

“A” Level Sociology

Teaching Notes

Education and Training

1. The Role of Education in Society (Functionalist Perspectives)

A. Introduction.

1. This section looks at the institutional role of education in society. That is, we are focusing on education in terms of the purpose(s) served by this institution in relation to the overall social / institutional structure of society. For theoretical convenience we will be looking at two main perspectives:

- Those (mainly Functionalist) theorists who see the role of education as being that of an institution charged with the differentiation (that is, making people different educationally) and selection of individuals into adult (work-related) roles.
- Those (mainly Conflict) theorists who see the role of the educational system as being mainly an ideological one. That is, an institution whose primary purpose is that of ensuring the reproduction of Capitalist forms of economic production (and hence social inequalities based on class, status, power, etc.).

2. The focus is on the role of the educational system in structural terms. This will involve an analysis of the way education, as an institution, reflects certain structural imperatives (commands) in our (Capitalist) society (a “structural imperative” involves the idea that social systems make demands on the behaviour of individuals that have to be met if society is to continue to exist).

- One structural imperative in our society is that children have to be socialised into the norms and values of our society. If this socialisation did not take place then our society could not reproduce itself. Educationally, the increasingly complex nature of work means that society has to try to educate some - if not necessarily all - of its members to a high level of technical competence. If this structural imperative is not met then our society would fail to develop technologically.

3. In the above respect we can note that all structuralist sociologists analyse the education system in terms of its basic role, purpose and so forth. That is, in terms of its basic reasons for existing as a central institution in industrial society.

- Functionalist and Marxist theorists, for example, seek to understand the role of educational systems in terms of how they promote a set of central values within society. However, where various forms of Structuralist sociology differ is in the different theoretical interpretations they place upon the nature of social systems.
- For Functionalists, the emphasis is upon social consensus, involving shared norms, values, beliefs and so forth. Society, in this respect, is interpreted as a functioning system that operates for the ultimate benefit of all.
- For Conflict Structuralists the emphasis is placed upon the ways that a powerful, politically and economically dominant, social class attempts to use the education system as a means of reproducing their domination (or hegemony - political leadership with the consent of the led) over time.

- **B. Functionalism and the Role of Education in Society**

1. Durkheim outlined a number of the basic ideas concerning the role of the education system that were to be picked-up and developed by later Functionalist writers such as Parsons and Davis and Moore.

2. Durkheim's basic theoretical position was that the education system should be seen as an agency of secondary socialisation. While the family is an agency of primary socialisation (performing the initial socialising functions required to integrate children into their immediate culture), the education system is an institution that "broadens the individual's experience" of the social world. It prepares people for adult role relationships. One of the primary functions of the education system in an industrialised society is that of socialising people into instrumental relationships:

- These are relationships based upon what people can do for us in return for the things that we can do for them. For example, in a supermarket the relationships you meet there are instrumental ones. The staff deal with you in a polite (but hardly loving) way. Their relationship to you is one of "doing their job". It is instrumental because it involves helping you buy things in exchange for money.
- The distinction between "affective" and "instrumental" relationships is important because in highly-complex societies the relationships we develop cannot be based on the kinds of "love and affection" relationships that (supposedly) characterise family life. In Durkheim's terms, people have to learn how to develop instrumental relationships and the education system effectively serves this kind of function.

3. For Durkheim, an educational system separate from the home or the workplace developed out of the increasingly differentiated nature of institutions in industrial society. In Functionalist terms, an education system has two basic functions:

- Firstly, an educational function - preparing individuals for the roles that they were to play in their adult lives. In the main, therefore, people have to be socialised into the knowledge and skills that a society requires if it is to function technologically.
- Secondly, and equally importantly, an education system was seen to promote social solidarity (that is, a sense of social unity) by promoting:
 - Understanding of the world (it's educational function),
 - Experience of collective behaviour (through secondary socialisation) and
 - Experience of the collective consciousness necessary for the integration of individuals into the social collective called "society".
- The concept of a collective consciousness refers to the basic, fundamental, values and norms that people share in society. Such values are so central to our lives that they are shared by everyone and hence take-on the appearance of existing independently of any individual.

