

1 Education

Activities

Critical thinking:
formulating research questions

1 Look at this essay question and answer the questions below.

A school's curriculum plays a key role in determining how successful a person's life will be. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

- 1 What different views might there be related to the opinion expressed in the question?
- 2 Do you agree or disagree with the opinion?
- 3 What questions would you need to ask to find evidence to prove or disprove this opinion?

2 Compare your questions from Exercise 1 with these ones. Do you agree that these are the right questions that need to be asked? Why? / Why not?

- 1 How can success be defined? It means different things to different people.
- 2 What other factors affect a person's success in life, e.g. parents, income, personality?
- 3 Does the school curriculum play a role in determining the kind of life a person has? How important is this?

Using sources: writing notes and summaries

3 Review these key skills by writing a short definition for each term.

- summarizing
- note-taking
- paraphrasing

4 Read this paragraph from the Unit 1 text. Which of the sentences below (a–c) is the best summary? Why?

The hidden curriculum is also related to gender bias. For many years, the focus in education was on how gender bias harmed girls and women: reading materials, classroom activities, and treatment by teachers and peers contributed to a feeling among many girls and young women that they were less important than male students. The accepted wisdom was that, over time, differential treatment undermines females' self-esteem and discourages them from taking certain courses, such as math and science, which have been dominated by male teachers and students.

- a Females used to be discouraged from studying subjects like maths and science because they did not perform as well in them as boys did.
- b Studies on gender bias in schools used to focus on how girls were at a disadvantage to boys, as they were inadvertently discouraged from studying formerly male-dominated subjects.
- c One part of the hidden curriculum is gender bias. For several years, it was commonly believed that girls were disadvantaged at school as a result of the reading materials, classroom activities and treatment by teachers and peers. This left girls believing that they were not as important as boys and being discouraged from studying subjects like maths and science, which male teachers and students dominated.

5 Spend a few minutes studying this extract. Then write a short summary of it without looking back at the text.

Ironically, after many years of discussion about how the hidden curriculum and other problems in schools served to disadvantage female students, the emphasis has now shifted to the question of whether girls' increasing accomplishments from elementary school to college and beyond have come at the expense of boys and young men. But this is not true, according to research by the AAUW (2008:2): "Educational achievement is not a zero-sum game, in which a gain for one group results in a corresponding loss for the other. If girls' success comes at the expense of boys, one would expect to see boys' scores decline as girls' scores rise, but this has not been the case."

Generally, positive trends in the educational attainment of both women and men mask the fact that many students are not making gains in school and that important variations in achievement exist by race/ethnicity and family income level (AAUW, 2008).

Language focus: key aspects of academic writing

6 a Look at these features of spoken and written language and write down an example of each one.

- colloquial vocabulary *kids (= children)*
- the passive voice
- tag questions
- contractions
- personal pronouns
- the active voice
- modal verbs and hedging
- assertive language
- noun phrases
- relative clauses

b Tick (✓) the features that are common in academic writing.

7 Rewrite these sentences in a more academic style.

- 1 It's clear that kids are strongly affected by the school curriculum.
- 2 Schools don't encourage students from lower-income families to go to university.
- 3 Everybody knows that getting a job should depend on your own ability, rather than who you know.

Extension Write an essay answering this question. You can use information from the Unit 1 text, as well as any of the texts in Unit 1 of the Student's Book. Use the ideas you have gathered as you have completed the exercises in the unit. Try to incorporate clear summaries of the ideas in the text, and focus on your academic language.

A school's curriculum plays a key role in determining how successful a person's life will be. To what extent do you agree with this statement?