Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

# The roles and functions of education

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## Functions of education

- Socialisation: passing on shared norms and values (secondary socialisation).
- Economic: teaching the skills and knowledge needed for work.
- **Selection and allocation**: sorting people into suitable jobs through exams and qualifications.
- Social control: teaching students to follow rules and respect authority.

## The functionalist view

- Parsons saw school as a bridge between the family and wider society. In the family, children are judged by **particularistic values** (as individuals); at school and in society they are judged by **universalistic values** (the same rules for everyone).
- Functionalists see education as meritocratic: people succeed through ability and effort.

## The Marxist view

- Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued education serves capitalism through the **correspondence principle**: school mirrors the workplace (such as obeying authority, and working for rewards like grades, as workers work for wages).
- The **hidden curriculum** (the unwritten lessons of school, such as punctuality and obedience) produces a docile, obedient workforce.
- They argued **meritocracy** is a myth: success depends largely on social class, but education makes inequality seem fair.

## Becky Francis: patriarchy in schools (Eduqas)

- The feminist sociologist Becky Francis studied gender in classrooms. She found that boys often get more of teachers' attention and are told off more harshly, and that gender stereotypes still shape behaviour and subject choices.
- Feminists argue this **hidden curriculum** teaches pupils patriarchal ideas, even though girls now out-perform boys in exams.

## Key terms

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|---|---|
| **Meritocracy** | A system where people succeed through ability and effort. |
| **Hidden curriculum** | The unwritten lessons taught by school, such as obedience. |
| **Correspondence principle** | The idea that school mirrors the workplace. |
| **Universalistic values** | Values that judge everyone by the same standards. |
| **Particularistic values** | Values that judge people as individuals, as in the family. |
| **Selection and allocation** | Sorting people into suitable jobs. |

## Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is meritocracy?
2. What is the hidden curriculum?
3. Who put forward the correspondence principle?
4. What did Parsons say school is?
5. What are universalistic values?
6. What is selection and allocation?
7. What do Marxists say about meritocracy?
8. Which is an economic function of education?

### Answers

1. A system where people succeed through ability and effort
2. The unwritten lessons taught by school, such as obedience
3. Bowles and Gintis
4. A bridge between the family and wider society
5. Values that judge everyone by the same standards
6. Sorting people into suitable jobs
7. It is a myth that hides class inequality
8. Teaching skills needed for work

## What to do next

Practise 11 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Your notes

## Read the lesson, one step at a time

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