What is education for?

01 / ROLES, FUNCTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES


Shared values


Learning


Work skills

Connect the ideas as you revise

Key ideas

Secondary socialisation: schools teach us how to behave outside the family. We learn to arrive on time, follow rules and work with others.

Social cohesion: shared values and experiences help people feel part of society.

Serving the economy: schools teach knowledge and skills needed for work. **Role allocation:** qualifications help decide who gets different jobs.

Social mobility: moving between social positions, such as from one social class to another. Education can help, but pupils do not all have the same opportunities.

Social control: rules, punishments and peer pressure encourage people to follow expectations. Citizenship lessons can teach people about voting and their rights.

Vocabulary

Norm: an expected way to behave. **Value:** a belief about what matters. **Value consensus:** agreement about shared values.

Ascribed status: a position you are given. **Achieved status:** a position you earn.

Meritocracy: success based on ability and effort. Sociologists disagree about whether schools work this way.

Universalistic standards: the same rules for everyone. **Particularistic standards:** treatment based on a personal relationship, such as being someone's child.

Moral Education

Durkheim (1925) | AQA

Schools pass on shared values. Learning history can help pupils feel part of society. Rules and teamwork teach self-discipline and cooperation.

Use it: Explain how education builds social cohesion.

Think about: Whose values are taught? Some groups may feel left out.

The School Class as a Social System

Parsons (1961) | AQA

School is a bridge between family life and wider society. Pupils face common rules and are rewarded for achievement. Schools help select people for future jobs.

Use it: Explain meritocracy and role allocation.

Think about: Halsey and Ball show that family background also affects opportunities.

Compare perspectives

Functionalism: education helps society work together and prepares people for jobs.

Marxism: education keeps class inequalities going and benefits powerful owners.

Feminism: education can support or challenge gender inequality.

Interactionism: focuses on everyday interactions, meanings and labels.

Schooling in Capitalist America

Bowles and Gintis (1976) | AQA

The **correspondence principle** means school relationships mirror work. Both have a hierarchy, rules and rewards. Grades at school are like pay at work.

Use it: Explain their view that schools train obedient workers and keep class inequality going.

Think about: Schools and jobs vary. Willis found pupils who resisted school rules.

Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

Althusser (1971) | Extra theory

Schools help spread the ideas of powerful groups. This can make inequality seem normal or fair. An **ideological state apparatus** is an institution that helps maintain power through ideas.

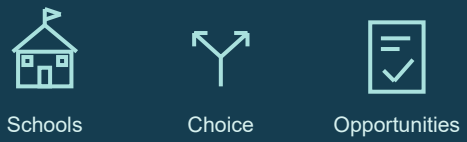
Curriculum and learning

Formal curriculum: subjects and content taught directly, such as maths.

Hidden curriculum: unwritten lessons learned through school life, such as obeying a timetable. Feminists ask whether these lessons reinforce gender roles.

Schools, choice and change

02 / SCHOOL TYPES, POLICY AND CHOICE



Connect the ideas as you revise

Types of school and education

Primary / secondary: stages of schooling. **Further education:** study after school below degree level. **Higher education:** degree-level and other advanced study.

State schools: funded by government. **Independent/private schools:** usually charge fees. A British "public school" is a type of independent school.

Comprehensive: takes pupils across the ability range. **Grammar:** selects pupils by academic ability, usually with an entrance test.

Academy: a state-funded school run by a trust. **Free school:** a type of academy. **Faith school:** has a religious character.

Special school: supports pupils with special educational needs. Mainstream schools also support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Compare schools

Independent schools may have smaller classes or more facilities. Fees limit who can attend. State schools offer publicly funded education and may have a wider social mix.

School type alone does not explain results. Also consider teaching, resources, admissions and pupils' backgrounds.

Standards and access

Ofsted: inspects education in England. **Cream skimming:** seeking pupils likely to get high results. **Silt shifting:** avoiding pupils thought likely to lower results.

Policy: what changed?

1944 Education Act: expanded free secondary education. The **tripartite system** had grammar, technical and secondary modern schools. The 11-plus often decided where pupils went.

