**“The primary function of the education system is to serve the needs and demands of the capitalist economy in which it exists.”  
Do you agree with this view? (15 marks)**

Marxist sociologists would agree with the statement and argue that the education system serves capitalism by keeping the bourgeoisie in power, and the proletariat in the place. However, other sociologists would argue that the education system performs other functions for society.

A Marxist sociologist would argue that the British education system is mainly a product of capitalism. Bowles and Gintis argue that the major role of education in capitalist societies is the reproduction of labour power. For example, much of what students do at school and much of the hidden curriculum is geared towards creating obedient, skilled, workers – such as a focus on punctuality. The fact that students work so hard without pay may be a part of the hidden curriculum that prepares people for later exploitation within capitalism. Therefore, Marxist sociologists would argue that the primary function of the education system is to serve capitalism.

However, Durkheim, a functionalist sociologist, argued that the main function of education is the transmission of norms and values, and that the education system served as a link between individual students and the wider society. For example, schools teach the essential skills required for people to function in a society (such as cooperation). Functionalists argue that the education system plays a positive role in society, and enables society to keep going. Therefore, Functionalists sociologists would disagree with the statement and would argue that education’s primary function is a positive one.

Feminist sociologists criticize the education system and focus on the existence of a gendered hidden curriculum that socialised patriarchal norms and values into the minds of young people. A feminist might disagree with the statement and argue the primary function of the education system is to socialise gender-roles into young and perpetuate patriarchy, for example through different subject choices. Therefore, feminist sociologists see the primary role of education as to reinforce gender roles.

In conclusion, there is a lot of disagreement around the main role of the education system. It would be fair to conclude that the majority of sociologists would not agree with the statement that the main role is to service capitalism; with other functions being put forward instead.