4.1 The Role and Functions of Education: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Evaluate the view that education mainly benefits society as a whole (a functionalist view), rather than mainly serving the interests of the ruling class (a Marxist view). In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 Not all education is academic. Some qualifications are described as 'vocational'. Define vocational education and give one example.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 The functionalist sociologist Emile Durkheim argued education performs the function of creating 'social solidarity'. Define the term 'social solidarity'.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 The functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons described school as a 'bridge' between the family and wider society.

(a) Explain what Parsons meant by describing school as a 'bridge' in this way. **(2)**

(b) Explain what Parsons meant by 'universalistic values', giving an example from school life. **(2)**

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Functionalism and Marxism are usually described as opposing perspectives on education. Explain one similarity between functionalist and Marxist views of education.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.1 The Role and Functions of Education: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the functionalist case AND the Marxist case, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both the functionalist case and the Marxist case, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of the functionalist and/or Marxist case, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between perspectives. **4-6**

Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about education benefiting society or the ruling class, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Functionalist case: Durkheim argued education creates social solidarity and teaches specialist skills needed for a complex division of labour; Parsons described school as a bridge from particularistic family standards to universalistic societal standards.
- Functionalist case continued: Davis and Moore argued education allocates people to job roles through a meritocratic process, rewarding talent and effort with the most important positions.
- Marxist case: Bowles and Gintis argued a correspondence principle links school structures (hierarchy, competition, obedience) directly to the structures of a capitalist workplace, preparing pupils to accept a subordinate role as workers.
- Marxist case continued: the hidden curriculum teaches obedience and acceptance of authority informally, and disguises this preparation as fair, ability-based meritocracy, which Marxists see as legitimating inequality.
- Evaluation of the functionalist case: critics argue it understates how family background, income and area affect real chances of success, treating the system as more meritocratic than it actually is.
- Evaluation of the Marxist case: critics argue Bowles and Gintis are too deterministic; Paul Willis's study of 'the lads' found some working-class pupils actively resisted and rejected school values rather than simply being shaped by them.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh the functionalist emphasis on shared benefit and formal equality of opportunity against the Marxist argument that structures still systematically favour the already-advantaged, without presenting either side as simply correct.

Question 2

education or training focused on preparing students for a specific job or trade (oe) **B1**

a correct example, e.g. a BTEC or apprenticeship in a practical field such as construction or health and social care **B1**

Answer: Education or training focused on preparing students for a specific job or trade, e.g. a BTEC or apprenticeship in a field such as construction or health and social care.

Question 3

a sense of belonging and shared identity that binds individuals together as members of the same society (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. Durkheim argued schools achieve this partly by teaching a shared history and culture, building commitment to society as a whole **B1**

Answer: A sense of belonging and shared identity that binds individuals together; Durkheim argued schools build this partly by teaching a shared history and culture.

Question 4

(a) identifies that the family judges a child by particularistic standards (their own individual standards, e.g. as 'my child') **B1**

(a) explains that wider society instead judges people by universalistic standards, the same impersonal rules applied to everyone, and school prepares children for this shift **B1**

(a) Answer: Parsons argued the family judges a child by particularistic (individual) standards, while wider society judges by universalistic standards applied equally to everyone; school is a 'bridge' preparing children to move from one to the other.

(b) defines universalistic values as the same standards or rules being applied equally to everyone, regardless of who they are (oe) **B1**

(b) a correct example, e.g. all pupils being marked against the same exam criteria, or the same school rules applying to every pupil **B1**

(b) Answer: Universalistic values are standards or rules applied equally to everyone; for example, all pupils sitting the same exam and being marked against the same criteria, regardless of their background.

Question 5

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both are structuralist/macro perspectives that see individuals as shaped by the wider structure of society **B1**

development, e.g. both agree that education performs important functions for the economy, such as producing a trained and disciplined workforce **B1**

further point, e.g. both agree schools socialise pupils into shared norms and expectations, even though they disagree about who benefits **B1**

accurately notes this contrasts with their central disagreement over whether education is based on consensus (functionalism) or conflict (Marxism) **B1**

Answer: Both are macro, structuralist perspectives that see education as shaped by wider society and agree it produces a trained, disciplined workforce and socialises pupils into shared norms, even though they disagree over whether this benefits everyone (functionalism) or mainly the ruling class (Marxism).

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