

Evaluation of the functionalist perspective

- As Topics 1-4 show, there is evidence that equal opportunity in education does not exist. For example, achievement is greatly influenced by class background rather than ability
- Melvin Tumin (1953) criticises Davis and Moore for putting forward a circular argument, as follows: How do we know that a job is important? Answer: because it's highly rewarded. Why are some jobs more highly rewarded than others? Answer: because they are more important!
- Functionalists see education as a process that instils the shared values of society as a whole, but Marxists argue that education in capitalist society only transmits the ideology of a minority – the ruling class

- The interactionist Dennis Wrong (1961) argues that functionalists have an 'over-socialised view' of people as mere puppets of society. Functionalists wrongly imply that pupils passively accept all they are taught and never reject the school's values.
- Unlike Davis and Moore, the New Right argue that the state education system fails to prepare young people adequately for work. This is because state control of education discourages efficiency, competition and choice

Activity

Critics argue that education is not meritocratic. Alone or in pairs, using your knowledge of class and ethnic differences in achievement (Topics 1-3), list some of the evidence in support of the critics' view.