

ITEM B

Functionalists are particularly interested in the role of education in society. They see one key function of education as being secondary socialisation: teaching children the norms and values of wider society. However, other sociologists, such as Marxists, argue that functionalists ignore the negative effects of education for some and that education might not work in the interests of the whole of society, but just of some powerful groups.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of functionalist views of the education system in society today. (30 marks)

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There is lots of evidence that girls outperform boys in school, therefore some would argue that feminism is no longer relevant to the sociology of education: that feminists have succeeded in making education equal for boys and girls.

However, different feminist sociologists raise a number of issues relating to gender and education such as the reinforcement of stereotypes. Feminists also offer useful explanations for why educational achievement for girls has improved so much since the 1970s.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of feminist ideas to our understanding of education in the UK today. (30 marks)

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Marxists agree with functionalists that the education system is designed to prepare people for work and also to shape people's norms and values. However, they believe that this is to serve the interests of the ruling class and capitalism rather of society as a whole.

They also believe meritocracy is a myth: an ideological weapon to disguise the fact that the education system reproduces the class inequalities that exist in society.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate Marxist views of the role of the education system. (30 marks)

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There is still a significant gap between educational outcomes for people of different social classes. Children with the lowest household incomes are eligible for free school meals. 15% of boys and 10% of girls eligible for free school meals leave school with less than 5 GCSEs. For both genders this is three times as many as for those who are not eligible for free school meals. Therefore, it is clear that how much money a family has is a major factor in how well pupils succeed at school. Sociologists disagree on why this might be the case.

Many sociologists suggest that it is pupils' experiences in school that determine whether they are successful or not, while others disagree and suggest that pupils' home life and family background has a larger impact.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that differential educational achievement by social class is mainly due to in-school factors. (30 marks)

ITEM B

Girls now outperform boys throughout school. Sociologists disagree about why this might be the case, with some focusing on processes within schools and others looking at factors outside school and in wider society.

There are also still differences in the subjects that girls and boys choose to study at school and college, especially in vocational courses. Again, sociologists disagree about whether this is due to factors inside the school or in society at large.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations for gender differences in educational attainment and subject choices. (30 marks)

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There are significant differences between the educational attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Children from Chinese or Indian backgrounds tend to achieve very well, while black children tend to perform poorly. The patterns are not straightforward, with different ethnicities performing more or less well at different points in their education. Sociologists disagree about why this is the case.

Many sociologists suggest that it is pupils' home life and family background that determine whether they are successful or not, while others disagree and suggest that factors within school have the biggest impact.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that differential educational achievement by ethnicity is predominantly due to pupils' home backgrounds. (30 marks)

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Some sociologists argue that education policy inspired by New Right ideas has been primarily concerned with creating a market in the education system, where schools compete to attract parents and pupils.

However, there are several education policies that do not contribute to this marketisation, such as the Pupil Premium, a Liberal Democrat policy introduced by the coalition government, that meant children from low income households brought with them additional funding for a school which must be spent in ways that benefit disadvantaged pupils.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that the main purpose of recent education policy has been to create an education market. (30 marks)

ITEM B

Decisions about the UK education system are increasingly influenced by events and factors far from the UK and in other countries.

Governments trying to develop education policies that serve the needs of the economy have to consider the global nature of modern business and work and whether the UK can compete with other economies around the world, some of which have very different education systems and attitudes to education to the UK.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the impact of globalisation on education policy in the UK. (30 marks)

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Since the Butler Act of 1944, governments have brought in a wide array of education policies, often reflecting the political priorities of the parties in power. However, a lot of policy has focused on making the system more equal (although governments might differ in their definition or understanding of equality).

However, there do appear to be other functions of education policy, from servicing the economy and competing with other countries to improving rigour and standards.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that the main purpose of education policy since 1944 has been to reduce inequality. (30 marks)

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Interactionists are particularly interested in the processes that occur within schools – the interactions between teachers and pupils and within groups of pupils – rather than the big structural concerns of Marxists, functionalists and feminists.

One example of an interactionist study in education was Gillborn and Youdell (2000) who found that black pupils believed that teachers tended to have low expectations of them and that this appeared to be due to a negative label, connected to ethnic stereotypes.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of interactionist ideas to our understanding of education in the UK today. (30 marks)

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Girls now outperform boys in school at every level and in most subject areas. This is a big change from the 1960s when higher-level study was dominated by boys.

Sociologists disagree about why this change has come about. Some point to changes in schools themselves, while others consider changes in society.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that educational policies and processes in schools are the main reason why girls now outperform boys in education.

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Paul Willis conducted a famous study into a group of boys in a Midlands school who had no interest in doing well at school and pushed the boundaries at all times.

However, other studies have identified groups of students with different attitudes both to school and to education and some sociologists argue that subcultures today are no longer based on attitudes to school.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that pupils fail in education because they join subcultures in school.

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Functionalist sociologists argue that one important function of education is to establish a value consensus. They argue that just as the family teaches its members what is normal and what is important to family members and a local community, so education teaches them the same about wider society.

However, functionalists also recognise other roles of education, and other sociologists criticise the functionalist view altogether.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that the main role of the education system is to establish a value consensus.

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Globalisation is a term to describe the greater interconnectedness of the world. One way this presents itself is economically and it has had significant effects on the UK economy and on the UK's role in the world.

It also means we have much more information about what people do in other countries, enabling us to learn from what works and what does not.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that recent educational policies in the UK have been greatly influenced by globalisation.

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There are major social class differences in educational achievement and some sociologists argue that these are the result of internal factors and processes within schools. These include teacher labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy, streaming and the creation of pupil subcultures.

However, other sociologists claim that factors outside the school, such as parental attitudes and parental income, are the main causes of working-class underachievement.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that factors outside the school are the main cause of working-class underachievement.

ITEM B

Sociologists have investigated a number of aspects of gender and education. Although it is clear that in most subjects, girls achieve better examination results than boys, girls' experience of schooling in other respects may be less positive. For example, there is evidence that schooling reinforces traditional gender identities. Some sociologists argue that this disadvantages girls.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that although girls outperform boys in terms of achievement, the experience of schooling reinforces traditional gender identities.

ITEM B

Functionalist and Marxist sociologists are interested in similar aspects of the role of the education system. For example, both examine the relationship between education and work. Both perspectives also look at how norms and values are transmitted through education. However, while Marxists and functionalists focus on similar issues, they reach very different conclusions about the role of education.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that 'while Marxist and functionalist approaches focus on similar issues, they reach very different conclusions about the role of education'.

ITEM B

Until the 1980s, most education was provided by elected local education authorities, directed and funded by central government. However, the 1988 Education Reform Act began the marketization of education, aimed at raising standards by increasing parental choice and competition between schools. After 2010, there was a substantial move towards the privatisation of education through policies such as the growth of chains of academies run by private businesses.

Some sociologists claim that the main impact of marketization and privatisation policies has not been to raise standards, but to increase educational inequality.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that marketization and privatisation policies have increased educational inequality.