

Outline some of the ways interactionists have contributed to our understanding of...

[Education](#)



The Interactionist perspective on education tends to focus on the role of the education system as a process instead of a system. They are interested in viewing education as a social construction and that it is open to a wide range of interpretations. They are interested in viewing if the education system is a place for education or training. Dewey (1916) argued by saying that the education system should be “transformative” so it focuses more on individuals when it comes to their social, psychological and moral needs.

This therefore means that the education system is providing a suitable place for pupils and students to reach their full potential. Although some sociologists state that the role of education is to help give people the knowledge and skill to be able to enter a specific world of work after they have finished school. They state that the education system teaches them skills for specific work roles such as a teacher or a lawyer.

The debate as to what the role of schooling is is analysed through a wide variety of situations such as, outside and inside of the school. Outside of school, the role of education is never clearly defined as parents, governments and businesses help to shape the system through their own means and beliefs. Some groups are able to influence the system better because of the power that they have, for example, the government. So because of this the role of education is ‘officially’ classed as a way of training people through things such as the National Curriculum.

Whilst Inside of the school, official definitions regarding the role of education is important as it influences the behaviour of the social actors, in this case it would be the teachers and pupils. Interactionists want to be able to consider how these social actors tend to interpret their roles within the education <https://assignbuster.com/outline-some-of-the-ways-interactionists-have-contributed-to-our-understanding-of-education/>

system. The Labeling concept is used to help describe how teachers, as powerful actors within the system stereotype their students and in by doing so therefore influencing how they understand their role and status within the school system.

Padfield (1997) has explored the way in which “ informal reputations” have been gained throughout the school and how it has affected the official definitions of pupils. The Labeling theory has been used to help show how the pupils are taught to think for themselves when it comes to educational abilities. Some research by Interactionists has looked at the way gender has helped teachers perceive their students. Stanworth found that teachers tended to learn boys names at a faster rate and that they on a whole held a higher academic and career expectations.

It was often noticed that the teachers tended to upgrade boys works and did the opposite with girls. Where as Spender argued that girls were ‘ invisible’ in the classroom and that they received less attention than boys did. Other research by Wright has contributed to the experience of ethnic minorities and it indicated that many teachers held ethnocentric attitudes that prejudice the achievements of Black and Asian students. Research by Rosenthal and Jacobson who are also Interactionists in 1969, looked at the effects of teachers’ expectations on pupils’ behaviour.

The study took place in a primary school located in California and the experiment was that the researchers told the teachers that they themselves had identified a number of pupils called ‘ spurters’. This meant that these children were likely to make rapid progress. Although unknown to the teachers, the pupils were indeed selected at random. Yet judging from the <https://assignbuster.com/outline-some-of-the-ways-interactionists-have-contributed-to-our-understanding-of-education/>

results of intelligence tests, the 'spurters' made greater progress than that of their classmates over the next year.

This found that when teachers labeled students as bright and praised them, the pupil reacted in a positive way that therefore means the original prediction is fulfilled, a self-fulfilling prophecy. This also works in the opposite, when a teacher ignores the pupil, and treats them as stupid, the pupil will react in a negative light. The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy can also apply not just to an individual but to an entire class of students as they may all find themselves negatively labeled by the teacher. The research by Wright shows and supports the claim that this can therefore affect a group of people.