

In this essay I will be assessing the Marxist view of the role of education. Issues such as social control, the hidden curriculum, meritocracy and correspondence will be raised. Sociologists such as Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, Willis, Althusser, Durkheim and Davis and Moore will be discussed.

Marxists think that education is a form of social control as it puts students in their place and prepares them for their role in society. They also believe that it teaches them the hidden curriculum which contributes to the economic scale of society.

Marxists also believe in 'myth of meritocracy', as Marxists Bowles and Gintis argue that education doesn't offer everybody an equal chance, as they believe that the education system works against the working-class. They also believe that schools are very much like work places and they both have rewards and hierarchies. Bowles and Gintis also came up with the 'Correspondence theory' which is a close correspondence between the social relationships in a classroom and those in a work place. This theory is essential for reproduction.

Bourdieu considers how schools transfer social / cultural inequalities from one generation to the next. The culture of the middle-class student matches that of the dominant ruling class culture of education. The ruling class decide what topics are worthy of consideration, what constitutes knowledge.

Marxists agree with functionalists that education contributes to the working of industrial society, and economic organisation. Louis Althusser argued that economic relations structures education. Althusser also argues that schooling is an 'ideological state apparatus'. Schools work to ensure that those who are to do the work will do co-operatively out of a belief that the situation is just and reasonable.

Durkheim maintained that the major function of education as the transmission of society's norms and values. Without these essential similarities, co-operation, social solidarity and therefore social life itself would be impossible. Durkheim's views are very patriotic and states that every society should be exactly like this.

Davis and Moore see education as a means of role allocation. Education ensures that the most talented and able members of society are allocated to those positions which are functionally most important for society. High rewards act as incentives which are attached to these jobs (money, status etc). In theory all will complete for them but only the talented will win through. The education system sifts, sorts and grades individuals in terms of their abilities. It rewards the most talented with high qualifications which provide entry to those occupations, which are functionally most important for society. Society will then believe that the system is fair and their position is deserved.

Marxists have said that working-class low-level achievement is linked to social inequality. 'Poor environmental background equals poor educational achievement'. Parents have fewer opportunities to provide their children with unlike the middle-class. To raise working-class educational achievement the government offers grants such as EMA particularly to sixth students. This will therefore encourage those to stay on for further education.