



GSOC.ED1 The Role and Functions of Education

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

- 1** Which sociological perspective sees the 'correspondence principle' as an accurate description of how schools operate?

- ☐ A) Functionalism
☐ B) Marxism
☐ C) Feminism
☐ D) Interactionism

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** The functionalist sociologist Emile Durkheim argued education performs the function of creating 'social solidarity'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Durkheim identified more than one function of education.

- (a)** Explain how Durkheim believed schools teach 'specialist skills'. (2)
- (b)** State one other function of education identified by Durkheim, other than teaching specialist skills. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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)

5 The functionalist sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore argued that education helps to 'allocate' people to the job roles best suited to their talents.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 The Marxist sociologists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis argued that the education system closely 'corresponds' to the capitalist workplace.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Marxists also refer to a 'hidden curriculum' operating in schools.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Functionalism and Marxism are usually described as opposing perspectives on education.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 Marxists criticise the functionalist claim that education is meritocratic.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 State one criticism that is often made of the Marxist correspondence principle.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Which of these is most closely associated with a 'New Right' view of how to improve education?

- ☐ A) Encouraging competition between schools and greater parental choice
- ☐ B) Abolishing all school rules
- ☐ C) Removing exams and qualifications completely
- ☐ D) Making all schools identical in every way

(Total for Question 11 is 1 mark)

- 12** A common criticism of functionalism is that not every pupil really has an equal chance to succeed through education, because of differences in family background, income or where they live.

Using your knowledge of the functionalist perspective, explain how a functionalist sociologist might respond to this criticism.

(Total for Question 12 is 6 marks)

- 13** Functionalists argue education mainly benefits society as a whole by teaching shared values and specialist skills. Marxists argue education mainly serves the interests of the ruling class, through the correspondence principle and the hidden curriculum.

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 13 is 12 marks)

- 14** Sociologists use the term 'meritocracy' to describe a particular way of allocating success.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

15 Not all education is academic. Some qualifications are described as 'vocational'.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

16 Explain one way the education system in England has changed over the last 50 years.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ED1 The Role and Functions of Education

Question 1

- **B1** B (Marxism)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** 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
- **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 3

- (a) **B1** identifies that modern industrial societies need a complex division of labour, with many different specialised jobs (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. schools teach the specific knowledge and skills needed for particular occupational roles, which the family alone could not provide
- **(a) Answer: Durkheim argued modern societies need many specialised jobs, so schools teach the specific knowledge and skills needed for particular occupational roles that families cannot provide alone.**
- (b) **B1** names a second function, e.g. creating social solidarity or a shared value consensus
- (b) **B1** brief accurate description of that function
- **(b) Answer: Creating social solidarity: education builds a shared sense of belonging and commitment to society through a shared history and culture.**

Question 4

- (a) **B1** identifies that the family judges a child by particularistic standards (their own individual standards, e.g. as 'my child')
- (a) **B1** explains that wider society instead judges people by universalistic standards, the same impersonal rules applied to everyone, and school prepares children for this shift
- **(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) **B1** defines universalistic values as the same standards or rules being applied equally to everyone, regardless of who they are (oe)
- (b) **B1** a correct example, e.g. all pupils being marked against the same exam criteria, or the same school rules applying to every pupil
- **(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

