

The Marxist Perspective on Education

Introduction/ context

Social class based analysis of society

1970s

The education system benefits the ruling class

In reality - social class influences educational achievement in addition to intelligence and effort

The reproduction of class inequality

Middle class children get better qualifications

Then go on to get higher paid 'middle class' jobs

Working class children end up with lower qualifications

They end up with lower paid, 'working class' jobs

The legitimization of class inequality

In school we are taught we all have an equal chance to succeed

Schools teach the 'myth of meritocracy'

We believe if we fail it's our own lack of ability or effort

This is why working class pupils accept lower paid jobs in later life

Pupils are not taught the TRUTH - that working class kids face an unfair disadvantage because of their class background

It presents the capitalist system as just and inevitable, and presents alternative systems as unrealistic

Links to the correspondence principle

School creates false consciousness, it controls people's minds

It encourages pupils to passively accept their future work roles

Create a passive and subservient workforce

The ideological state apparatus

Louis Althusser

Transmitted through the 'hidden curriculum'

The correspondence principle

What students learn in school corresponds to what future employers need

Motivation by external rewards - put up with boredom in lessons to get grades at the end

Passive subservience of pupils to teachers

Acceptance of hierarchy at school

Passive subservience of workers to managers

Acceptance of hierarchy at work

Criticisms

Deterministic - not every w.c kid fails

Critical subjects are taught in schools - e.g. sociology!

Dated? The class structure/ education system/ work are more complex today

Some pupils rebel (they don't just accept authority passively)

Workers put up with exploitation and tedium at work to get wages at the end of the month

The Marxist Perspective on Education

Neo-Marxism (Paul Willis)

Participant Observation study of 12 lads who formed a counter school culture

The point of school was to rebel and 'ave a laff'

They saw school as pointless - irrelevant to the factory jobs they wanted, they also realised it was unfair

They'd seen through the 'myth of meritocracy'

The lads ACTIVELY resisted school authority

Criticises the idea of passive subservience

However - the lads still ended up in working class jobs

So class inequality was still reproduced

See 'class and achievement' topic

Positive evaluations

Wealth of statistical evidence shows w.c kids disadvantaged by material and cultural deprivation

The existence of private schools unfairly benefit m.c kids

Cultural capital benefits m.c. kids

7% of private school kids get >50% of 'top jobs')