The Functionalist Perspective on Education

Intro/ context

- The case of Musharaf overcoming his stutter in Educating Yorkshire demonstrates all of the positive functions education can perform
- Tend to emphasise the positive functions of education
  - Secondary socialisation
  - Value consensus

Social solidarity

- Durkhiem
- Where the individual feels themselves to be part of the community and where people work together towards shared goals
- School is one of the few institutions which can perform this function in advanced, industrial socieites
- Achieved through
  - Pledging allegiance to the flag - USA
  - Learning the same curriculum - history, english
- Results in value consensus

Role allocation and meritocracy

- Parsons/ Davis and Moore
- Industrial societies are hierarchical
  - Some jobs are more important and pay more
    - E.g doctors
  - Other jobs less important and pay less
    - E.g, hairdressers
- Education provides a way of allocating people to appropriate job roles - through tiered qualifications
- Education is meritocratic (fair) - it provides an equal opportunity for all to achieve good qualifications
  - A combination of ability and effort determine who gets the best qualifications and then the best jobs

Bridge between home and school

- Parsons
- At home - pupils are judged by particularistic standards
  - Different standards
- At school - pupils are judged by universalistic standards
  - The same standards, applied equally to all

Teaching specialist skills for work

- Durkhiem
- Schools provide a diversity of qualifications which gradually become more specialised
- Industrial economies require a complex division of labour, many jobs are highly skilled

Positive evaluations

- Schools try to create solidarity
  - Team sports/ assemblies/ citizenship lessons
- Those with degrees earn 85% more than those without degrees
- Education is more meritocratic now than in the 19th century
- Education has become more work focused with more vocational qualifications and apprenticeships

Criticisms

- Marxism - the education system is not meritocratic
  - Class background influences educational achievement, especially with private education
- It is ideological - it reflects the views of the powerful, who generally tend to benefit from education
- Postmodernists - education kills creativity - through teaching to the test for example
- Interactionism - Functionalism ignores the negative experiences some students have in schol
  - E.g. Bullying/ negative teacher labelling