evaluation</td>
<td>product evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central control of certification</td>
<td>decentralised certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This model of systems which are the polar opposites of one another gravitating towards a mid-point of similarity is misleading, however. For, in many respects, the systems are not polar opposites at all. In reality, the movement towards a common pattern of centrally directed control by product evaluation has, in each case, commenced from very different starting points which cannot be identified simply on a centralised-decentralised continuum. The traditional associations between decentralised and product evaluation on the one hand, and central control and process evaluation on the other, misrepresent what tends to occur in practice. Thus, it is possible to maintain a traditional emphasis on product evaluation within a context of increasingly centralised control. Alternatively, it is possible for a system to change its traditional pattern of assessment towards an emphasis on product evaluation, but without lessening its central grip upon the education system. (See Fig. 4.2).

Figure 4.2

Representations of changing patterns of assessment control

As Fig. 4.2 shows, it is no longer sufficient to conceptualise control over education in terms of its strength or weakness (as in Fig. 4.1 because control cannot be equated with centralisation. Rather, what appears to be important in determining patterns of educational control is the relationship between the two variables mentioned earlier - the
form of assessment control, and the location of power over assessment procedures. Thus, it is not the gravitation of centralised and decentralised systems towards some educational mid-point that has produced the growing convergence between education systems, but the particular way in which these two variables, the form and location of assessment control, are tending to intersect in such countries.

Thus, in England, for example, there has been something of an oscillation between a more 'free market', decentralised approach to assessment control mediated by the semi-autonomous Examination Boards and the links they in turn have with the universities at times of plenty, and more directive, centralised strategies based on the tighter control of public examining and institutional accountability when economic and social problems dictate a more utilitarian direction for educational activity. In France, by contrast, the development has been from what was in fact the relative freedom of a highly centralised system in which assessment control was vested in national, government-run selective examinations and personal teacher inspection. This has been replaced by a nominally more decentralised, positive control based on a reflexive relationship between teacher-conducted continuous assessment according to nationally prescribed norms, and an increasingly corporate management approach to educational administration, provision and control. The information thereby generated provides an increasingly powerful means of both directing the careers of individual pupils and of directing the educational system as a whole. By the same token, the institution of continuous assessment based on national norms now not only exhorts teachers - as the system has always done - but makes that exhortation effective as these norms relate directly to the assessment of pupil progress and simultaneously provide for the national statistical monitoring of educational standards within the system.
Although the trends in decentralised systems are less clear-cut, the activities of the Assessment Performance Unit (APU) in England and the National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) in the United States are similar to some aspects of the French initiative. The search for national norms as assessment criteria at the present time in England is also a comparable development. A currently less developed but potentially very significant trend in England is the increasing government as well as popular support for the idea of 'profiles' based on continuous assessment and culminating in a 'positive' record of achievement (DES, 1983) for all pupils. More recently still, DES support for 'graded tests' (DES, 1984) offers the possibility of even closer central control. For whilst these initiatives may have much to recommend them educationally, they nevertheless have the potential to provide for the very effective imposition of centrally-determined curricular norms and pedagogic directives. If in some ways such developments can be seen as steps towards greater equality of educational provision, they are just as much a step towards greater control. As such they represent yet another reflection of the liberation-control dilemma in assessment procedures already discussed. In the past, where autonomy was safeguarded by the lack of central curricular prescriptions, the very powerful control exerted by the emphasis on 'product evaluation' still left considerable room for individual teachers, pressure groups and semi-autonomous bodies such as Examination Boards to influence the content of that control. Similarly, in other systems, in the past autonomy could be safeguarded by the relatively minor role of 'product evaluation' despite the existence of a highly centralised, bureaucratic education system in which every aspect of pedagogic activity, and especially curricular objectives, was tightly controlled. The increasing similarity at the present time between England and France, as documented in Chapters Five
and Six, reflects the fact that each is tending to institute the aspect hitherto lacking to ensure effective control.

Perhaps even more important than this increasingly effective control, however, is the growing association of educational administration in both countries with a corporate management approach. Such an approach is likely to disguise the essentially political nature of educational goals - in an ideology of scientific rationality. In this event, value-judgements appear as merely administrative decisions dictated by rationality and the goal of maximising efficiency.