From 1965: government encouraged comprehensive schools to reduce selection. Change took time. Some areas kept grammar schools.

1988 Education Reform Act: increased choice and competition. It also introduced the National Curriculum and changed assessment. School performance tables followed in the early 1990s.

From 1997: New Labour introduced schemes to improve skills and support families, including Sure Start and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). EMA later ended in England.

From 2010: more academies, free schools and the Pupil Premium, which gives schools extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

Vocabulary

Marketisation: making schools compete for pupils and giving parents more choice. **League table:** a comparison of school results.

Catchment: an area used in some school admissions. **Selection:** choosing pupils using set rules.

Vocational education: learning knowledge and skills for work. It can help people find jobs, but training alone does not create jobs.

Market Forces and Parental Choice

Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1994) | AQA

Research in 15 schools explored competition and choice. Pressure to get good results encouraged schools to focus on high-attaining pupils and group pupils by ability. Parents with more knowledge, contacts and money could make better use of choice.

Use it: Explain how choice can keep class advantages going.

Think about: Supporters say competition improves standards. Travel, school places and admissions can limit choice.

Home education

Children learn outside school, often with parents or tutors. Learning can be flexible and meet individual needs. Resources and chances to mix with others vary.

Deschooling Society

Illich (1971) | Extra theory

Illich criticised a system that makes school and qualifications the main route to learning. He suggested learning networks where people share skills and resources.

Use it: Explain an alternative to formal schooling. Deschooling is more than teaching school lessons at home.

Think about: How would everyone get the support and resources they need?

Why does achievement vary by class?

03 / MONEY, CULTURE AND OPPORTUNITIES







Connect the ideas as you revise

Key ideas: outside school

Material deprivation: lacking money and things it can buy. Pupils may lack books, internet access, transport or a quiet study space. Poor health and paid work can also affect study time.

Cultural capital: knowledge, language and habits valued by schools. Some families know more about school expectations and routes into further study.

Social capital: useful contacts, such as someone who can help with an application. Every class can have useful networks.

Parental support: help and encouragement can matter. Work and money pressures may limit school visits even when parents value education.

Vocabulary

Cultural deprivation: the disputed idea that some pupils lack the culture needed for school success. It does not mean their culture is inferior.

Deferred gratification: waiting for a future reward. **Immediate gratification:** wanting a reward now.

Attainment: measured results. **Life chances:** opportunities in life. **Class reproduction:** class advantages or disadvantages continuing from parents to children.

Origins and Destinations

Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) | AQA

A survey of over 8,000 men born between 1913 and 1952 compared education with fathers' jobs. Sons of professionals and managers were more likely to stay in education and reach university than sons of working-class fathers.

Use it: Challenge the view that everyone has equal opportunities.

Think about: It excluded women and studied older generations. It shows a link, but does not prove one cause.

Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977 English edition) | Extra theory

Schools reward the culture of powerful groups. Knowing valued ways of speaking and behaving can give pupils an advantage. This advantage may look like success based only on ability.

Class, Codes and Control

Bernstein (1971) | Extra theory

Restricted codes rely on shared understanding. **Elaborated codes** explain meaning more fully. School language often favours elaborated codes.

Language codes do not measure intelligence. Pupils can learn to use different codes in different situations.

The Home and the School

Douglas (1964) | Extra

Research followed children over time. It linked school progress with home circumstances and parental interest.

Use it: Explain how home and school can work together.

Think about: School visits may show how much time parents have, rather than how much they care. A link between two things does not prove that one causes the other.

Connect home and school

Without a quiet space, a pupil may struggle with homework. A teacher may wrongly see this as low effort and expect less. Home resources and school treatment can work together.

Ball links class to school choice and grouping. Willis shows how some pupils respond by rejecting school values.

Build an explanation

Resource > learning experience > possible result. Unreliable internet can limit revision and leave a pupil less prepared for a test.

Compare money, cultural capital and school processes. Explain how they might work together.

