Does education have the potential to 'free' marginalised groups?

Does education have the potential to ' free' marginalised groups? <u>Critically discuss the educational challenges experienced by one of the marginalised groups examined in the module. Consider the work of Paulo Freire and decide whether his theory (or another's) is best suited for your argument.</u>

Marginalisation is the action of excluding particular groups of citizens to the lower levels of society. This is done by not giving them the freedom to have an active voice, identity or place within society. This is carried out by direct and indirect actions, which means marginalised groups maybe demoted to a lower level of society than those who hold more power or privilege in society. Marginalisation can occur individually or as a collective, on the grounds of numerous forms of identity, this includes but does not limit to; race, gender/gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, sexuality, age or religion. Furthermore, various individuals may identity with a number of marginalised groups, leading them to experience further marginalisation as a result of their intersecting identities (Syracuse University, 2011).

The right and freedom to education is comprehensive and allows no form of discrimination or exclusion. Nevertheless, near enough all countries are faced with objections assuring equal opportunities for all in education access and within education systems. Marginalised groups are often forgotten by national educational policies, declining numerous people their right to education (Right to education, 2014). However, considering ' groups' can be useful, groups often are heterogeneous. For example, the marginalised group ' women and girls', made up of half the world's population, is majorly diversified. Furthermore, this group contains women and girls from; upper

and middle-class backgrounds, with impairments, indigenous girls and girls living in rural areas. An aspect of marginalisation is that people who are marginalised are more prone to be exposed to numerous levels of discrimination. Although this may be true, non-discrimination and equality are vital human rights that apply, specifically in regards to education (right to education, 2014). Education is a fundamental human right, it is also an impetus for reduction of poverty, economic growth and social mobility. Furthermore, one of the essential priorities for all governments should be for all citizens to receive a good quality of education, however, majority of countries advocate the principal of equal opportunity in education (UNESCO, 2010). Within the centre of this principle is the belief that what children achieve within education should reflect their efforts and talents, not their social circumstances; however, continual inequalities based on gender, wealth, ethnicity, language and location point to marked discrepancies in their chances in life (UNESCO, 2010). Within the Education for All, Global Monitoring Report, it was stated that, ' Marginalisation in education is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities. It represents a stark example of ' clearly remediable injustice' (UNESCO, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to answer the research question, ' does education have the potential to ' free' marginalised groups?' While critically discussing the educational challenges experienced by one particular marginalised group, furthermore, the work of Paulo Freire will be explored and critically analysed, alongside other theorists such as Robert Merton and his Anomie and strain theories. The marginalised group chosen to be discussed is youth and deviant youths.

Deviant behaviour is any form of behaviour that is adverse to the primary ' norms' of society. There are various theories that assist in explaining how behaviour appears to be categorised as deviant and the reason behind why people in – in particular youths participate in it, within this, biological, psychological and sociological explanations. (Crossman, 2018). There are a large portion of deviant youths in education, which form a particularly vulnerable group, majority of these youths are impoverished of their freedom in education due to ' status offences' such as: truancy, begging, running away from home, alcohol or substance abuse or homelessness (righttoeducation, 2014). Moreover, this also applies to youth who are in juvenile detention, who are in essence the most disadvantaged group in society. Additionally their right to education is more than often not granted before or during their incarceration. This is quiet problematic as education is a key aspect of deviant youth's rehabilitation and integration back into society. When discussing juvenile justice systems particularly, access to education of adequate quality is not granted to people in juvenile detention or of poor quality (righttoeducation, 2014).

A theory that associates well with youth deviancy is sociologist Robert Merton, who developed the structural strain theory as an addition of the functionalist perspective on youth deviance. The strain theory follows the creation of deviance to the pressures that are created by the rift between cultural goals and the means people have available to achieve these goals. Furthermore, according to Merton's theory, societies are formed of culture and social structure, culture forms targets for people in society where as social structure provides or neglects to provide the resources for youth to

achieve these targets. Within an integrated society, people use acceptable and correct aims to achieve the targets that society forms. In this instance, the targets and the resources of the society are of equal balance. It is when these are unbalanced with each other that youth deviancy is more likely to take place. The unbalance between cultural targets and structurally available aims can in fact encourage youth deviancy (Crossman, 2018).

