

Sociology of education response paper

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SOCIOLOGY Sociology of Education Response Paper Introduction Both the United States and Europe have hierarchical higher education systems. However the nature of the stratification is significantly different in the 2 areas, causing ramifications for both structure and funding issues.

Institutional Hierarchy in the US Higher Education System

Although currently there are dire warnings that America is falling behind the rest of the world, especially emerging powers such as India and China, in educational achievement endangering its superpower status, in at least one respect it is still on top of the world. Using criteria like academic citations and Nobel prizes, a Chinese university in 2008 gave 17 of the top 20 rankings to American universities (Labaree p. 3). This author credits the US success to their stratification pyramid of institutions, with the broad lower base providing access for many and the apex exclusive to the elite. He divides US colleges into 4 tiers. In the top tier “ are the most influential, prestigious, well funded, exclusive, research-productive, and graduate-oriented universities in the world.”. The second tier that emerged from land grant colleges, “ expand access to a broader array of students and offers programs with practical application such as agriculture and engineering” The third category evolved from normal schools to train teachers, in stages, to regional state universities. In this tier I would also include for profit universities. Finally, in the fourth tier are the 2 year community colleges, used by some students as a cheaper and more accessible route to upper tier institutions. Religious and liberal arts colleges have their own stratification parallel to the above. The American system, especially the for profit universities, is more market oriented than the European. With less state funding, US institutions generally rely more heavily on tuition, endowments

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and corporate donations. Especially now, the top tier with its higher academic scholarship and prestige is more likely to attract these resources than the more egalitarian lower ones.

Hierarchy of EU Country Signatories to the Bologna Agreement

The European Union countries also have an institutional higher education hierarchy. However, it is “ flatter” and of a different nature than that existing in the United States. Although Europe has a long history of scholarship and venerable institutions, it felt reforms are necessary because standards were uneven across the continent, and it was falling behind America and Asia, especially in basic scientific research. Therefore in 1999, the EU 27 member states and 28 neighboring countries signed the Bologna Agreement to address educational issues within these countries and establish the European Higher Education Area by 2010. (europa. eu). At least 2 factors differentiate the American and European contexts. The first is that with so many countries involved, with different cultures, languages, and norms, it is difficult to establish and implement a common upgrade policy (van Vught p. 20). Secondly, Europe has a more traditional ideology of scholarship for its own sake rather than the strongly capitalist model of the United States, where business and the professions influence vocational course availability and research concentration, the selection of university presidents, and institutional accreditation through lay boards and donations. In contrast, in Europe academics perform these roles and institutions must rely more heavily on government funding due to the relative lack of industry contributions. As recent demonstrations in the UK have shown, tight government budgets have resulted in steep tuition fee increases. In spite of these handicaps, the Bologna Agreement has resulted in some progress in <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-of-education-response-paper/>

unifying standards, facilitation of transfers of credits and personnel and encouraging research.

Conclusion

Although EU countries through implementation of the Bologna Agreement have attempted to imitate the success of American education, it is unlikely they will ever be able to fully do so. This is because they lack the resources the strongly capitalist American ideology provides in establishing a compatible higher education institutional hierarchy.

Works Cited

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- 2) “ The Bologna Process- Towards the European Higher Education Area” European Commission Education and Training retrieved from [ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/loc.1290-eu: htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/loc.1290-eu.htm).
- 3) van Vught, Frans A. and Huisman J. “ Mapping the Higher Education Landscape Towards a European Classification of Higher Education Springer Science and Business Media BV 2009 retrieved from [booksgoogle.com/jm?books? isbn= 9048122481](http://books.google.com/jm?books?isbn=9048122481).