- **B1** identifies role allocation as sorting or selecting individuals for their future work roles
- **B1** explains this happens through testing, grading and qualifications during education
- **B1** links this to meritocracy, the idea that people succeed through their own ability and effort rather than their background
- **B1** development, e.g. Davis and Moore argued the most talented or hardest-working individuals are allocated to the most important, highly rewarded positions, which encourages everyone to try their best
- **Answer: Davis and Moore argued education sorts and tests individuals so the most talented and hardest-working are allocated to the most important, highly rewarded jobs, a meritocratic process based on ability and effort rather than background.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies the correspondence principle: the claim that relationships and structures in school mirror those in a capitalist workplace
- **B1** example, e.g. the hierarchy of teachers over pupils mirrors the hierarchy of bosses over workers
- **B1** example, e.g. competing for grades mirrors competing for wages or promotion, and following school rules without question mirrors following orders at work
- **B1** development, e.g. Bowles and Gintis argued this trains pupils in advance to accept a subordinate role as workers in a capitalist economy
- **Answer: Bowles and Gintis's correspondence principle argues school mirrors the capitalist workplace: teacher-pupil hierarchy mirrors boss-worker hierarchy, and competing for grades mirrors competing for wages, training pupils to accept a subordinate role as future workers.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies the hidden curriculum as the unwritten, unofficial lessons or values schools teach alongside the official subject curriculum
- **B1** example, e.g. obedience to authority, punctuality and accepting hierarchy taught through school routines and discipline rather than lesson content
- **B1** development, e.g. Marxists argue the hidden curriculum prepares pupils to accept inequality and their eventual position in the workforce without question
- **B1** further development, e.g. Bowles and Gintis argued success in this hidden curriculum is disguised as being based purely on ability, making inequality seem fair
- **Answer: The hidden curriculum is the unofficial lessons schools teach through routines and discipline, such as obedience and punctuality, which Marxists like Bowles and Gintis argue prepares pupils to accept inequality and a future subordinate role at work as if it were simply based on ability.**

Question 8

- **B1** 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)
- **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).**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a recognised Marxist criticism, e.g. that success is really linked to class background and cultural or material advantages, not just ability and effort
- **B1** brief development, e.g. so meritocracy is a 'myth' that disguises real inequality
- **Answer: Marxists argue meritocracy is a myth: success is really linked to class background and material or cultural advantages, not just ability and effort, which disguises real inequality.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it is too deterministic and underestimates pupils' ability to resist or question school rules and values
- **B1** development, e.g. Paul Willis's study of 'the lads' found some working-class pupils actively rejected school values rather than simply accepting them
- **Answer: Critics argue the correspondence principle is too deterministic; Paul Willis's study of 'the lads' found some working-class pupils actively resisted and rejected school values, rather than simply accepting them.**

Question 11

- **B1** A (encouraging competition between schools and greater parental choice)
- **Answer: A**

Question 12

- **B1** acknowledges the criticism, e.g. that a pupil's chances are affected by family background, income or where they live
- **B1** a functionalist response, e.g. formal equality of opportunity exists because state education is free and open to all, and all pupils sit the same exams
- **B1** development, e.g. Parsons would argue the system is built around universalistic standards applied equally, even if outcomes still vary between pupils
- **B1** development, e.g. some functionalists would argue policies that give extra support or funding to disadvantaged pupils can strengthen meritocracy rather than disprove it
- **B1** further development, e.g. functionalists might argue education's overall function, teaching shared values and specialist skills, is still achieved regardless of some unequal individual outcomes
- **B1** clear, accurate use of functionalist terminology throughout (e.g. meritocracy, universalistic, value consensus)
- **Answer: A functionalist would accept that outcomes vary but argue formal equality of opportunity exists (free, open state education, the same exams for all, universalistic standards), and that support for disadvantaged pupils strengthens rather than disproves meritocracy, while education's wider functions are still achieved.**

Question 13

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of the functionalist and/or Marxist case, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between perspectives.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about education benefiting society or the ruling class, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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 14

- **B1** a system in which an individual's success is based on their own ability and effort (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. rather than on factors such as family background or wealth
- **Answer: A system in which success is based on an individual's own ability and effort, rather than on factors such as family background or wealth.**

Question 15

- **B1** 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
- **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 16

- **B1** identifies a genuine change, e.g. a rise in the school leaving age, growth in the number of young people going on to higher education, or growth in vocational qualifications
- **B1** brief development of that change
- **Answer: There has been a long-term rise in the school leaving age and in the proportion of young people going on to higher education, compared with 50 years ago.**