# 4.9 Marketisation, Parentocracy and School Choice: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Answer ALL questions. For questions worth 3 marks or more write in full sentences. Spend about 30 minutes on this paper.**

**1** Compare how the New Right perspective and a Marxist perspective would view marketisation and school choice.

**(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)**

**2** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that marketisation of education has increased equality of opportunity.

**(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)**


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**3** Define the term 'parentocracy' as used in sociology of education, referring to Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz's use of the term.

**(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)**

**4** Identify one feature of 'open enrolment' policy in the context of marketisation and school choice.

**(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)**

**5** Explain two ways league tables are intended to influence schools under marketisation policies for education since 1988.

**(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)**


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# Mark scheme · 4.9 Marketisation, Parentocracy and School Choice: 30-minute Pack

## Question 1

| | |
|---|---|
| identifies New Right view, e.g. supports marketisation as increasing efficiency and standards through competition | **B1** |
| identifies Marxist view, e.g. sees marketisation as reproducing class inequalities and benefiting ruling-class interests | **B1** |
| explains New Right rationale, e.g. parents acting as consumers force schools to improve | **B1** |
| explains Marxist rationale, e.g. choice advantages privileged families and helps legitimize unequal outcomes as 'fair' market results | **B1** |

**Answer: The New Right supports marketisation, arguing competition and parental choice increase efficiency and standards as parents act like consumers; Marxists argue marketisation reproduces class inequalities, advantaging privileged families and legitimising unequal outcomes as if they result from fair market processes.**

## Question 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 1** Simple statements about marketisation with little or no sociological explanation, or an unbalanced description of one side only. | **1-3** |
| **Level 2** Clear explanation of one or two relevant sociological arguments about marketisation and equality of opportunity, with some use of evidence or examples, limited evaluation. | **4-6** |
| **Level 3** Developed analysis using competing sociological perspectives and examples, showing awareness of how market mechanisms have both positive and negative effects on equality of opportunity. | **7-9** |
| **Level 4** Thorough, balanced discussion drawing on several sociological perspectives and specific evidence, with a supported judgement on the extent to which marketisation has increased equality of opportunity. | **10-12** |

**Indicative content:**

- Arguments that marketisation increases equality: New Right claim that parental choice and competition drive up standards, giving parents power to choose better schools and rewarding effective schools; league tables and Ofsted provide transparent performance data so parents can make informed choices; some disadvantaged pupils may gain from improved schools and targeted interventions in competition-driven contexts.
- Arguments that marketisation reduces equality: Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz and other critics argue parentocracy privileges middle-class parents who have economic and cultural capital to choose, leading to cream skimming and silt-shift; league tables can stigmatise struggling schools and concentrate disadvantaged pupils; selective admissions, marketing and resource differences increase segregation by class and reduce genuine equality of opportunity.
- Empirical and practical considerations: evidence that oversubscribed schools are dominated by pupils from advantaged backgrounds, that academy or autonomous status can lead to variable outcomes, and that Ofsted pressure can lead to short-term improvements but also to teaching to the test and exclusion of challenging pupils.
- Perspectives to use: New Right supportive view, Marxist and critical sociologists highlighting reproduction of class inequality, Ball et al. on parentocracy, and feminist or interactionist comments on how choice affects different social groups in varied ways.
- Possible judgement: balanced conclusion that marketisation has produced some improvements in choice and accountability but overall has tended to increase inequalities because advantaged families benefit most; extent of agreement depends on which sociological perspective is used and on how equality of opportunity is defined.


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## Question 3

identifies parentocracy as a system where parents are given power to choose schools, with choice supposedly driving school improvement (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. credits Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz in noting this idea can mask inequalities between parents in the ability to choose **B1**

**Answer: Parentocracy describes a system where parents are given power to choose schools, with the idea that parental choice drives school improvement; Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz note it can mask unequal ability among parents to exercise choice.**

## Question 4

identifies a correct feature, e.g. pupils can apply to schools outside their local catchment area **B1**

brief development, e.g. this increases competition between schools for pupil places **B1**

**Answer: Open enrolment allows pupils to apply to schools outside their local catchment area, increasing competition between schools for pupil places.**

## Question 5

identifies one way, e.g. to provide parents with information to compare school performance **B1**

development of first way, e.g. so parents can choose higher performing schools, creating demand incentives **B1**

identifies second way, e.g. to pressure schools to raise standards to improve their published position **B1**

development of second way, e.g. lower-ranked schools may change practices or recruit differently to improve results **B1**

**Answer: League tables are meant to give parents information to compare school performance so they can choose higher performing schools, creating demand incentives; they also pressure schools to raise standards to improve their published position, leading some schools to change practices or recruitment.**


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