

Social classes and education



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Social classes and Education. When it concerns the education of the black children, there seems to be much more than just racial prejudice that shapes their standard.

Anthropologist John Ogbu's study of the school in Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights exposes, rather unexpectedly that the reason for the black students lagging behind their white counterparts is the attitude that the children and their parents behold and not just racial distinction. He observed that black students followed the peer culture that considered academic success as "acting White" and their parents, unlike that of other ethnic groups refrained from concerning about their children's school progress. Other black authors such as Asa Hilliard however, condemned Ogbu and maintained that that are black students who succeed. Racial theorist Shelby Steele felt that racial discrimination determined their lack of effort to achieve what others do.

(Ogbu)

The other issue that needs attention in determining African-American children's education is the methodology used for teaching. In a multicultural urban elementary school, black teachers in an attempt to explore the best instruction to serve the black students felt the necessity of the attitude of "I want the same thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine," in teachers. (Delpit, 1998) Rectifying the cultural hegemony in teaching and empowering children the freedom of expression and culture in learning and inculcating child-centered approaches were found to be some of the steps. One way of achieving this end is by reminding children about their power to shape meaning and rationale.

J Anyon found out that pedagogical care and practice differed in schools of different social classes. (Anyon, 1980) He studied a total of five schools and

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found out that the first two which were working class' schools emphasized on rote behavior, gave less explanation and used less textbooks. The third school which mostly belonged to middle class parents had the system of getting only the right answer and no serious attention was given. The fourth one, which he called as the affluent professional school encouraged in individual thought and expression. The fifth one called executive elite schools which comprised children of the capitalist class, was the only school that worked on the development of analytical and intellectual powers through logical reasoning.

Jonathan Kozol, a teacher who was being fired by a school for having his students read a poem that wasn't prescribed in the list, does not disagree with the trend of this segregated school system (Kozol, 1991). He cites an example of a public school in New York which conducted classes in abandoned roller skating rink with no encyclopedia to use. The only solution he sees to the problem is the financial equality in schools either by state funding or by diverting money from the more affluent schools.

Booker T. Washington says that the blacks must avoid ignorance that their submissive position had given them (Washington, 1901). The magnanimous author taught African-Americans how to study and work hard and respect oneself and others. Two of his products I can recognize are my father who was taught work in the automotive industry and my grandfather.

It is indeed time that we realized the need of, as Washington points out, "property, industry, skill, intelligence, and character" for Black-Americans to succeed.

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