

#40DayChallenge Day 11

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Item A
Functionalists see the education system as an important social institution in the harmonious running of society. Through education, students learn the norms and values of wider society as well as a range of skills that they will be able to use in employment. Furthermore, the education system makes sure that students are rewarded based upon their ability.
However, some sociologists would disagree and state that education merely acts as a system for the elites to control and manipulate those without power into believing it is their own fault when they fail.
Applying material from Item A, analyse TWO ways in which the education system prepares students for their future (10)



One way in the education system prepares students for their future is through role allocation. This is based upon the idea of meritocracy, or as stated in the item 'students are rewarded based upon their ability'. If students show an aptitude for a certain subject or a certain set of skills, then this is nurtured by the education system and students are trained by experts in that field to go on and achieve to a higher level in that subject area. This is essential to the 'harmonious running of society' (Item A) as it means that those who show the greatest skill or ability in an area are most likely to make it to the top of their chosen profession. This benefits society as it means that it functions correctly, with those most capable in medicine being doctors, whilst those who show an aptitude for the law being in the legal professions. However, Marxists would suggest that 'meritocracy is a myth' and that many working-class students are denied the opportunities to show what they are capable of because of unconscious prejudices in the education system. They suggest there is a reproduction of inequality which leaves working-class students in working-class professions. Both the Functionalist view of role allocation and the Marxist view both suggest that education prepares students for their future, however they do not agree on whether this is carried out in an objective manner that allows students to achieve their potential.

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A second way in which education prepares students for their future is through the teaching of specialist skills. Item A states, 'students learn...a range of skills that they will be able to use in employment.' This refers to Durkheim's idea of education creating a diverse and specialised workforce for the complex division of labour in modern society. This can be evidenced in schools both explicitly through the formal curriculum which focuses on students learning the knowledge and skills to go onto employment or further study (for example to study medicine at university it is necessary for students to have a good understanding of the sciences, particularly biology). It can also be achieved through more subtle means, such as the informal or hidden curriculum. This is where students are taught values of working in teams, meeting deadlines, punctuality and the process of rewards and sanctions. However, Marxists Bowles and Gintis would suggest that the hidden curriculum passes on the norms and values of capitalist labour, what they referred to as the correspondence principle. This prepares students for a future of subservience, obedience and passive acceptance of hierarchies and alienation from their peers. Both of these approaches agree that the purpose is to prepare students for their future, albeit they disagree on whether that is one of oppression or of possibility.