4. We can outline Durkheim's basic views about the reasons for the development of "universal" education in industrial societies by looking at the way education as a social institution develops in industrial societies.

- Durkheim characterised small-scale, essentially pre-industrial, societies as being "relatively undifferentiated" in terms of the nature of social institutions such as the family, work and so forth. In simple terms, such societies contained very few separate institutions (the family, government and religion probably being the main social institutions in such societies). Each institution, therefore, had to be multi-functional rather than mono-functional.
Thus, the family for example, performed socialisation, educational, welfare and work-related functions. Religious institutions not only performed cultural functions (the propagating of moral values, for example), but also political functions (such as being involved in the governing of society, for example).
- In such societies, "work" was an extension of family life. People worked within and around the family unit (such societies being mainly agricultural). In this type of society, family relations were the most significant, mainly because people spent so much of their life within this institution. Family relationships, according to Durkheim are primarily based upon kinship affiliation (that is, "blood ties") and are invariably affective. In addition, those relationships that were developed outside of the kinship network were seen to be primary peer group relationships (and, as such, based upon a mixture of both affective and instrumental relations).
- In industrial societies, the increased size, complexity and differentiation of society was reflected in the increasingly instrumental nature of people's relationships. Increased institutional differentiation, in this context, simply refers to the idea that as society becomes larger and more-complex in its economic and political relationships institutions change to reflect this new complexity.
- In short, people have to learn to co-operate with people who are neither friends nor family. Without this ability to learn instrumental relationships, Durkheim argued, societies and individuals would experience varying levels of anomie.
- True anomie is a situation in which no norms of behaviour apply, leading to the inability of an individual to act socially. True anomie is a state that cannot last for long. Human beings, if they are to behave socially towards one another, have to develop norms of behaviour that define the areas they have in common.
- A variation on this theme can exist for a much longer period. This form of anomie involves the idea that, whilst norms of behaviour exist in a given social situation, the individual is either ignorant of them or is unable to conform to such norms. It is this milder form (which can, nevertheless, be devastating in its effect upon individuals, leading to madness, suicide and the like) which is likely to be experienced by individuals if they move directly from the family into a separate sphere of work.

5. The problem, as Durkheim (amongst others) saw it was basically as follows:

- In industrial societies, the workplace develops as a social institution that is separate from the family. The workplace involves primarily instrumental relationships, whilst the family is primarily based around affective relationships.
- The potential for anomie exists because if people move directly from the family to the workplace without learning instrumental relationships then some form of "normlessness" will result (since people will not "know how to behave").
- Since societies are seen by Functionalists as self-adjusting systems, it follows that the social system must adjust in some way to limit the potential impact of anomie. This is not to say that social systems are thinking, conscious, beings; rather, it is to suggest that when life starts to become intolerable due to various strains and tensions originating at the structural level of society, people have to devise ways of resolving the problems this creates.
- The means that "society" devises to eliminate this "problem of anomie" is, according to Durkheim (and Functionalists in general), the development of an institution that "sits between" the family and the workplace - the school.
- The school provides a transitional phase in an individual's life between the family and the workplace. The needs and demands of the workplace are socialised into the individual in a context free from the pressures of the home. In effect, one important function of the school is to gradually socialise people into the type of instrumental relationship found in the workplace and wider society generally.
- People learn the basic ways of behaving in the adult world of work in a "gentler, more forgiving" environment. Within the school, therefore, people learn instrumental relationships without facing the (anomic) consequences of failing to understand their significance. The school is an agency of secondary socialisation.

6. The role of the education system is not simply one of secondary socialisation. In societies that are, institutionally, highly-differentiated, there is a specialised division of labour (different types of work, different skills needed and so forth). The skills required by an industrial workplace cannot be easily or adequately taught within the family and, for this reason, an institution has to be developed in society that will meet / satisfy the needs of the industrial workplace.

