

Essay on functionalist views

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



Functionalism is a predominant perspective. The functionalists see education as a miniature society, where the individual develops a sense of commitment to the social group; it is a place to learn rules where the individual learns to conform to societies cultural norms and values. The functionalist perspectives of Emile Durkheim are, he believed that the major function of education was the transmission of societies norms and values. This would allow an advanced division of labour, which contributes to the economy. He believed in the process known as socialisation, where cultural norms condition an individual, allowing entry to modern society. The economy greatly relies on educational conditioning, and it is essential that educational achievement is well balanced in the meritocratic society, for role allocation to occur. The individual must be suitably-fitted for his or her post. From a functionalist perspective schools sieve individuals in accordance to their ability for example by tiered examinations. This process in which educational failure is seen positively, aids role allocation. Parsons backed Durkheim's theory. He believed that education fulfils the function of secondary socialisation, thus allowing role allocation to occur. He firmly believed that role allocation was necessary for the functioning of society and the economy. His perspectives encouraged meritocracy, where the individual is rewarded on the basis of merit or ability and not their background. There are various conflict theories, which give different views regarding the role of education. For example the Marxist perspectives of education argue that the education system imposes values of a higher class origin. In addition, achievement is based merely on social background and therefore makes failure inevitable. They believe that the education system serves capitalism and say that

functionalists only look at the positives of the education system. Bowles and Gintis believed that the hidden curriculum benefits only the employer in a capitalist society, whereas a functionalist perspective would argue that without socialisation in education, the individual would not recognise the norms and values of modern society. They believed that there is a strong relationship between capitalism and the educational system. The correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis illustrates school as entry into a world of exploitive work, where the individual learns to believe in meritocracy. In contrast to a functionalist perspective, Giroux believed that the educational system is a site of ideological struggle, where the enforcement of class differences by aiding the middle class and neglecting the working class from achieving are obvious. Marxists believed that functionalism was to blame for the failure of the educational system, and because individuals are made to conform, they mostly oppose values imposed by schools. The enforcement therefore encourages a counter school culture. A functionalist would argue that bad behaviour, is exactly why individuals need to reform to the cultural norms of a modern day society if they are to succeed at all. Marxist and Functionalist perspectives of the role of education in modern Britain are evidently very different.

Functionalism seems to be the main consensus perspective. Analysis of Functionalist views conveys the positive contribution made by education to the social system. Whereas the Marxist theories argue that the education system imposes dominant values of the middle class and neglects the working class. Marxists perspectives also believe that a disproportional amount of lower class individuals will continue to higher education as a

result of ideological factors such as class and race. Marxists believed that the myth of meritocracy made the individual feel responsible for his or her own failure in education as opposed to the functionalist factors such as role allocation and the hidden curriculum which are clearly to blame for the inevitable failure of the individual. A Marxist perspective is probably more relevant to my own experience. I have experienced pressure from peer groups from higher social backgrounds of my own, and feel that without dress sense and money we are all able to achieve to similar standards, despite allowances sometimes made for richer more fortunate individuals.