Read data carefully

An average does not describe every pupil.
Free-school-meal eligibility helps identify disadvantage, but does not fully measure social class.

Gender: achievement and choices



Connect the ideas as you revise

Key ideas: outside school

Changing employment: more career choices for women may make qualifications seem more useful to girls. This can encourage study and revision.

Changing gender roles: ideas about work, marriage and financial independence have changed. Girls may see more possible futures.

Feminism: challenges unfair treatment and limits on women's roles. It can encourage ambition and demands for equal opportunities.

Gender socialisation: learning expectations about gender from family, media and peers. This can affect play, reading and career choices.

Key ideas: inside school

Teachers may label girls as hardworking or boys as disruptive. These stereotypes can affect feedback and support.

Books, careers advice, role models and peers can influence subject choice. Pupils may feel some subjects are "for boys" or "for girls".

Schools can challenge sexism and widen choices. Good grades do not mean all gender inequalities have disappeared.

Just Like a Girl

Sharpe (1976; updated 1994) | Extra

Research with schoolgirls in Ealing compared their priorities at different times. The later research found more emphasis on careers and independence than earlier traditional expectations.

Use it: Link social change with girls' future goals.

Think about: Interviews in one area cannot represent all girls or prove the cause of changes in national results.

Boys, Girls and Achievement

Francis (2000) | Extra

Interviews and classroom observations explored how pupils saw themselves as boys, girls and learners. Behaviour and schoolwork could affect their status with others.

Use it: Explain how gender expectations can affect learning.

Think about: Boys and girls have varied experiences. Avoid treating each group as all the same.

Vocabulary

Patriarchy: a system where men hold more power.
Gender stereotype: a simple assumption about someone based on gender.

Gendered curriculum: school messages that link subjects or roles with gender. **Aspiration:** a future goal.

Gender role allocation: directing people towards roles linked to their gender.

Lads and Ladettes in School

Jackson (2006) | Extra

Some pupils acted as if they did not care about work to gain popularity or avoid looking like a failure. This behaviour could occur among girls as well as boys.

Use it: Explain how peer pressure can affect effort.

Think about: Looking unconcerned may hide a strong wish to succeed. These attitudes do not describe all pupils.

Explain the chain

Social change > future goals > attitude to education > possible achievement.

More career choices may make qualifications seem important. A pupil may study more, understand more and prepare better for exams. Explain each link.

Read patterns carefully

Girls have higher average results on many GCSE measures. Differences vary by subject, qualification and the results being compared.

Compare the same year, age group, subjects and grade level. One year cannot show change over time or explain a cause.

Class and ethnicity also matter. Subject choices and later pay can remain unequal even when girls get high grades.

What happens inside schools?

05 / GROUPING, LABELS AND PUPIL CULTURES

Labels Treatment Results

Connect the ideas as you revise

Key ideas and vocabulary

Setting: grouping pupils by attainment in one subject. **Streaming:** grouping across most or all subjects. **Banding:** broad ability groups.

Mixed-ability teaching: pupils with different attainment learn together. It can support learning from peers. Teachers still need to meet different needs and challenge everyone.

Labelling: giving someone an identity, such as "bright" or "disruptive". The label may be wrong.

Self-fulfilling prophecy: an expectation affects treatment and behaviour, making the expected result more likely.

Halo effect: one good impression affects other judgements. **Differentiation:** judging or separating pupils into categories. **Polarisation:** pupils forming groups with opposite attitudes.

Explain the chain

Low expectation > less support > less confidence or effort > lower attainment. The result may seem to confirm the label.

Pupils can reject labels. Positive expectations also need useful support.

Pupil cultures

Pro-school subculture: a group that values school success. **Counter-school subculture:** a group that rejects school expectations.

Peers may reward revision or disruption. Group membership does not fix a pupil's future.

Beachside Comprehensive

Ball (1981) | AQA

Ball spent three years observing school life and taking part in activities. He compared pupils in bands with pupils in mixed-ability classes. Grouping and teacher expectations helped shape pupils' attitudes.

Use it: Explain how school processes can keep inequalities going.

