1.1 Functionalist and New Right Perspectives on the Role of Education

AQA 7192 · about 55 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. Spend about 55 minutes on this paper.

1 Item A: A regional education report, fictional and created for this question. 'Region X' introduced parental choice and a voucher pilot five years ago. The report compares outcomes from local state schools before and after the pilot. Findings: average GCSE points per pupil rose by 6% in maintained schools that remained in the state system, while academy and voucher-funded schools in the region saw a 9% rise. Parental satisfaction surveys show 68% satisfaction in voucher schools and 55% in remaining state schools. However, disadvantaged pupils in voucher-funded schools had only a 2% improvement in average points, compared with 7% improvement for disadvantaged pupils in state schools. The regional inspector reports increased selection by ability in voucher schools and higher administrative costs per pupil in the voucher scheme.' Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, outline and explain two ways this evidence could be used to evaluate the New Right view that marketisation and parental choice improve educational standards and meritocracy.

(Total for Question 1 is 10 marks)

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2 Which pair of theorists is most closely associated with the functionalist idea that education promotes social solidarity and teaches specialist skills?

- ☐ A) Bowles and Gintis
- ☐ B) Durkheim and Parsons
- ☐ C) Chubb and Moe
- ☐ D) Becker and Willis

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

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3 Explain briefly how the concept of the hidden curriculum can be used to critique the functionalist claim that schools promote shared values and meritocracy.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Applying material from Item A (printed with Question 1) and your wider sociological knowledge, evaluate the functionalist view that education serves the needs of society. You should consider different functionalist claims, relevant evidence and criticisms, and reach a supported conclusion.

(Total for Question 4 is 20 marks)

5 Identify Parsons' idea of how school acts as a bridge between family and wider society in the context of education.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Give one brief example a functionalist might use to support the claim that examinations promote meritocracy in education.

(Total for Question 6 is 1 mark)

7 Explain one Marxist criticism of the functionalist claim that education is meritocratic.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Outline one way Parsons linked education to the value consensus needed in a meritocratic society.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.1 Functionalist and New Right Perspectives on the Role of Education

Question 1

Level 1 Simple statements identifying a limited use of the Item or a basic criticism, with little or no development or sociological knowledge. **1-2**

Level 2 Some accurate use of the Item with one or two developed sociological points that begin to evaluate the New Right claim, but limited range or depth. **3-4**

Level 3 Clear use of the Item and relevant sociological knowledge, giving at least two developed points that evaluate the New Right view, including evidence for and against. **5-6**

Level 4 Detailed and well-focused evaluation using the Item and wider sociological knowledge. At least two distinct and well-developed ways of using the evidence to support balanced judgement about marketisation and parental choice, showing understanding of implications for standards and meritocracy. **7-10**

Indicative content:

- Support for New Right: higher average rises (9% vs 6%) and higher parental satisfaction in voucher schools can be used to argue competition raised standards and responsiveness to parents.
- Counter-evidence: disadvantaged pupils improved less in voucher schools (2% vs 7%), suggesting marketisation can increase inequalities and fail to deliver meritocratic outcomes for the disadvantaged.
- Selection and cream-skimming: inspector's report of increased selection by ability in voucher schools supports the criticism that marketisation encourages selection, undermining equal opportunity.
- Higher administrative costs: higher per-pupil costs in the voucher scheme could be used to argue market mechanisms are less efficient or divert funds from teaching, challenging New Right efficiency claims.
- Sociological knowledge: reference to Chubb and Moe's claims about better outcomes under markets, and to criticisms from Marxists and sociologists who stress unequal starting points, cultural capital and reproduction of class advantage.
- Evaluation: students might argue that some measures of 'standards' improved, but that marketisation risks undermining meritocracy and increasing inequality; conclude with balanced judgement about conditional benefits or limits of parental choice.

