

Education as a social institution

Distinguish schooling from education and connect socialisation to unequal opportunity.

Core learning

- Education is wider than schooling: people learn norms, skills, identities and expectations in many settings.
- A social institution organises behaviour through roles, rules, routines, resources and sanctions.
- Educational opportunity is shaped before, inside and beyond the school gates.

Concepts, studies and perspectives

- Socialisation: Schools continue socialisation by teaching punctuality, authority, competition, cooperation and identity.
- Formal and hidden curriculum: Some learning is planned; some is communicated through routines, labels and expectations.
- Unequal opportunity: Family resources, locality, prior attainment and institutional practices can shape access and outcomes.
- Functionalism: Education can integrate individuals and allocate roles through shared standards.
- Marxism: Education can reproduce class inequality and prepare compliant workers.
- Feminism: Education can challenge or reproduce gendered expectations.
- Interactionism: Labels, identities and classroom interactions can shape educational action.

Suggested teaching sequence

- Connect and diagnose prior knowledge
- Explicitly teach distinction between concept and mechanism
- Model one evidence-to-explanation paragraph
- Use routes for supported, core and stretch application
- Finish with exam judgement and retrieval

Misconceptions to tackle

- Assuming schooling and education are identical
- Listing theory without application
- Treating social solidarity as a proven fact
- Evaluating by simply saying “not everyone agrees”

Source / accuracy note

Source note: This is original Reach for the Star material aligned to AQA Sociology 7192 Education with Theory and Methods.