



International School

Chapter 4: Education

4.1 Theories about the role of education



Key concepts in 4.1

- KC 1 – Inequality and opportunity
- **KC 2 – Power, control and resistance**
- KC3 – Social change and development
- **KC4 – Socialisation, culture and identity**
- **KC5 – Structure and human agency**




The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology





Introduction to the chapter

- Education - family and workplace
- Education - the individual
- 'Outside school' process - economic change and social mobility 
- 'Inside school' process





Functionalist views about how education contributes to value consensus and solidarity

Formal education: education that takes place within the formal setting of the school. It involves learning a specific range of subjects (the formal curriculum), mastery of which is tested through formal examination.

- **Functionalists** see society as social system consisting of functionally connected institutions.
- The relationship between education and work is one of dependency. The workplace needs the education system to perform its allotted roles in order for society to function successfully.





Functionalist views about how education contributes to value consensus and solidarity

- If the stability of the system is threatened it can be restored:
 - An existing institution evolves - differentiation within institution.
 - A new institution arises - formal education.
- Schools act as agents of secondary socialisation - Individuals internalise norms and values of the society. How is this done?
- **Outcome:** individuals share a level of agreement, so that there is value consensus and sense of shared identity that reduces conflict between individuals and groups.
- Durkheim - solidarity, values and skills



Functionalism and Education





Education and role allocation

- UK: 1944 Education Act
 - Academic students
 - Vocational students
- Secondary education (tripartite system) - students were taking intelligence test at age of 11.
 - Grammar schools
 - Secondary modern schools
 - Secondary technical schools
- The argument that this is functional:
Examples: India, Pakistan, Mauritius

Intelligence: capacities and abilities related to acquisition and demonstration of knowledge and skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making





Education and role allocation

- The separation of academic and vocational educational routes reflects a belief in two basic forms of work:
 - Professional career
 - Non-professional career
- **Davis and Moore's (1945)**: those who are most able and talented intellectually are allocated work roles that offer the highest rewards in terms of income, power and status.
- Most functionally important roles - most capable members of society - relationship between education and economy.
- Balance problems - rising demand for certain roles





Criticism of functionalism

- Work roles have different levels of functional importance depending on their contribution to society.
- 1. **Tumin (1953)** - can we objectively measure functional importance? He argued that this is something we can only establish subjectively and that it represents ideological justification for functionalist analysis of education and its relationship to the economy.
- 2. Does meritocratic system exist?
 - a. Interactionists focus on school processes that education is not meritocratic.
 - b. Marxists argue that meritocracy is a myth that hides underlying processes of class reproduction.

Meritocracy: a system based on equality of opportunity; those with ability and talent achieve their just rewards regardless of their social characteristics





Marxist views about how education contributes to the maintenance of the capitalist economic system

- **Bowels and Gintis (2002)** -organisation of workplace = school
- Workplace inequalities are reflected and reproduced through education:
 - School disciplines students to meet demands of work
 - Social relationships
 - Students are without control in education system
 - The educational process as whole
 - The content of education
 - The teaching and learning process - competition for grades





Marxist views about how education contributes to the maintenance of the capitalist economic system

- For Bowles and Gintis, the correspondence principle is maintained at all levels of the education system (streaming, setting or banding)

Correspondence principle: the view that the organisation of schools closely corresponds to the organisation and demands of the workplace.

Banding: refers to the process of setting or streaming where pupils of similar academic ability are taught together.

Setting: individuals are placed into groups (sets) based on their ability. It differs from streaming in that someone might be in top set for English and bottom set for Maths, rather than being in an ability band across the board.

Streaming: situation in which groups of children of different measured ability are taught separately in all subjects on the formal curriculum.





Education as an instrument of ideological control and cultural reproduction

- **Bourdieu (1986)** - meritocracy is a myth. The education system works in favour of a ruling elites:
 - ability to pay private schooling, and
 - streaming.
- It is a justifying myth - it has the appearance of fairness, equality and merit.
 - Role of formal curriculum
 - Cultural reproduction is disguised as a consequence of the choices of children make and their differing levels of ability and aptitude.

Cultural reproduction: The Marxist idea that higher social classes try to reproduce their leadership and advantages (privileges) by investing time, money and resources in the education of children.





Education as an instrument of ideological control and cultural reproduction

- **Althusser** (1971) - schools are an ideological state apparatus (ISA) that involves social learning.
- Advantages of vocational education for ruling elites:
 - Eliminates working-class children as competitors for higher-level occupations.
 - It gives the appearance of being chosen by the working class
 - choice or
 - they have failed to reach required level of academic achievement.

Ideological state apparatus (ISA): a Marxist concept that argues that institutions such as schools encourage values which benefits the interests of a ruling class in capitalist societies.





Education as an instrument of ideological control and cultural reproduction

- **Bates and Riseborough (1993)** - white middle-class vs. white and black working-class students - Vocationalism is about social control.
- **Davies (2012)** - 'modern slave labour'
- Criticism of Marxist views about education contributing to capitalist system:
 - **Young (1981)** - 'left functionalism' - education functions to meet the needs of a ruling class) - Marxist see working-class students as passive
 - **Willis (1977)** - students resisted to conform to school rules
 - **Heath (1997)** - Marxist approaches tend to reject all forms of vocational education because they encourage class- based cultural reproduction. Some form of vocational education have helped women in area of schooling and eventually work.

Vocationalism: the knowledge and skills required for specific types of employment.





New Right views on the relationship between education and the economy



New Right views on education

- Acknowledge the basic relationship outlined by Davis and Moore
- This kind of society and economy no longer exist!!!
- Rise in service industries and computer-based service technologies
- Distinction between academic and vocational - too inflexible
- Education system needs to change

Recent changes in academic and vocational qualification:

- Development of new qualifications and routes to ability (competence)
- Curriculum based on functional knowledge and skills
- Narrow the distinction between different types of knowledge and skills





Social democratic views on the relationship between education and the economy

Two related processes:

1. Technological changes in the workplace; Large number of poor-qualified school leavers fails to meet the economic needs
2. Social changes focused on ideas about equality in gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class.

Comprehensive education: system where schools are open to all children, regardless of their ability to pay, where they live or earlier educational achievement.

Equality of opportunity: the absence of discrimination within institutions such as schools.

- Competition produces larger number of better-qualified workers
- Technological change and social inequality addressed through education
- Chitty (2009) - low to high
- Marxist criticism - economic inequality drives educational inequality not vice versa.

