

Item A

State education was created in the late nineteenth century in order to equip the next generation with the skills it needed for the complex division of labour in modern society. Since then, governments have introduced new initiatives to ensure that schools and colleges provide students with the skills they need in order to progress in the modern workplace. These have included the introduction of specialist courses, schools and colleges as well as ensuring that all students achieve a certain standard of education, particularly in English and Maths.

However, some sociologists would suggest that government initiatives have had limited success in achieving these objectives.

Applying material from Item A, analyse **TWO** ways that educational policies have ensured that students have the skills to compete in the job market. (10)

As stated in Item A, one way in which educational policies have ensured that students have the skills to compete in the job market is through achieving a 'certain standard of education, particularly in Maths and English'. Students who do not achieve passing grades in English and Maths are expected to resit these courses until they do achieve a passing grade. This was set out in the Wolff Report into employability skills in the UK in 2010 and suggested that the education system had failed to adequately equip students with the numeracy and literacy skills required to hold down permanent employment. As a result of these findings, the government made studying English and Maths a condition of funding for courses for 16-18-year olds who had carried onto Further Education. This can be seen to be one way in which educational policies ensure that students have the basic skills to compete against others in the job market. However, pass rates on English and Maths resits remain low and many students still leave the education system ill-equipped for the demands of the job market despite achieving these grades, as evidenced by the large number of 18-24-year olds who are unemployed or underemployed in the UK today.

A second way mentioned in the item is the provision of 'specialist courses, schools and colleges.' The Conservative government from 1979 to 1997 set out to reform vocational education and introduced several schemes to help students gain the skills that they would require in the job market. The creation of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) allowed 16-year olds to learn employment

skills through work with additional training provided by Further education colleges. Additionally, the creation of NVQs and GNVQs allowed students to receive a 'certain standard' of vocational training that was nationally recognised and could be used to prove their skills to future employers. Both qualifications were delivered in partnership with employers and colleges and this led to an upskilling of the workforce throughout the early part of the twenty first century. However, some have criticised the usefulness of these qualifications as they lacked the same prestige as A levels and GCSEs, whilst the YTS scheme was open to abuse by employers as a form of cheap labour with no guarantee of employment at the end of a work placement. Whilst students may have been given skills, structural issues such as large-scale employment and shifting job markets have meant that many young people did not possess the skills to fill shortages in the job market, such as nursing and scientific disciplines.