

Education from conflict approach assignment

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Historically, American education served both political and economic needs, which dictated the function of education. Today, sociologists and educators debate the function of education. Three main theories represent their views: the functionalist theory, the conflict theory, and the symbolic interactionist theory. The conflict theory Conflict theory sees the purpose of education as maintaining social inequality and preserving the power of those who dominate society. Conflict theorists examine the same functions of education as functionalists.

Functionalists see education as a beneficial contribution to an ordered society; however, conflict theorists see the educational system as perpetuating the status quo by dulling the lower classes into being obedient workers. Both functionalists and conflict theorists agree that the educational system practices sorting, but they disagree about how it enacts that sorting. Functionalists claim that schools sort based upon merit; conflict theorists argue that schools sort along distinct class and ethnic lines. According to conflict theorists, schools train those in the working classes to accept their position as a lower-class member of society.

Conflict theorists call this role of education the “ hidden curriculum. ” Conflict theorists point to several key factors in defending their position. First, property taxes fund most schools; therefore, schools in affluent districts have more money. Such areas are predominantly white. They can afford to pay higher salaries, attract better teachers, and purchase newer texts and more technology. Students who attend these schools gain substantial advantages in getting into the best colleges and being tracked into higher-paying professions.

Students in less affluent neighborhoods that do not enjoy these advantages are less likely to go to college and are more likely to be tracked into vocational or technical training. They also represent far higher numbers of minority students. Conflict theorists contend that not only do the economics favor the white affluent, but so does school testing????” particularly IQ testing, which schools can use to sort students. They argue that the tests, which claim to test intelligence, actually test cultural knowledge and therefore exhibit a cultural bias. For example, a question may ask: “ Which one of these items belongs in an orchestra? A. ccordion B. uitar C. violin D. banjo. ” This question assumes considerable cultural knowledge, including what an orchestra is, how it differs from a band, and what instruments comprise an orchestra. The question itself assumes exposure to a particular kind of music favored by white upper classes. Testing experts claim they have rid modern exams of such culturally biased questioning, but conflict theorists respond that cultural neutrality is impossible. All tests contain a knowledge base, and that knowledge base is always culturally sensitive. powerful means of maintaining power structures and creating a docile work force for capitalism.