

Contribution of marxism to our understanding of the roles of education in society...

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



Marxists take a critical view of the role of education. Capitalist society is essentially a two-class system, with a ruling class exploiting the working class. Marxists see education as being run in the interests of the ruling class. For example, Althusser argues that education is an important ideological state apparatus that helps to control people's ideas and beliefs. He suggests education has two purposes. It reproduces class inequalities through the generations by ensuring that most working-class pupils experience educational failure. Education also legitimates this inequality, persuading the working class to accept educational and social inequalities. Other Marxists have also pointed to the existence of a hidden curriculum in schools.

The Marxists helped contribute to our understanding of the role of education in society in many ways. They went against the functionalists and even opposed one of the functionalist's theories.

Marxists take a class conflict approach they see education as serving the needs of capitalism. They therefore don't agree with the functionalist's view of consensus and theory of meritocracy. Meritocracy is an educational or social theory believing that everyone has an equal opportunity to do well and to succeed. Meaning that your individual efforts are what make you achieve rewards and status, rather than ascribed by their upbringing, background, ethnicity, class or gender. This means that everyone gets the same education and it's up to them how well they do at school. Marxists believe that this isn't true and meritocracy is a myth.

Whilst Marxists believe it is partially true, it is up to the student to do well and try however they can only do as well as the capitalist society allows

them to. Willis is a Marxist sociologist and an interactionist, he also shows this by saying children put themselves into social groups and choose not to try and end up not getting the grades down to their own behaviour. However Bowles and Gintis, two other Marxists believe this is achieved through the correspondence principle and the myth of meritocracy they say not everyone gets an equal right to education as there are private schools that always get the same grades as arguably they are getting a better education. In general different schools have different teaching styles and different levels of performance so depending what school you go to can have a big impact on your education; for example if the same person went to private school and then a state school they could end up with better grades from going to the private school and bad grades from the state school however if they go to a private school and don't try but went to a state school and tried really hard this may not be true.

Marxists also say that schools teach pupils to accept hierarchy and that they reproduce the next obedient workforce that will accept inequality as inevitable. Bowles and Gintis decided to do a study on 237 students from New York. They found that the school rewarded the kind of personality traits that made for a submissive compliant worker. They also found that students that showed independence and creativity tended to gain lower grades than those who showed characteristics linked with obedience and discipline for example punctuality. They also talk about the hidden curriculum and how schools are teaching students things they don't know they are learning. They teach you things you know you shouldn't do and they teach you to accept

hierarchy as you know if you go against the teacher you will be punished in some way. Schools teach students how to act in the workplace as they obey the teacher in the workplace you have to obey your employer. They also talk about working class people saying “ I’m poor because I’m dumb” they believe this as they feel they didn’t work hard at school and were not very clever so they didn’t get good grades therefore didn’t get a good job and so now don’t have much money. Bowles and Gintis say this is unfair they have been taught to blame themselves instead of blaming the capitalists.

Althusser is another Marxist sociologist; he looks at ideological state apparatus. He believes that education just reproduce class inequality by transmitting it from generation to generation they do this by failing each successive generation of working class pupils in turn. This legitimates class inequality by producing ideologies that disguise its true cause. The function of ideology is to persuade the working class to accept inequality as inevitable and therefore reduces the threat of them challenging or threatening capitalism.

This is all what we are taught by the Marxists about education. It is based on saying that school is misleading students into being the next obedient workforce and whilst each sociologist’s opinion slightly differs they all say that it is a negative experience which teaches us to except Capitalism.