

Functions of Education

Functionalist View

Emile Durkheim

Durkheim suggested there were several functions that the education system should perform for society:

- **Socialising the next generation into the value consensus of society**
- **Promoting social solidarity**
- **Teaching of specialist skills for the complex division of modern labour**

Talcott Parsons

Parsons suggested that education performs the function of secondary socialisation – converting particularistic values of family into universal values of society. Education acts as a bridge between home and society

Davis and Moore

Suggested that education performs the function of role allocation – sifting and sorting pupils into the future roles based on ability

Marxist View

Louis Althusser

Suggested that the purpose of education was to reinforce and legitimise inequalities in society through the myth of meritocracy

Described education as an ideological state apparatus that allowed the ruling class to control the working classes through passing on their ideology

Bowles and Gintis

Education prepares students for their future roles as workers through the hidden curriculum. The Correspondence Principle explains how school mirrors work through hierarchies, promoting blind obedience, alienation and submissive behaviours.

Paul Willis

Adopting a neo-Marxist approach suggested that working-class pupils were aware of their exploitation and showed agency in resisting the attempts of education to get them to conform

Feminist View

Education reinforces patriarchal dominance

Despite the recent progress made by girls in education, feminists suggest that the purpose of education is to reinforce the patriarchy. This is achieved through:

- Subject choices
- Teacher interactions with females
- Tolerance of sexual harassment in schools
- Content of curriculum focused on male achievements
- Uniform regulations

New Right View

Education should operate on market principles

Operation of education on market principles of competition and choice – usually administered through social policy (Education Reform Act, OFSTED, Free Schools and Academies, Marketisation of HE)

Postmodern View

Education is fragmented

Increased choice over education reduces its structural impacts – education is individualised to pupil's needs

Global Education

Influences of globalisation on education, both in policy and through the media. Greater access to education through media which dilutes what institutions look to enforce

Interactionist View

Whilst nominally a conflict theory, it focuses on interactions between individuals in education rather than seeing education as having a purpose