

1. Outline and explain two ways that education promotes meritocracy [4]

One way in which education promotes meritocracy is through awarding grades based upon effort. This promotes the idea to students that their ability is based upon a subjective interpretation of the effort that they are able to put into a subject, rather than their overall knowledge and understanding, and fails to take into account barriers to education that some students may face.

A second way in which education promotes meritocracy is through competition. Students are expected to compete against one another in order to obtain the highest grade. This can be evidenced through university admissions for those with the highest grades, or even algorithms that dictate what percentage of students achieve the highest grades in a subject.

2. Outline and explain three ways education serves the needs of capitalism [6]

One way in which education serves the needs of capitalism is through the fragmentation of the curriculum. According to Bowles and Gintis, this serves to limit students understanding of their level of exploitation as they are unaware of the larger picture in society. As a result, they fail to challenge the exploitation they face in capitalist society.

A second way in which education serves capitalism, is through introducing students to the 'long shadow of work'. Bowles and Gintis argue that this prepares students for employment by transforming students into passive and obedient workers fit for exploitation by capitalists.

A final way in which education serves the needs of capitalism is through promoting the myth of meritocracy. This ensure that students who do not achieve will not challenge the education system, but instead believe that it is their own fault they have not achieved, thus forcing them into low-paid employment – serving the needs of capitalism.

Item A

In recent years, girls have been outperforming their male peers at all stages of the education system. However, some sociologists suggest that girls are still controlled by a patriarchal education system, through their behaviour, their appearance and the choices they make about their future.

3. Applying material from item A, analyse two ways in which girls are controlled by the education system. [10]

One way in which girls are controlled by the education system is through the 'behaviour' (Item A) that is expected of them. Girls are often seen as being closer to the idea of the ideal pupil, as teachers expect them to be passive and obedient in class. As a result, teachers are more likely to discipline girls for 'unlady-like' behaviour, whilst allowing boys to act in a similar way. Furthermore, girls are controlled based upon their behaviour towards boys in the classroom. Archer, when studying why working-class pupils do not see education as fitting in with their identity, found that girls who had developed a 'hyper-heterosexual' identity were perceived to have lower levels of intelligence by teachers, and were disciplined for their 'appearance' (Item A) and 'behaviour' as it clashed with the expected behaviours of an academically successful pupil. This can be seen to be the school controlling the behaviour of girls if it does not conform to social expectations.

A second way in which girls are controlled by the education system is through the 'choices they make about their careers' (Item A). This refers to the way in which schools divert girls into subjects and careers that are not in the masculine domain. For example, subject images in subjects such as science, are focused on males and the achievements of male scientists. This dissuades girls from choosing a career in the sciences. Furthermore, Francis argued that science classes are often dominated by boys, with teachers allowing boys to monopolise equipment, which leaves girls alienated by the subject. However, recent changes in subject imagery and initiatives to promote science to girls (such as GIST and WISE) have seen an increase in the number of girls choosing the subject at both Advanced level and on undergraduate courses, which counters the feminist argument that girls are controlled in their career choices.