

The history of education



Education is one of the most important aspects of society and benefits the individual and society as a whole. It benefits society through economical, political and cultural means. But what has to be assessed is whether the aim of education is to benefit each individual, whether it is to further the development and production in society, or whether it is to do both, but in a fair and equal manner without causing separations and problems within society. Modern day society is ever expanding and globalization, which Coatsworth says “ is where the movement of people, goods or ideas among countries and regions accelerates”, increasing. This then results in the world requiring a ‘ global workplace’ of people working for TNC’s (Trans-National Corporations) across multiple continents in order to create the biggest amount of profit and spread of goods. Whether globalization is a good thing is one question but what is central, is whether education needs to be transformed to prepare children for this ever developing market.

Arguably, there are many different purposes of education. The Functionalist view is that education unifies and stabilizes society, it benefits society as a whole and is based on a meritocratic system. Education contributes towards social cohesion through shared experiences and a common curriculum. The expansion of education, for Functionalists, is directly linked to the requirements of industrial production. Therefore, the essential purpose of education for Functionalism is to keep society going by creating workers and people who can benefit society economically. The Functionalist belief is that each individual child’s achievement is based on how hard the individual works (meritocracy) and whether they want to achieve highly. This is a very positive view of education but unfortunately, Functionalism fails to notice

any negatives within society and education. It fails to recognize any exterior or genetic factors that can affect a child's achievement within education such as poverty, gender or ethnicity.

Karl Marx would argue that the “ purpose of education is to reproduce inequality and social hierarchy” (keep the rich, rich and the poor, poor).

What Marx says is that children are being labelled in school according to their social class and then the education system makes sure they are kept in that class to produce low-skilled workers and manual labourers for means of production within society. “ The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation” (Marx, 1848). Making profit is more important to the capitalist society than the effective development and education of our future generations. One of the ways children could be kept in their social class within education is through language. Basil Bernstein said that humans use a restricted and elaborated language code depending on what social situation they find themselves in and with which types of people. The Restricted code is a simple understanding of language used with family and friends whilst the elaborated code is more abstract and complex and would be more commonly used within institutions. Bernstein's research found that working-class children had access to the restricted code whereas middle-class children had access to both the restricted and the elaborated code. It is the dominant use of the elaborated code within education though, that is disadvantaging working class children by affecting their understanding and ultimately resulting in lower achievement from them.(Bernstein, 1977). Marxism would argue that social class is based on the possession of means of production but

in the modern day society class is based upon knowledge and wealth. Capitalism has created a society where knowledge creates wealth and power. Overall, the Marxist view would be that education is already preparing children for the global workplace by reproducing inequality and manual labourers who will be underpaid and mistreated in the workplace so that Trans-National Corporations can make the biggest profits; whilst the middle class children shall become the management of the companies and the hierarchy shall be present in the global workplace as it was in school.

Weber's Interactionist theory examines how individuals and groups create patterns of behaviour which shape the systems. Becker's labelling theory explains how if a teacher labels a pupil negatively in school then a pupil will go on to fulfil that label. Labelling is an effect of the characteristics of a pupil on a teacher's views of the student. If a child is labelled in school by a class teacher because they appear scruffy or lazy, this can be down to relative poverty in the home which could cause the child to be frequently tired and without the necessary resources to assist their learning. This can result in a teacher labelling a pupil as lazy, unenthusiastic or simply unwilling to learn, which then goes on to affect the child's achievement within school and possibly even later life. Labelling is potentially a major factor in working class children going on to perform manual labour jobs, making up the majority of a national and global workforce and remaining in their social class. Marxism would maintain this is true and would state that this is the sole aim for the education system, to produce a global workforce that can benefit society economically.

“ The world is in a transformation that means there is ‘ no longer a clear distinction between international and domestic, external and internal affairs” (Rosenau, 1990). This statement by Rosenau explains how the world through modernisation is now merged into one global workplace. Globalisation has created a world where each individual country is now reliant upon one another for goods and services and so act not alone, but more as one.