Question 2

B (Durkheim and Parsons) **B1**

Answer: B

Question 3

identifies the hidden curriculum as the implicit lessons of rules, routines and teacher expectations **B1**

development, e.g. it can reproduce class-based or gendered norms and thus undermine claims that schools produce a fair meritocratic value consensus **B1**

Answer: The hidden curriculum refers to implicit lessons from school rules, routines and teacher expectations; critics say it can reproduce class-based or gendered norms, undermining the claim that schools produce a fair meritocratic value consensus.

Question 4

Level 1 Basic statements about the functionalist view with little development, limited use of Item A, and little or no evaluation.	**1-4**
Level 2 Some accurate description of functionalist views (Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore), with attempts to apply Item A and some limited evaluation using one or two criticisms.	**5-9**
Level 3 Clear and accurate explanation of the main functionalist claims, good use of Item A and wider knowledge to support points, and balanced evaluation using Marxist, feminist and New Right critiques with developed analysis.	**10-15**
Level 4 Detailed and well-focused assessment that explains functionalist arguments and uses Item A and wider evidence precisely; strong, balanced critical engagement with multiple perspectives and a well-supported conclusion about how far education serves societal needs.	**16-20**

Indicative content:

- AO1 points: Durkheim on social solidarity and specialist skills; Parsons on school as bridge and meritocratic role allocation; Davis and Moore on role allocation and importance of allocating talents to social roles.
- Use of Item A: evidence that some measures of standards rose (9% in voucher schools) which could be seen as supporting functionalist ideas about education performing economic and integrative functions; parental satisfaction may indicate schools meeting societal expectations.
- Criticisms: Marxist critique that education reproduces class inequalities and is not genuinely meritocratic, Bowles and Gintis on correspondence principle; feminist critiques on gendered reproduction.
- New Right perspective: Chubb and Moe argue markets improve efficiency and standards, which overlaps with functionalist emphasis on skills but differs in policy prescription; Item A also shows counter-evidence such as disadvantaged pupils faring worse under vouchers, suggesting market solutions can undermine social needs.
- Practical evidence from Item A: selection by ability and higher administrative costs challenge functionalist assumptions of equal opportunity and efficient allocation; functionalist claims about meritocracy are undermined if disadvantaged groups are excluded.
- Evaluation: weigh positive claims about social cohesion and skill provision against evidence of inequality, selection and reproduction of advantage. Conclude that education can serve some societal needs, such as training a workforce and fostering shared values, but may fail to provide equal opportunity and can reinforce social divisions unless policies specifically address structural inequalities.

Question 5

identifies the bridge idea: school replaces particularistic family values with universalistic standards	**B1**
development, e.g. this prepares pupils for meritocratic competition in wider society	**B1**

Answer: Parsons argued school is a bridge from the particularistic standards of the family to the universalistic standards of wider society, preparing children for meritocratic roles.

Question 6

a correct example, e.g. national examinations that rank pupils and determine access to university or jobs	**B1**

Answer: National examinations that rank pupils and determine access to university or jobs.

Question 7

identifies a criticism, e.g. education reproduces existing class inequalities rather than offering equal opportunities	**B1**
development, e.g. Marxists argue cultural capital and hidden curriculum advantage middle-class pupils so 'meritocracy' is a myth	**B1**

Answer: Marxists argue education reproduces existing class inequalities rather than offering equal opportunity; cultural capital and the hidden curriculum advantage middle-class pupils, so the claim that success is purely meritocratic is a myth.

Question 8

identifies Parsons' link, e.g. school teaches universalistic values and achievement orientation	**B1**
development, e.g. this creates shared standards against which individuals are judged	**B1**
further development, e.g. teachers reward effort and ability rather than ascribed family status	**B1**
application, e.g. this supports the idea of meritocracy where status is achieved	**B1**

Answer: Parsons argued school teaches universalistic values and an achievement orientation, creating shared standards against which individuals are judged; teachers reward effort and ability rather than ascribed family status, supporting a meritocratic system where status is achieved.