

A new work ethic: comparison and contrast between structural functionalism and CO...

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Name: Course: Tutor: Date: Comparison and contrast between structural functionalism and conflict theory. Structural functionalism and conflict theory are theoretical perspectives forming main theories of sociology of education. Sociology of education is the study of how individual experiences and public institution experiences effects education and outcomes. It is mostly concerned with public education system of informal industrial societies, including expansion of higher education, adult education and continuing education. Education is fundamentally optimistic human endeavor characterized by aspiration for progress and betterment.

It is the means of overcoming handicapped, achieving greater quality, acquiring wealth and social status. It is where children develop their potential and the best means of achieving greater social equality. The social system serves the function of intergrating individuals with one another into life shared with other individuals. Individual experiences and public institution experiences can be analyzed in separate system. " structural functionalism links key social structures with manifest and latent function that help maintain social structural arrangements in our society.

Ashford B, Winston L and Kathy L. (2009; 184.) Structural functionalism see society as leaning on equilibrium and social orders, as if society is like human body in which educational institutions forms basic organs which keep the society/body totally healthy. Social health means social order which is guaranteed when everyone accept to live by the moral values of heir society. Hence structural functionalists believe that the objective of key institutions such as educational institutions is to socialize children, teenagers and students.

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This is because different generations in modern institutions require learning new knowledge, attitudes and values that they will need to be productive citizens in the coming years, especially the new generation is a concern.

Students' learn these values until they gradually understand them, accept them and instill them. Though this is the aim of functionalism, educational institutions must however continue and perform another function. Large number of students from working class background fails to pass well examinations and therefore fail to uphold their status they deserve.

This is because the cultural experiences they learn from school are contrary to cultural experiences they receive at home. They usually get difficulties in coping with these experiences in their different learning institutions. They thus remain as working class because they get least desirable jobs since they are not so much qualified. The weakness of this perspective raises questions like, why is the working class, remains a working class?

Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements such as norms, customs, traditions and institutions.

Structural functionalism helps to answer the question, why certain societies are stable and survive for years. " Durkheim. " Proposes that such societies tend to be segmented, with equivalent parts held together by shared values and common symbols and that complicated societies are held together by organic solidarity. Society is seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally, a relational construct that function like organism with their various parts (social institutions) working together in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion towards achieving an overall social goal.

All social and cultural phenomena here are viewed as functional because they work together and have their own lives. Individuals in these institutions are viewed in terms of status, the position they held in terms of social relations and their behaviors associated with their status. It assumes that primary social problems lead to secondary social problems such as crime, poverty, drug abuse and other immoralities. It explains how a change in social institutions contributes to adverse family conditions which impact other variables in the society like costs of living.

It views a society as a reality of facts that can be investigated. Structural functionalism also postulates that there is a natural order to social facts and strives to balance and harmony in the social system. Variables like conflicts are viewed as functional because they contribute to strain as the system adjusts to social and material environments. "Conflict theory assumes that conflict is natural and focuses on understanding issues involving conflicts, coercion and the role of power in social relations. Ashford B, Winston L and Kathy L. 2009; 184). "The perspective of conflict theory is that it sees a society as full of competing social groups with different aspirations, different access to life chances and gaining different social rewards. Relations in a society are based mainly on exploitation, oppression, subordination and domination. Many teachers assume that students usually have middle class experiences at their homes, which according to some they don't understand because of ignorance and that the assumption isn't necessarily true.

Some students attend to household chores after school and carry out a considerable amount of domestic responsibilities, mostly in single parents'

homes. The demands of these domestic chores make it difficult for them to do better their studies at home and thus affect their academic performance. Teachers have realized particular students' doing well academically as a result of formalizing regular studies and integrated student preferred methods.

Some students fail to realize and appreciate this technique as it pass unnoticed. Instead the students perceive this as irrelevant with their perceived future labour markets. Anti-school values displayed by this students are derived from their consciousness of their real interests. Infact in this case the working class students see to themselves that striving to succeed and absorbing their middle class values is accepting their inferior social position as if they are contributing to their failures.

Conflict theory is especially useful in understanding variables like war, wealth and poverty, the haves and the have not's, revolution and political strife. Therefore it also explains that a society is in state of perpetual conflict and usually competes for limited resources. It is a theory which can be used to explain the current unprecedented bail by the US government which has proven to be rich- to- rich wealth transfer. It assumes that the haves have perpetually increase their wealth at the expense and sufferings of the have not's.

It is the power struggle that is commonly worn by those who have and lost by those the have not's- common persons of common means. Certain conflict theory discusses ideological aspects inherent in traditional thoughts. It is important to note that conflict theory doesn't refer to a unified school of

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thought and should not be confused with theories of social conflicts like peace and conflict studies or any other theory of social conflict.

In summary conflict theory views a society as having constant conflicts that shall never end. The haves possess money and have power to shape the law to meet their interests. The elite enforce justice to maintain their status, behavior and they try as much to keep the haves not subservient. WORKS CITED 1. Ashford B, Winston L and Kathy L " Human behavior in the social environment. " Amultidimensional. (2009): 185. Print. 2. Siegel J and Welsh C. " Juvenile Delinquency" Theory, Practice and Law. (2011): 185. Print.