“ Globalisation has integrated rich, affluent, and educated classes, but has fractured working classes and marginalised the poor, who do not have the skills and economic clout to profit from open markets” (Shalmali Guttal 2007). This statement from Guttal shows how Globalisation may be positive in terms of benefitting the rich and providing opportunities for the middle class but at the expense of the working class. Therefore if a student struggles academically and cannot go on to higher education, they should not suffer in today’s society by not benefitting from the gains of globalisation. This is one way that Globalisation is creating inequality in society and if the education system was to prepare students for the global workplace then this would simply be reinforcing inequality in school. The purpose of education is to benefit the lives of all children in school not just to progress the lives of those children who have already been born into the middle and upper classes. Economic gain is not the vital target for the result of education. “ Globalisation enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects on education and the production of knowledge are largely a product of that financially-driven, free-market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education” (Carnoy, 1999).

Bowles & Gintis explain how school relates to the workplace via the overt and the hidden curriculum. Orders are given by the teacher/boss to the student/worker to follow. The person in charge of the student/worker will have to give permission for the individual to use the toilet, when to go and return for fixed time breaks, will assign work tasks to the individual/group, give rewards for hard work, place emphasis on attitude towards tasks, give work to be done at home and discipline the students/workforce. Nearly every single thing a person will experience when they enter the workplace is imitated within the schooling system to prepare students for the global workplace.

The restricted and elaborated language code explained by Bernstein not only puts working class children at a disadvantage in the schooling environment but also in the working environment and especially in the multi-national corporations of today's global workplace. If a working class child is underachieving in school because of the dominant elaborated language code used by teachers, then that student will not secure themselves a well-paid job in the management sector of TNC's because of their achievement academically and because of their dominant use of the restricted language code. In the global workplace, as well as in education, the elaborated language code is used. Therefore, the use of the elaborated language code in education and the global workplace is reproducing inequality by keeping the working class limited to the restricted code which results in them only gaining manual labour jobs and becoming the primary workforce of the global workplace. As a result of this, more emphasis needs to be put on teaching children the elaborated language code in school before they reach

the workplace, but in a gradual, subtle way so they can pick it up rather than being at a disadvantage right from the beginning of school. This is one major way that education needs to prepare students for the global workplace simply so that inequality is not being reproduced as a result of the schooling system.

Bourdieu's forms of capital can link to Bernstein's language codes in terms of class and social structure. Bourdieu's says that a group or an individual's position in the social structure depends on three forms of capital: Economic, social and cultural. Economic capital is everything with a monetary value a person owns, social capital is what types of groups the individual may belong to and cultural capital is the way a person may have been cultured such as frequenting museums and art galleries as a child. These three forms of capital are something a child is either born into or not and as a result is crucial to the individual's position in the social structure as they grow up. It is also important to mention that economic capital can be converted into cultural and social capital by means of paying for a University degree from King's College, London, and influencing the right to membership of an esteemed social group. A further form of capital that Bourdieu also explains is linguistic capital. If an individual is raised in a higher class family where the elaborated language code is used on a daily basis and the child even comes into contact with another language such as Greek or Latin, then that is going to raise their position in the social structure right from a young age (Bourdieu, 1986). Consequently, it is easy to see what role that child shall go on to take in terms of hierarchy in the global workplace and what role a child who has grown up without that form of capital will take.

Harbison and Myers say that the role of education “ Unlocks the door to modernization”. In terms of capitalism though, it is debatable whether modernization is a positive thing when it is reproducing inequality and reinforcing the class system. However, inequality is being reproduced not just now in a national sense, but a global sense where the poverty-stricken underclass are being exploited for cheap labor in third world countries by capitalist countries such as America.

In conclusion, education is crucial to the development of society but not at the expense of the majority of individuals within that society. The rise of the global workplace through Globalization has created possibly more inequality and greed within the world and to prepare students for that in school would be ethically and morally wrong. It would be right to prepare students for the global workplace by dismissing social backgrounds, treating all equally and assisting those in more need. This could go on to reduce the gap in social class to create equal opportunities for all within the hierarchy of the global workplace. School already prepares students for the world of work in terms of its discipline and rules, and with the world becoming an ever increasingly multi-cultural place, schools are teaching children about other cultures. This therefore, is already preparing children for the global workplace. However, when there is so much inequality and exploitation in the global workplace, simply to enable cheap labour costs and higher profits, it is more important to focus on creating equality in the classroom and trying to make sure all children can achieve what they desire.

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