

# Role of education in contemporary society



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Discuss functionalist approaches to the role of education in contemporary society This essay will look at functionalism and the approaches held within and use these approaches to explain the affect they have on the role of education in contemporary society. The functionalists approach has been fundamental in helping towards the goal of understanding behaviour and the world we live in. and this

methodologies used. This essay will discuss and analyse some key points surrounding these methods and it will highlight the strengths and weaknesses identified in within these methods.

The functionalist approach is one of several different perspectives within sociology. Functionalism is a structuralist theory, and sees the individual as less important than the social structures of organizations in society and looks at society as a whole rather than individuals within it. The functionalist approach looks at society as though it was a human body, each part of the body has a function to keep it alive and healthy and each part of society helps to keep society going. (Tony Bilton 2009)

Functionalists believe in maintaining consensus, a general agreement between societies as a hole of widely shared values and beliefs. The functionalist approach believes that as individuals we all have a shared responsibility to use the functional prerequisites set out for us such as the NHS, government and Education Services.

Education is a term used to describe knowledge and skills acquired both within and outside educational institutions. Education is always changing and research is ongoing, as is research on the provision for achievement for all

abilities. The ultimate goal of education is to provide the best possible education. (Tony Bilton 2009)

Functionalism is largely derived from sociologists such as Emile Durkheim( 1961)and Talcott Parsons. The Functionalist approach explains that by studying the relationship between education and other social institutions that the educational system does not function alone, it makes a positive contribution to society as a whole.

For without society functioning as a whole and without the realization that the individual is part of something much bigger than themselves, social life would be unfeasible, thus making Durkheims Social solidarity a fundamental part of functionalist thinking. (Haralabos 2010 )

( )Durkheim saw the educational system as a way to be taught societies, norms and values.

Durkheim believed that people are placed into education in order to learn life skills which will in turn set the foundations for future employment. This enables people to fulfil roles in society and develop a social conscience, which Durkheim labelled “ conscience collective” and play their part in the division of labour.

Durkheim argued that children need to learn to become part of society and education helps with this and it also helps the child to survive in society. Durkheim believed that the education system was better at teaching certain aspects of social rules than that of families or peer groups. He also thought that being taught punishment and self discipline in the educational systems

would help the individual see that bad behaviour would not only effect the individual but would also effect society as a whole. It was Durkheims belief that being taught subjects such as History would help children feel an attachment to society and enable them to become more committed to their social groups and this would have a positive effect on the greater good of society. Durkheim viewed the education system as a miniature society and a model of the social system (Haralambos 2010)

As effective as Durkheim's view of education is there are still some issues surrounding his theories that can be argued like how can the transmission of social solidarity and shared values be correctly measured especially when looking from an interactionist against society as a whole and can one assume that each individual is going to learn the exact same values and social norms when schools teach in different ways and pupils interpretation on things are different. Although Durkheim

Although Talcott Parson's(1961)was in agreement with Durkheims view of the education system representing a miniature society argued that the education system acts as stepping stones between the family and society. Parsons states that primary socialization takes place within the confounds of the family and this is where particularistic standards will be placed on the child. However to move on to universalistic standards, the focal socialization is then taken over by the school thus

Ensuring children are prepared for their adult roles in society. This ensures the child moves from the ascribed status of the family on to the achieved status and universalistic values of adult society.

Parsons believed the basic values of society were taught through the education system and that value consensus was inevitable for society to function resourcefully.

Parson argued that each individual regardless of background could significantly achieve in the education system and that equality of opportunity was based on meritocratic principles. Parsons viewed the school as a vital tool in assisting role allocation that each job would be correctly matched to the skills of that child.

Davis and Moore (1967) came from a different viewpoint than that of Parsons they agreed on the concept of role allocation but linked it more to the idea of social stratification, they argue that inequality is needed to ensure the most important and influential roles in society are filled with the most skilful and intellectual members of society. They believe this is done through a filtering process whereby individuals are put into categories and graded on their performance, those that achieve higher qualifications can then get higher positions in society. If individuals were assigned to the wrong roles this would have a negative effect on society and the education system would be seen as failing and this would bring about a degree of inefficiency.

that the education system is essential in preparing youngsters for their forthcoming roles in society

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