In 1965 the Labour Government made schools comprehensive:
-The labour government insisted that Local Education Authorities (LEAs) reorganised most schools so that everyone had equality if opportunity.
‘Comprehensive school’ means its universal- everyone’s meant to get the same deal.
Positive aspects of the comprehensive system:
• Criticisms of the comprehensive system
• There’s no 11+, so 80% of the school population don’t get labelled as failures
• Most comprehensive schools still sort pupils into streams or sets depending on test scores, so it’s still possible to feel like a failure without the 11+.
• High-ability pupils generally still do well with this system. Lower-ability pupils do better in comprehensive schools than in the old secondary moderns.
• Comprehensives in working-class area have worse GCSE results than those in middle-class areas.
• Comprehensive schooling hasn’t achieved equality of opportunity. Schools tend to be ‘single-class’, depending on the local area. Where people can afford to live is important in educational attainment.

In 1976 the push for Vocational Education started:
-policies designed to create a closer link between school and work = vocationalism.
These vocational reforms include:
1. Youth Training Schemes (YTS) started in 1983. These were job training schemes for school leavers aged 16-17.
2. NVQs and GNVQs were introduced- practical qualifications.
3. The New Deal, introduced in 1998 meant people on benefits had to attend courses if they didn’t accept work.
There are some problems with vocational education:
1. Some sociologists argue that it aims to teach good work discipline, not skills
2. Some Marxist sociologists say that vocational training provides cheap labour and that governments encourage people into training schemes to lower unemployment statistics.
3. Vocational qualifications often aren’t regarded as highly as academic qualifications by universities and employers.
4. Some feminist sociologists argue that vocational qualifications force girls into traditionally ‘female’ jobs such as beautician and child-minder.

The 1988 Education Reform Act- choice, inspections and more tests
-in the late 1980s the conservative govt introduced major education reforms based on New Right ideas so were focused on:
• Widening choice within the education system
• Encouraging more competition to create a ‘market’ in schools (marketisation)

Education should link to the economy: the govt introduced more vocational courses and work placement schemes.

There should be better standards in education:
1. The govt introduced a National Curriculum of compulsory subjects for all 5-16 year olds: eng, maths, science, ‘core subjects’ had to be given priority.
2. OFSTED was set up to inspect schools.
3. Schools could opt out of their local education authority and become grant-maintained schools, meaning they got money straight from the government.
-the research couldn't be exactly repeated, so it isn't as reliable as questionnaires, e.g. covert participant observation also has to be conducted with a smaller sample, which makes the data less representative.

Using closed questionnaires to find out about parental attitudes:

-Parental attitudes to education can be positive or negative:
  1. Questionnaires can be used to collect a larger amount of data very quickly. This means that lots of parents could be surveyed, which would make the results more representative.
  2. Parents may be more honest about their attitudes towards education if they can complete a private questionnaire, rather than talking to an interviewer. E.G if their attitude towards education is negative they may be unwilling to speak about it in person.
  3. The study could be easily repeated, making the data more reliable. This could be useful for investigating the changes in parental attitudes over time.

BUT....

  1. Respondents can easily lie about their attitudes. This makes the data less valid.
  2. Using closed questions doesn't allow the respondent to explain their answer. It might not be a suitable method for researching attitudes to education, which are often complex.
  3. If parents associate the questionnaire with the school, then the researcher may find that the questionnaire is mostly completed by those with a positive attitude towards education. This would skew the sample making it less representative, so the data could be less valid.

Using official statistics to study mixed-ability teaching:

-mixed ability classes are one of the three main ways to organise teaching in a school, there are 2 types of statistics- hard and soft:

**ADVANTAGES**

- Using hard statistics would be a reliable source of secondary data because they're objective. Schools can't adjust the to portray mixed-ability teaching in either a positive or negative way.
- Statistics can be easily compared because they're a form of qualitative data. For example, the outcomes of mixed-ability classes could be compared for different genders, age groups and schools, over time.

**DISADVANTAGES**

- If soft statistics are used, the researcher would have to be careful that the data was valid. It could have been adjusted by schools, e.g. to exaggerate the successes of mixed-ability teaching.
- Official statistics don’t offer as much insight into the reasons behind achievement as other methods like unstructured interviews.
- As selective schools, the variation in abilities in mixed classes would be less great than at non-selective schools, so this could skew the data.