

Chapter 3 Research Methods

Topic 2 Examining education: the research context

Answers to QuickCheck Questions on page 107

1. Three of the following:

- They have less power and status than adults, so it is more difficult for them to state their views openly.
- Their vocabulary, powers of self-expression, thinking skills and confidence are likely to be more limited.
- They may be more vulnerable to physical and psychological harm.
- Researchers must have DBS checks before they can study children.

2. Manipulating the way we come across to other people. Teachers are often highly skilled at impression management because a major part of their role is to put on an act for pupils and others.

3. The teacher/school control classroom layout and access, and pupils' time, activities, noise levels, dress and language while they are in class.

4. Classrooms are fairly small, confined social spaces. They are comparatively simple social settings, with usually just two social roles – teacher and pupil.

5. (a) Official statistics on exam performance/league tables; on truancy; on subject choices. (b) Documents: school policy documents; reports on individual students; Ofsted reports; government inquiries.

6. Child protection laws mean researchers to have DBS checks, which may delay or prevent them from carrying out their research. Schools' legal duty of care towards their pupils may mean researchers' access is restricted. By law, young people must attend school and this gives researchers a 'captive population' to study. The law requires schools to collect information on pupils' attendance, achievement etc, which researchers may use.

7. Heads may believe the research will interfere with the school's work or undermine teachers' authority. They may believe it is dangerous to involve pupils in commenting on their teachers. They may believe children are not competent to judge teachers. They may steer the researcher away from sensitive situations, such as classes where the teacher has poor classroom control.

8. Parents' class, gender and ethnicity may affect how willing or able they are to participate in research; e.g. pro-school, middle-class parents may be more likely to return questionnaires about their children's education.

9. The researcher will probably have been quite successful in education and this may make it difficult for them to empathise with students in an underachieving, anti-school subculture.