Labelling theory is one of the most crucial concepts to understanding youth deviant and criminal behaviour. It begins with the expectation that no act is per se criminal. Instead, interpretations of misdemeanour are formed by those in power through the creation of laws and the definitions of those laws by police, courts, and correctional institutions (Crossman, 2018). Youth deviance is thus not a set of attributes of individuals or groups, but comparatively it is a process of interaction between deviants and non-deviants and the circumstances in which misdemeanour is interpreted.

Those who serve as forces of law and order and those who implement the confines of appropriate behaviour, such as the police, court officials, experts, and school authorities, provide the main sources of labelling (Crossman, 2018). By assigning labels to people, and in the process forming categories of deviance, these people augment the power structure and hierarchies of society. Customarily, it is those who possess more power over others, based on race, class, gender, or overall social status, who enforce rules and labels on others in society.

In addition to this, Marxists believed that defiant behaviour is an inevitable outcome in a capitalist society in which one group holds power over another.

Whereas, functionalists believed that defiant behaviour is just another essential aspect of society. It serves many functions that are valuable to evolve social attitudes and consolidate moral values. Additionally, deviance is produced by a process of interaction between the potential deviant and the agents of social control (Haralambos and Holdburn 1995: 406).

Similarly, Travis Hirschi's (1969) developed Social control theory, is a form of functionalist theory, that suggests that deviance occurs when a person's or group's attachment to social bonds is depleted. According to this theory, people care about other's opinions of them and conform to expectations of society because of their connections to others and the expectations of others. Socialisation is significant in generating conformity to social rules, and it is when this conformity is broken that deviance occurs (Crossman, 2018).

Furthermore, the social control theory concentrates on how deviants are attached, or not attached, to common value systems and what issues break people's commitment to these values. In addition to this, the social control theory also implies that most people most likely feel some inclination towards deviant behaviour at some time, but their bond to social ' norms' prevents them from taking part in deviant behaviour (Crossman, 2018).

In addition to the social control theory the learning theory, theory of differential association focuses on the actions by which individuals lead to commit deviant and/or criminal acts. Edwin Sutherland (1924, 1939) suggests that criminal behaviour is learned through communications with

other people. Through these communication and interaction, people determine the values, attitudes, techniques and motives for criminal behaviour (Crossman, 2018). The differential association theory accentuates the communication between people and their peers in their surroundings, those who cohort with deviants attain to value deviance. Moreover, the greater time spent and intensity of their time spent in deviant surroundings, they will more or less become deviant themselves.

Overall, the two main groups of marginalisation in the UK are, youth deviancy and socioeconomic. Both socio-economic and gender gaps collaborate with each other so that specifically male students who are poor, become vulnerable to marginalisation in education. Moreover, evidence implies that both of these gaps appear and remain ingrained in primary and then increasing when the students enter secondary school. In addition to this, there has been slight progress to reduce not only the gender gap but also the socio-economic gap in education, this has been evident throughout the last decade. In addition to this, unlike most educational systems, the United Kingdom has for a while adhered to a quasi-market approach to policies in education, it is known that markets and parental choice were first introduced in 1988 (Vignoles, 2009).

In addition, having this form of approach has not particularly had a major effect or impact on the overall educational standards but equally neither has it reduces or increased the educational marginalisation to any extent. Moreover, reducing the marginalisation in education has been the main objective for the policy in recent initiatives and legislation. It has been recognised by policy-makers that majority of the socioeconomic gap in

education is in relation to elements outside of the school system. Thus there are policies; (Every Child Matters and Extended Schools) that endeavour to not only involved parents in their child's education but to also expand the duty of schools to undertake activities usually done by parents at home, such as supervision of homework (Vignoles, 2009).

Overall, evidence shows a lack of critical, analytical research on youths marginalised experiences in school. Evidently, there is a cause for more significant research that encourages theoretical and empirical understanding of youths school experiences (Smith, p. 293, 2000). Further more, it is suggested that the majority of delinquency in education, while proving it is significant and useful information, it is also restricted by its attachment to the positivist paradigm and quantitative methods (Smith, p. 293, 2000). Subsequently, it has been suggested that research much be used to critically examine the objectives of schools and their processes to fully analyse how the education system may be involved in duplicating academic failure and delinquency in marginalised youth. In addition to this, there has not been a concrete about of evidence to determine whether education does truly ' free' marginalised youth.

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