

## B5 Discussion (Unit 2.1)

### 1 Essay structure

*Read the essay carefully and then decide which of the headings below match each of the paragraphs 1-7.*

- (a) The impact of education
- (b) Discussion/ example
- (c) Introduction – aims and overview
- (d) Conclusion
- (e) Other factors
- (f) Introduction – definitions
- (g) Limits of education

Title: Education is the most important factor in national development – Discuss.

- 1 Education must be considered on several different levels, so that today most western countries are concerned with provision from nursery to higher education, while developing countries attempt to deliver basic education (e.g. reading and writing) to their people. 'National development' will be defined in this essay as the development of a country's economy, since this is most commonly seen as the function of education provided by the state. For example, many European countries began providing primary education for all citizens in the late nineteenth century, in the early phase of industrialisation.
- 2 This paper attempts to evaluate the importance of these varying levels of educational provision in encouraging economic growth, compared to other factors such as national culture, natural resources and governance. The role of education in fostering development will be examined first, and then other factors affecting growth will be considered.
- 3 At its simplest, education sets out to teach literacy and numeracy. People who can read and count are capable of being trained for many roles in the industrial or service sectors, as well as learning by themselves. Even in the economies dependent mainly on agriculture, the education of women has been shown to lead to dramatic improvements in family welfare. In more developed economies further skills are required, such as languages, engineering and computing. Good education does not merely teach people how to function passively, but provides them with the skills to ask questions and therefore make improvements. At university level, education is closely involved in research which leads to technical and social advances.
- 4 Yet education does not operate in a vacuum: cultural, religious, legal and other factors all influence the rate of economic growth. Soviet Russia, for example, had an advanced educational system, but many graduates were under-employed due to the restrictions of the political system. Similar situations exist in many countries today because of political restraints on the economy which prevent fast enough expansion to create sufficient jobs. Clearly, development requires efficient and honest government to encourage a dynamic economy.
- 5 A strong work ethic, as found in the USA or Japan, also aids growth. In such societies children are brought up to believe that both the individual and society will benefit from hard work. Natural resources such as oil are another consideration. Brunei, for instance, previously a poor country reliant on fishing, today has one of the highest per capita GDPs in the world (\$54,000 in 2009). A clear and effective legal system also encourages development.

- 6 It is difficult to think of a situation where education has been the principal agent in fostering growth. For example, in the world's first industrial revolution, which occurred in eighteenth-century Britain, the majority of people were still illiterate (some pioneer industrialists themselves could not read or write). It seems that the availability of capital through the banking system, and a secure political and legal environment were more crucial in this case.
- 7 However, despite these considerations, education clearly has an important part to play in developing the skills and abilities of the people. Ultimately, they are the most important resource a country possesses, and their education is a priority for all successful states.

(Approximately 600 words)