

The sociology of education



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The theory of functionalism assumes that institutions and society are made up of interdependent parts all working together. Each part of the society and institution are contributing some necessary activity to the functioning of the whole society. The government provides education for the children of the family; the family pays taxes to government to keep the society running (Cliffnotes. com, n. d.). Generally, functionalism does not encourage changing of social environment, even when such change may benefit them. Instead, they believed changes are undesirable and society may compensate naturally when problems arise (Cliffnotes. com, n. d.). This functionalist perspective, or so called functionalism was found by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). According to Durkheim, education system is a meritocracy. The main purpose of education is to sort people to specific job on the basis of their abilities. Those important jobs in society are filled by the most talented student.

The micro level is the smallest levels of society (Appliedsoc. org, 1990). It mainly focuses on individuals and their relationship (123helpme. com, 2013). It examines the social roles of an individual and how an individual react to society and understand it. Micro level also focuses on how people think within society opposed to their behavior. The examples of micro level society include families, schools and church group (Appliedsoc. org, 1990).

On the other side, macro level focuses on how the institutions within a large population affect the masses. This is the largest level of the society grouping. It mainly focuses on social structure, social processes and problems and also their relationships among each and other. Sociologists

believe that society's problems begin on macro level. Therefore, many sociologists are interest on this level (Appliedsoc. org, 1990).

Discussion:

In Malaysia school system, students spend over a quarter of their time in school. Schools are responsible in foster unity. Students from a range of socio economic, ethnic background and religious learn to understand, accept and embrace differences (Blueprint). Schools are competitive in Malaysia. As stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, there are significant variation in outcomes in Malaysia across states, rural and urban school, National and National-type schools, gender and socio-economic. Among these variations, socio-economic status continues to have a huge impact on students' performance. Students from a low-income household perform poorer than those from a better family background. From the functionalist theorists' perspective, students with poorer and weaker performance will have to take low pay and low status work in their future.

According to Durkheim (1858-1917), education is important to maintain social roles and social rules. Students learn that some people have more power than others in school. For instance, the school prefects have the power to uphold the school rules. Students also learn manner from school. They learn the correct manner and behavior which will then help them to survive in the future.

Functionalism mentioned that there is division of labor in a modern society. An individual does not have all skills that needed to survive. Therefore, society needs plumbers, tailors, accountants and engineers. People must

specialize in their own job. Therefore, students in our country sit for examinations. Examinations sorted students out and encouraged them to take up job that they are capable in. During primary education, students' aptitude is measure through the Primary School Achievement Test (Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah, UPSR). After their third year studied in secondary school, students sit for the Lower Secondary Assessment (Penilaian Menengah Rendah, PMR) examination. And finally, they take the Malaysia Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, SPM) in their fifth year during secondary education. Those national examinations in primary education and secondary education in Malaysia are held under equal conditions where students have the equal opportunity to the high grades. From this, students learn to accept the equality of opportunity. The competitive school life teaches students to be competitive and accept that it is fair to have different rewards.

Malaysian school system passes on students are achievement and equality of opportunity. Students who can achieve better of success will get rewarded. This phenomenon encourages students to work hard. Malaysia Public Service offered JPA Scholarship to the Malaysian nationality who is continuing their studies at locally or overseas universities or colleges. There are also others corporate or university scholarship offered to encourage talented and outstanding students to further their studies. Beside scholarship, the National Higher Education Fun Corporation (PTPTN) is providing study loans to students pursuing tertiary education in Malaysia. PTPTN is open to students pursuing studies at the diploma, first degree,

master, doctorate and professional courses levels in local institutions of higher learning.

During secondary education, students study about the history. The study of history provides links between the individual and society. It is also important to give students a sense of the continuity of Malaysian culture. Furthermore, the enforcement of co-curricular, sports activities and competitions in school make students feel that they are part of the society. It reinforces students' sense of social solidarity and belonging which is also coherent with the functionalism perspective.

Other than that, skills provision is also important for a functionalist's perspective on education. Education in Malaysia encompasses education from pre-school to university. According to the National Philosophy of Education, the vision of education is means to develop a child holistically from intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. Education in our country aims to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent. To practice the skills provision, the country benchmarks the learning of languages, Mathematics and Science to international standards. Every student will receive foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and Science, which believed as the key growth area for the Malaysia economy. The equity in education will also ensure students are being equipped with the knowledge and skills required for success in life.