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| **Perspective** | **Main ideas and assumptions** | **Evaluation and analysis** |
| **The History and purpose of Education** | Compulsory education began in 1880 and then went through a series of changes. Education was mostly to provide skills for the workforce, to control working class children or protect them. **1945 Butler Act** – **Tripartite system** and introduction of free places at grammar schools, prior to this schools were mostly fee paying this was supposed to be egalitarian (equal for all) **1965** most schools became **comprehensive**. **1979** brought in **New Right** and the development of **market principles** in education. Schools compete via league tables, Ofsted, results and funded by roll numbers.Various types of schools have emerged. | 1945 Tripartite system was based on belief in **meritocracy** but mostly wealthier children went to grammar schools. Comprehensive schools practised streaming so again were not truly equal. **Marketisatio**n increased inequality in education by making schools differently funded. Recent policies have sought to counter problems with working class underachievement e.g pupil premium. |
| **Functionalism** | The purpose of education is to ensure **shared norms and values** are taught to children to keep social order and harmony. This is done via the **hidden curriculum** where children learn culture e.g history of their country, manners, punctuality, uniform etc. Education works on **meritocratic principles** so that people are sorted fairly in appropriate roles to perform in society according to their merits – ability and hard work. E.g doctor or shop assistant. Without **role allocation** via meritocracy society would not function as undesirable roles would not be filled. | Marxists argue that education is not meritocratic. Meritocracy is a myth because wealthier people get the best education and the best roles/jobs. They argue that the hidden curriculum does teach shared values but they are the values that benefit the bourgeoisie e.g obedience. Functionalist’s focus on meritocracy means they ignore structural inequalities like racism, sexism or poverty. |
| **Marxism/ NeoMarxism** | Marxists believe that the purpose of education is to keep the status quo (the way things are) by ensuring that middle and upper class children succeed and get the best jobs. This is achieved via the **hidden curriculum** whereby working class children are socialised into believing they are inferior. Therefore they believe that Education **reproduces class inequality** and false class consciousness. The **myth of meritocracy** is used to ensure that all children conform to the system but in truth **equal opportunities do not exist**. | Marxists fail to acknowledge that many working class people are now socially mobile and succeed. They also claim that education is an ideological state apparatus therefore suggesting that teachers are agents of the **bourgeoisie** when many are working class themselves. Marxists ignore other inequalities in education such as gender and ethnicity. |