- Note the Functionalist idea of institutions having "needs" that have to be satisfied by other social institutions if society is to continue to function.

7. Another role of education, according to this form of analysis, is that of the "co-ordination of human resources" (that is, understanding the broad needs of the workplace and fulfilling them in (ultimately) a national system of learning, qualifications and so forth).

- In complex social systems, with a variety of different types of employment, societies must develop ways of managing their human resources. Whilst a society may need people such as doctors, dentists, accountants, police officers and manual labourers, there is no point in producing so many trained doctors that they cannot get employment because there is no demand for their services.
- The co-ordination of human resources, therefore, refers to the way people are:
 - Selected for various types of training, made
 - Different to each other in some way (such as, in modern societies, through the possession of educational qualifications) and then
 - Allocated to different adult roles.
- In Functionalist terms, therefore, the institution that can be safely charged with this aspect of co-ordination is the educational system, since it exists in a form that enables it to focus on and carry-out such tasks.

8. These ideas show how Functionalists address the idea of social change. Increasing differentiation results in an increased institutional specialisation:

- The family, for example, starts to lose functions (such as the education of children) and, ultimately, is reduced to performing its "core functions" in an industrialised society (the functions that no other institution can perform as well as the family group). Parsons, for example, argues that the core functions of the family are:
 - a. The socialisation of children.
 - b. The stabilisation of adult personalities.

9. In this sense, whilst the family is charged with the functions of basic primary socialisation and the development of individual personalities, the education system is charged with taking those personalities and forging a wider sense of social solidarity based upon instrumental bonds of social co-operation.

10. Social change, therefore, comes about from the way in which various social institutions relate to one another in society. The tensions and strains between such institutions effectively produces the pressure for change.

C. Post-Durkheim Functionalism and the Role of Education.

1. For Talcott Parsons the education system represents one of a number of inter-related and inter-dependent institutions in society. Each institution has a different set of purposes and hence "needs" (that is, things it requires from other institutions if it is to continue to function properly).
2. Institutions such as the family, education, work and government perform different functions and although these functions will (necessarily) overlap, each institution is somehow unique.
 - Parsons' argument is that there is a clear "fit" between the way in which institutions such as the family, education and work develop. We can express this idea thus:
 - Work needs:
 - Trained people (literate and numerate)
 - Specialisation / specific skills (technical and practical)
 - Socialised people
 - Family Purpose:
 - Primary socialisation
 - Basic literacy / numeracy
 - Care / comfort
 - Education Purpose:
 - Secondary socialisation
 - Vocational training (relatively low level)
 - Academic training (higher level)
 - Selection of individuals (adult role allocation)
3. The basic argument here is that education:
 - a. It develops and co-ordinates human resources.
 - b. It selects individuals on basis of ability (a meritocracy).
 - c. It develops social cohesion through the secondary socialisation process by socialising individuals into core social values.
4. The main conclusions we can draw from this are as follows:
 - As work becomes ever-more complex in industrial societies (the division of labour becomes increasingly specialised), "family education" cannot cope with the demands made upon it by the workplace. A specialised institution is required (it becomes a functional necessity).
 - The education system arises to fill this "social need" by:

~~Socialising individuals into basic needs of workplace:~~

- Punctuality / time-keeping.
- Routines of regular working.
- Respect for legitimate authority.
- Development of varying levels of responsibility / initiative.

Developing the different abilities (practical and academic) of individuals.

5. We can develop the above by looking briefly at the various ways in which we can interpret the broad historical sweep of educational developments in our society by relating these developments to economic and political tensions and strains at the structural level of society.

Historical Developments in English Education A Functionalist Interpretation.

1. Until the late 19th century, the majority of schools in England were established for either religious purposes (the training of priests, for example) or for the education of the sons of the aristocracy. This separation is more theoretical than real since it was mainly the sons of the aristocracy who were trained to be priests.

