

The impact of sociological theories in education

[Science](#)



The Impact of Sociological Theories in Education
Crystal Taylor-Johnson
SOC101: Introduction to Sociology
Professor Christine Henderson
November 22, 2010
Education is the most important part of a person's life. Without a good education people would struggle in everyday life just to be able to get by. There are three theories that help understand education. Even though most people feel theories are just someone's opinions, education has many different theories that support it because these theories help people understand education better and these theories are all different but yet they help identify what education really is.

The three theories that are important for people to know are Functionalism, Conflict, and Interactionism. These three theories play an important role in helping to understand education and why education is important. These theories are not just one man's opinion; they give a prime meaning of what education is really about. Martin Luther King Jr. once said " the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.... intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. Without sociological theories to help understand what education is all about and why education is important, we would not get the true identity of education.

Education does not just help you with a better career, it also helps you with your social skills, your ability to understand things better, and most importantly it helps you to be able to identify yourself. Functionalism " Functionalism perspective is a sociological approach that emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. (Richard Schaefer, 2009) Functionalists will focus on ways that universal education can serve the needs of society. The first thing that functionalist do

is see education in its manifest role. They believe that education conveys knowledge and skills to the next generation. Emile Durkheim was the founder of functionalist theory. He identified the latent role of education, which was identified as one of socializing people into society's mainstream. He called it " a moral education", and it helped form a more-cohesive social structure.

It did this by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds. The other latent roles of education that functionalist point to are transmission of core values and social structure. Core values reflect the characteristics that support political and economic systems that had originally fueled education in American education. This means that children in America will receive rewards for following schedules, directions, meeting deadlines, and obeying their authority figures. A benefit that functionalists see in education is something they call sorting.

This means they separate students on the basis of merit. They feel that society's needs demands that the most capable people get channeled into the most important occupations. Schools are capable of identifying the most capable students early. They do so by seeing who scores highest on classroom and standardized tests. The students who score high on these tests are put into accelerated programs and college preparation courses. Many sociologists like Kingsley Davis, Wilbert Moore, and Talcott Parsons referred to this as social placement. They felt this was a beneficial function in society.

Functionalists believe that education plays an ironic dual role in both preserving and changing culture. There have been studies that have shown <https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-sociological-theories-in-education/>

that as student's progress through college and beyond, they are usually able to become increasingly liberal as they encounter a variety of perspectives. People who are more educated are generally more liberal, but people who are less educated are conservatism. " Heavy emphasis on research at most institutions of higher education put them on the cutting edge of changes in knowledge, and, in many cases, changes in values as well.

Therefore, while the primary role of education is to preserve and pass on knowledge and skills, education is also in the business of transforming them. " (CliffNotes. com, 2010). Conflict " Conflict perspective is a sociological approach that assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of tension between groups over power or the allocation of resources, including housing, money, access to services, and political representation. " (Schaefer, 2010). These theorists see the purpose of education as maintaining social inequality and preserving the power of those who society.

Conflict theorists and functionalists examine the same functions of education. " Functionalists see education as a beneficial contribution to an ordered society; however, conflict theorists see the educational system as perpetuating the status quo by dulling the lower classes into being obedient workers. " (CliffNotes. com, 2010). Both of these theories agree that the educational system practices sorting, but they disagree on how the educational system enacts that sorting. Functionalists believe that the schools sort based on merits; whereas conflict theorists believe that schools sort based on distinct class and ethnic lines.

Conflict theorists believe that schools train those who are in the working class to accept their position as a lower-class member of society. This role of

education is called “ hidden curriculum”. Conflict theorists have several key factors that defend their position. They feel because property taxes fund most schools, schools in affluent districts have more money. The students who live in these kinds of areas are more likely to get into the best colleges and have a better chance of being tracked into higher-paying professions.

Students who are in less affluent neighborhoods do not have these kinds of advantages. They are less likely to go to college and more likely to go to a vocational school or technical training. “ Employers routinely use education as a selection tool. Jobs with a high social status such as executives, Wall Street Lawyers, and politicians at the national level are almost exclusively recruited from elite universities. While employers looking for middle management and other white-collar workers, require certain levels of education that indicate sufficient motivation and social experience. (Jason Todd, n. d.) Interactionism “ Interactionist perspective is a sociological approach that generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole. ” (Schaefer, 2010) Interactionists are primarily concerned with relations and transactions in the school house. Interactionists are more concerned with the daily grind of the students and the transactions that occur between the students and the teachers or any other person that is involved with the student.

Because they are concerned with this they disregard the basic physical factors, which are whether the schools are urban or rural, a large educational complex or a small one, or if the schools have a highly bureaucratic system or not. For example, interactionists would be more concerned with the roles that other people play in the students’ education. They are concerned with

the efficiency of a student's education and the quality of a child's academic experience. Interactionists believe that it is important for students and teachers or any other person who is involved in that student's life.

Every student needs to know that their voice is being heard. It is very important for a teacher to understand every one of their students, because every student is different. I think that is what interactionists are trying to get at with their theory. Before a student can really learn, they need to be able to listen. And before they will listen they have to know whether they can trust that person or not. In the beginning a teacher's primary goal should be to gain the trust of their student's. When a teacher is able to gain the trust of their student's, then the student's will listen.

The theories that have been discussed here are very different from one another, but they are not far from the truth. Unfortunately we see these things every day. Functionalists and Conflict theorists believe that if you live in a high profile neighborhood then you will go to a high profile school, and when you go to a high profile school you will get noticed by the best colleges and you will have a very wealthy successful career. If you live in a lower-class neighborhood you will have a more difficult time getting into a great college and living the life that upper-class people live. Although we do not like this, it is true.

There are many people that face this unfairness every day. Interactionists believe a more delicate theory. They believe that a good social communication between students and peers, teachers, family members, or any other person that comes in contact with the student on a daily basis is

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-sociological-theories-in-education/>

the most important part of a student's ability to learn and succeed. Even though most people feel theories are just someone's opinions, education has many different theories that support it because these theories help people understand education better and these theories are all different but yet they help identify what education really is.

Education is what you make of it. I leave you with a quote by Booker T. Washington that felt as though it does not matter where you came from in order to be successful, but how hard you worked is the key: " Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed. "

References

- Cliff Notes. com. (2010). Theories of Education. Retrieved November 22, 2010 from http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/topicArticleId-26957,articleId-26914.html King Jr. , M. L. (n. d.).
- Education Quotes to Impart knowledge, Wisdom, and Deepen Understanding In All Arenas of Life Arenas of Life. Retrieved November 22, 2010 from <http://famousquoteshomepage.com> Shaefer, R. T. (2009).
- Sociology: A Brief Introduction 8th Edition. McGraw-Hill, New York, New York. Page 422, 420 and 423 Todd, J. (n. d.). Functional and Conflict Theory: Point of View. Retrieved November 22, 2010 from <http://www.helium.com/items/779460-functional-and-conflict-theory-a-point-of-view> Washington, B. T. (n. d.).
- Inspirational Educational Quotes for Students. Retrieved November 22, 2010 from http://www.successcds.net/student_quotes.htm