"In so far as the argument about aims can be reduced to one about objectives, it takes on a technical character which strengthens the claims of teachers and educational specialists to exert influence ... and obscures the problematic" (Taylor, 1977)

It seems probable that effective educational control implies the existence of a social order ready to concur in educational goals. The way in which assessment procedures help to bring this about will, perhaps prove ultimately more significant than their role in imposing such goals for the requirements of mass testing are such as to require a considerable measure of agreement over educational objectives. It may well be that the testing technology overwhelms the initial, sensitive identification of educational goals, reinforcing the long-deplored tendency for assessment to reduce curricular goals to what can be measured and bringing a stage nearer the predominance of a technocratic ideal of managerialism (Gouldner, 1976; MacDonald, 1978) as set out in Chapter Seven. Before coming to such a discussion in detail, however, it is necessary to establish how far the theoretical explanations for systemic similarities and systemic differences in educational assessment procedures, as set out in Chapters Three and Four respectively, are adequate to explain the specific assessment practices of the two countries under study. This is the concern of Part II of this thesis.
Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. See also in this respect Council of Europe (1974) 'Report on the training and career structures of educational researchers', Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

2. "Lorsqu'on étudie historiquement la manière dont se sont formées et développées les systèmes d'éducation on s'aperçoit qu'ils dépendent de la religion, de l'organisation politique, du degré de développement des sciences, de l'état de l'industrie etc. Si on les détache de toutes les causes historiques, ils deviennent incompréhensibles, les institutions scolaires sont des institutions sociales" ... (Durkheim).


4. A debate which ultimately cannot be resolved - at least with the current array of conceptual tools - for, as Marshall (1982) suggests, "discussion of which changed first - the world (Marx), or people's understanding of it (Weber) - is likely to be interminable because what is at issue is not the status of this or that body of empirical material but is rather the validity of competing frameworks for the interpretation of social reality" (p. 150). See also Barton and Meighan (1978) for an overview of the issues.


7. As it often is in centralised systems - if for rather different reasons.

8. It is interesting to note that 'ideology' was a term coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy - a member of the newly-founded 'Institut de France' (1795) whose members were known as 'ideologues' - progressive, radical, liberal-scientific scholars during the French Revolution (see Matthews, 1980; see also Larrain, 1979).

9. See also CERI (1973).

10. The growth of the Manpower Services Commission during the late seventies and early eighties in England has been nothing less than spectacular in this respect. See also Williamson (1981) for a comparison of English provision with that of West Germany, and Jessel, TES, 12.2.80 and 16.1.81 on recent French initiatives.

11. The example Ranson et al. cite of when the increasing size of an organisation constrains it to become more bureaucratic and, at the same time, it is located in a turbulent environment and therefore constrained to become more flexible and adaptable in its structural arrangements, is very clearly the situation currently facing the education systems of advanced industrial societies.

12. See also Ranson et al. (1982).

13. A point made by HMI John Graham, former professional head of the APU, in interview.

15. See, for example, Unit 15 of course E222 The Control of Education in Britain, Open University 1979 or for the layman's view, Turpie (1978) Report on Strathclyde Regional Council Study, Tour of French Educational Establishments, mimeo.

16. See Broadfoot, P. (1980a) for an enlargement of this argument.

17. "On peut aujourd'hui se demander si un certain degré de centralisation n'est pas requis par le souci de l'efficacité et la nature des objectifs que se donnent les systèmes d'éducation. Au moment où nous interrogeons légitimement en France sur les avantages d'une plus grande souplesse et donc d'une plus grande déconcentration, d'autres pays de traditions différentes regardent avec intérêt vers un modèle plus centralisé et, partant, mieux adapté à la réalisation de l'égalité devant l'éducation. La décennie qui s'ouvre pourrait être marquée par une plus grande homogénéité des structures des systèmes éducatifs ..."

P. Garrigue, Chef du Service des Affaires Internationales, Ministère de l'Education, Paris, 'Etude comparative des Systèmes éducatifs', ministerial paper, October 1980, p. 3. It is not clear, however, whether the explanation for this tendency is the common experience of economic recession, or a more inevitable progression towards some optimum arrangement in keeping with the economic realities of technological competition in advanced industrial societies per se.

18. Evidence of this intention with regard to curriculum is manifest in most recent government publications on education since the Great Debate of 1977, notably the 1977 Green Paper, 'Education in Schools', the 1980 response to the 1977-9 review of local authority arrangements for the curriculum (report published 1979) namely, 'A Framework for the School Curriculum'. With regard to assessment, see, for example, Vickerman, C. (1982) 'The organisation and structure of the new examining groups', in Secondary Education Journal, 12, 1 and the 1982 DES booklet on the new Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, '17+ : A New Examination', which illustrate similar intentions. The direction towards increased financial control is expressed in the revised procedures for the allocation of the Rate Support Grant and in hints that government may be exploring the possibility of an education 'block' grant (see, for example, Annex B of the Green Paper, 'Alternatives to Domestic Rates', para. 7).


20. It would be misleading, however, to regard the trends depicted in Figure 2.2 as anything more than general tendencies and to ignore the many examples of resistance on the part of educational practitioners and consumers to such changes which may be identified and the associated pattern of negotiation between politicians, administrators, teachers and the public this has made necessary.
21. This refers to the DES's request— at present still in experimental stage— to the Examination Boards to submit jointly grade-descriptions for three different levels of performance in three different subjects at O-level.