- Perhaps the earliest recorded educational establishments in England were the Church schools at Canterbury created by St. Augustine in 597 AD for the training of priests and the teaching of converts to Christianity.
- By 1000 AD schools had been created at St. Peter's in York and Beverly grammar school, such schools again having a religious and aristocratic membership.
- In 1150, Oxford University was established, followed in 1200 by Cambridge University, catering for the sons of the aristocracy with a heavy emphasis upon religious instruction. One of the first Public Schools to be founded, Winchester College, came into existence for the training of priests.

2. Schools and Colleges during this early period, therefore, reflected the basic class structure of Feudal society, concerned as they were with a Classical and religious education for a relatively small minority of the population.

- Between the 12th and 14th centuries, Merchant and Craft guilds were established to formally teach the skills required for membership of the Craft Guilds that flourished during this period. Whether these should be considered as schools in the way we interpret the concept of schooling nowadays is open to doubt. Such institutions were concerned more with the training of apprentices into a particular craft than with the provision of an education as we might understand it.

3. Before the 1870 Forster Education Act, therefore, education was clearly class-stratified both in terms of provision and access. This, perhaps, is no-more than should be expected or predicted by a Functionalist model of educational development.

- However, it is clear that such establishments did serve an educational / training function in relation to the learning of various economic skills and trades.
4. The 15th and 16th centuries saw the founding of 3000+ grammar schools, mainly dominated by the aristocracy, Church and the emerging middle classes. Once again, education was restricted to males. Between 1545 and 1547 the dissolution of the Catholic monasteries under Henry 8th ended religious schooling for many years. It was not until the 16th - 17th centuries that schools and colleges - religious or otherwise - were established again under the guidance of Merchant guilds and Town Councils (councils and guilds dominated by upper and middle class males). In 1650, for example, 60 free schools were established around the country, funded largely from public funds.
- We can conclude two things from the above:
 - Firstly, the majority of the population received no schooling during this period, mainly because there was no economic demand for mass education.
 - Secondly, the majority of schools catered for the sons of the aristocracy, although as we get into the start of the industrial revolution (the late 16th / early 17th centuries) the emerging middle classes can be seen to take an interest in the education of their sons at least.
5. In the early industrial period, attempts were made to provide basic levels of education for the working classes, mainly by the Church (Church-funded schools and Sunday schools). The government was interested, for various reasons, in the extension of education from the upper and middle classes to the working classes.
- Until the late 19th century, successive governments (dominated by both the aristocracy and emergent bourgeoisie) positively resisted attempts to establish a universal system of education in England and Wales.
6. As Nobbs, Hine and Fleming (“Sociology”, 1975) note:
“The public education system in Britain dates from the nineteenth century when it became clear that an industrial society necessitated an efficient labour force. The governing classes realised that it was in their own interests to have a better-educated working class. A working class that could read, write and understand simple arithmetic was able to operate machinery more efficiently as they understood written instructions and could calculate the dimensions of components. Earlier, particularly during the French Revolution, it was feared by those in power that a literate working class would be inspired to violence by reading revolutionary literature.”

7. The first serious attempt to educate the mass of the population came in 1870 with the Forster Education Act. This set-up a system of Elementary schools (and supervisory School Boards) that were neither free nor compulsory - a huge drawback to any serious hopes of educating the working classes.

- The upper classes, for example, dominated the Universities and Public schools, their religious and economic function for this class being reflected in the fact that only male children were educated in this way.
- The middle classes established fee-paying grammar schools, for male children. This reflected the emerging opportunities for managerial / supervisory staff in factories and businesses as the Industrial Revolution began to rapidly take-off.
- The working classes, where they were educated at all, attended Sunday Schools or the so-called “ragged schools”. The latter at least had the advantage of being free, although they were characterised by huge class sizes and little attempt to provide much more than a minimal level of education.