Think about: One school gives detail, but may not represent others. Removing bands does not remove every label.

Social-class Variations in the Teacher-Pupil Relationship

Becker (1952) | Extra

Chicago teachers described preferred pupil qualities linked to middle-class expectations. Their views of pupils were shaped by social class.

Use it: Explain how teacher judgements may favour some pupils.

Pygmalion in the Classroom

Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) | Extra

Teachers were told that randomly chosen pupils would make rapid progress. Later gains, especially among younger pupils, supported an effect of expectations.

Use it: Explain a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Think about: The tests and conclusions have been challenged. Labels do not always produce the expected result.

Learning to Labour

Willis (1977) | AQA

Observation and interviews followed 12 working-class boys in a Midlands school. The "lads" rejected school values and valued toughness, humour and manual work. Their choices helped lead them towards working-class jobs.

Use it: Explain resistance and class reproduction. Compare the lads with Bowles and Gintis's obedient workers.

Think about: A small group of boys in one place and period cannot represent all pupils.

Hightown Grammar

Lacey (1970) | Extra

School judgements and grouping helped pupils form groups with opposing attitudes. Lacey called these processes differentiation and polarisation.

Use it: Explain how pupil subcultures develop.

Social Relations in a Secondary School

Hargreaves (1967) | Extra

Grouping and school experiences were linked to pupil status and anti-school attitudes.

Use it: Explain how school treatment and peer groups can work together.

Ethnicity: explaining differences

Key ideas: outside school

Ethnicity: a shared cultural identity linked to history, language, religion or traditions. People within an ethnic group can have very different lives.

Money, housing, migration and access to support may affect learning. Class and ethnicity can overlap. Ethnicity alone does not explain a result.

Learning the language used in school may need extra support. Speaking more than one language does not mean lower ability.

Parents' hopes and support vary within every group. Check claims about family culture against research.

Asian Children at Home and at School

Bhatti (1999) | Course

Research explored the lives of teachers, pupils and 50 Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian families linked to a comprehensive school. Parents could value education highly while misunderstandings between home and school still occurred.

Use it: Challenge the idea that fewer school visits mean parents do not care.

Think about: These families do not represent every Asian family.

Key ideas: inside school

Ethnocentric curriculum: teaching that treats one culture as central or normal. Other backgrounds may be overlooked.

Institutional racism: rules or practices within an organisation that unfairly disadvantage ethnic groups. It can happen beyond one person's prejudice.

Teacher stereotypes can affect discipline, subject advice and support. A "hardworking" label may hide a pupil's need for help. Stereotypes are not facts about ethnic groups.

Young, Female and Black

Mirza (1992) | Course

Young Black women had strong educational ambitions despite racism and low expectations. They could recognise and challenge teachers' judgements.

Use it: Show that negative labels do not always lead to failure.

Think about: Resisting a label does not remove unfair barriers or guarantee equal opportunities.

Young, Gifted and Black

Mac an Ghaill (1988) | Further evidence

Research explored relationships between teachers and Black pupils. It examined racism and pupils' responses to school.

Use it: Explain how school experiences involve both teacher treatment and pupils' responses.

The School Effect

Smith and Tomlinson (1989) | Course

Research compared multi-ethnic comprehensive schools. School quality and work on equal opportunities mattered. Ethnic-minority pupils in effective schools could do as well as white pupils.

Use it: Explain how schools can reduce inequality through teaching, expectations and fair treatment.

Think about: Schools matter, but this does not mean home circumstances have no effect.

Compare the evidence

Bhatti: parents may value education even when schools misunderstand them.

Mirza: pupils can challenge negative labels. **Smith and Tomlinson:** school practices can make a difference.

Also consider Halsey, Ball and material deprivation. Explain how each factor could affect learning.

Using studies in answers

AQA: a thinker or study named in the specification. **Course:** evidence found in the available lessons. **Extra / Further evidence:** added revision material.

Remember the title, sociologist and finding. Explain how the finding helps answer the question. Then give a relevant reason to question it.

Compare explanations and finish with a judgement supported by evidence.