

Item A

Recent changes to the provision of education have led to an increase in investment of businesses in the education sector. Some sociologists have argued that this has led to changes in the opportunities for students of different social classes, whilst others suggest that this is a form of reproducing inequality in wider society.

Other sociologists have suggested that the injection of capital provided by businesses has led to an increase in educational standards and choice for all students.

Using material from Item A, analyse two ways in which the privatisation of education has impacted on the experience of students from different social classes (10)

One way in which the privatisation of education has impacted on the experience of students from different social classes has been through the creation of the first wave of city centre academies. Initially a policy created by the Labour government of Tony Blair, City Centre academies replaced run-down schools in urban areas with new academies. Often several state comprehensives with falling numbers and under-performance would be closed with permission given to businesses (academy trusts) to invest in a new school in that area. Academy Trusts provided an 'injection of capital' (Item A) to build new state of the art facilities in urban areas and offered incentives for students attending such as the use of i-pads and other educational technology. These initial academies targeted students from low-income backgrounds and drew funding directly from central government to pay for their tuition. This led to an increase in standards in education in those areas (predominantly working-class), increased opportunities and improved outcomes for students in the first few years of operation. However, some critics would suggest that after several years of capital investment, academies would change their strategy to maximise profit, reducing the number of teachers and even hiring unqualified teachers instead of experienced ones, which eventually led to a decline in standards.

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A second way in which the privatisation of education has impacted on the experience of students from different social classes has been the coalition government's increase of different types of schools. Between 2010 and 2015 the coalition government both introduced Free Schools and increased the range of academies. This 'led to an increase...choice' (Item A) of schools and this primarily benefitted the middle classes. Many high performing independent schools converted to academy status and attracted investment from multi-academy trusts. This led to improvement of facilities, expansion of teaching capacity and investment in educational technology. Multi-academy trusts were drawn to investing in these schools as with high performing students and a dominant position in the marketplace it gave them a chance to expand provision and increase profits. Some schools attracted investment from Universities and offered students incentive to continue their education through guaranteeing places, providing more opportunities for the middle-class children that attended. Similarly, Free Schools attracted middle class parents who with funding from the government could set up their own alternative provision, often influenced by global ideas in education. This gave their students a diverse and tailored experience to education that working-class children were excluded from. However, it can be argued that many multi-academy trusts have put profit over progress and this has led to declining standards in education for all students.