

Chapter 6: Education

Education in social context

Theories about the links between education and the economy

- Functionalism – core functions of education, the relationship between education and work, functional differentiation.
- Neo-functionalism / new right – social and economic changes brought on by globalisation, academic/vocational education.
- Social democratic theory – the relationship between education and the economy in terms of technological and social changes.
- Marxism – the relationship between the education system and capitalism, with schooling meeting the needs of the bourgeoisie, acting as an ideological state apparatus and as a method of cultural reproduction.
- Feminism – the relationship between education and the economy and the channelling of women into different types and levels of work, possibly affected by choices made at school such as subject selection based along gender lines.

Explanations of educational achievement and intelligence

- Definitions and measurement of intelligence – the purpose of IQ tests, the varying definitions of intelligence and internal/external evaluations of intelligence.
- Agnostic, positive and negative explanations of the relationship between intelligence and achievement – definitions of intelligence and achievement are socially constructed.

The relationship between education and social mobility

- Consensus approach, functionalism and meritocracy – the functional necessity of social mobility and the value of individual merit.
- Neo-functionalism/new right meritocracy and individual life choices – educational failure or success is dependent upon the choices that people make.
- Marxism – social inequality is reproduced by the education system due to the influence of the bourgeoisie.
- Neo-Marxism – educational and cultural reproduction in hegemonic terms.

Debates about the links between social inequality (class, gender, ethnicity) and educational opportunity and achievement

- Functionalist explanations – underachievement with a focus on cultural deprivation and cultural advantage/disadvantage.
- Marxist explanations – poverty and material deprivation are the main sources of differential achievement.
- Feminist explanations – a move away from female underachievement to explaining how girls cope with, and overcome, a range of school and workplace disadvantages.
- The interrelationship between class, gender and ethnicity – should these factors be investigated individually or is there an interplay between them that needs investigating?

Structures and processes within schools

The social construction of knowledge and learning; power and social control as factors influencing the structure, content and development of the curriculum

- Modernity – schools are modern institutions developed to meet the needs and requirements of modern, industrial societies.
- Reactions to modernity: deschooling – schools may kill the creativity of children and simply teach them how to pass exams, deschooling society may help to solve this problem.
- Cultural capital – the advantages/disadvantages of a person's – cultural history, is it a significant mechanism in the education process?
- Postmodernity – education is seen in terms of a relationship and tension between the process of the power principle and increasing resistance and decentralising attitudes of students.

Language, deprivation and knowledge

- Language codes – elaborated and restricted codes and their impact upon educational success.
- Habitus – schools being the natural habitat of the middle and upper classes.

Teacher–pupil relationships: streaming, labelling, hidden curriculum, the gendered curriculum

- The hidden curriculum – the things children learn from the experience of attending school.
- Labelling – positive and negative labelling, classifying and stereotyping students in ways that impact on their self-perceptions.
- Streaming – allocating children to different year groups or streams on the basis of academic ability.
- Banding and setting – further variations of streaming in which pupils are divided within school.
- Self-fulfilling prophecies – responses to labelling, streaming, setting and banding in which students may live up (or down) to the expectations placed upon them.
- The gendered curriculum – the impact of gender upon subject choices.

Pupil sub-cultures and attitudes to education

- Pro- and anti-school sub-cultures – the range of sub-cultural responses to school itself.
- Pro- and anti-education sub-cultures – the range of sub-cultural responses to the process of education.
- Influences on educational performance – the impact of class, gender and ethnicity upon educational achievement.