8. The latter end of the 19th century saw economic and political pressure build-up as the industrialisation process began to seriously demand a workforce that was literate and numerate. Before 1870, estimates suggest that about 40% of the population were literate, although it is probable that the majority of these people were functionally illiterate (they could do little more than write their name and read simple words).

- In the above we can see an example of a Functionalist explanation for social change. Change originates from the tensions and strains that develop between institutions when the needs of one institution are not being satisfied by other institutions. The nature of work was beginning to change so rapidly that the need for skilled labour was not being met by institutions such as the family, government or religion. The institutional strain could only be relieved by the creation of an educational institution dedicated to educating the masses.

9. Thus, although various powerful groups in society (especially the aristocracy) tried to resist or prevent change, the structural forces behind the need for change were simply too powerful to resist for any length of time.

- The Mundella Act (1880) made Elementary education compulsory (although still not free). It was not until 1891 that free state education was provided, but the compulsory attendance element was not rigorously enforced. The 1893 “Half-Time” Act also illustrates the tension between education, family and work. This system attempted to resolve the problem of young children being forced by their family to work full-time by allowing 10 and 11 year olds to spend half the week in school and the other half in work.

10. The 1918 Fisher Education Act saw the development of secondary education (the minimum school leaving age was raised to 14) and the abolition of the “Half-Time” system. The lengthening of the period spent in education indicates the increasing complexity of economic production, expressed in relation to two main ideas:

- The economic need for a literate and numerate general population and
- The political need for a general population socialised into the demands of an increasingly fragmented division of labour.

11. The Hadow Report of 1926 developed these ideas further when recommending the reorganisation of the educational system into an explicit division between junior and secondary education (the latter starting at the age of 11).

12. The Spens Report (1938) and the work of the Chief Government Statistician Sir Cyril Burt in the pre-war period laid the groundwork for one of the major educational developments of the 20th century, namely the tri-partite (three-part) system established in the 1944 Butler Education Act.

- This Act established an effectively-policed system of compulsory, free, education between the ages of 5 and 15. In addition, for possibly the first time education was explicitly related to the perceived requirements of the economy by dividing pupils into two basic groups:
 - a. Academic pupils benefiting from an education based around the study of theoretically-based subjects. These pupils would attend Grammar schools.
 - b. Non-academic pupils benefiting from an education based around the study of vocational subjects (those subjects that led more directly to a particular type of employment). These pupils would attend Secondary Modern schools.
- The academic / vocational division, based on Burt’s pre-war psychological studies of twins and IQ that claimed to prove different pupils had different natural abilities and inclinations, explicitly mirrored the growing economic division between non-manual (professional) and manual occupations. In this respect, the education system was designed to channel pupils into one or other of these general areas.
- The tri-partite system (the third element, the Technical School, was never seriously developed) evolved into a bi-partite (two-part) system.

13. Post 2nd World War, the Atlee (Labour) government encouraged the development of Comprehensive schooling (through Circular 146, issued in 1946). Although some Comprehensive schools were built in the early 1950’s, especially in London, the bi-partite system dominated English education until the mid-1960’s. In 1965 the Wilson (Labour) government made all Local Education Authorities (LEA’s) submit plans for the comprehensivisation of schooling in their areas.

- This marked the beginning of a switch from a bi-partite system based on the separation of academic / vocational pupils at 11 (using an IQ test) to a Comprehensive system based on teaching all pupils in the same type of school (the notion of an academic / vocational division of children still persisted, however).

14. In 1975, the Labour Education Secretary Shirley Williams tried to make the submission of plans for the establishment of Comprehensive schooling a legal requirement, but a legal judgement given in favour of Tameside (Conservative) Council in Manchester ruled that it was beyond the powers of the Education Secretary to effectively demand the abolition of Grammar and Secondary Modern schools. This explains why such schools still exist in some areas of the country (most notably those areas that are most politically Conservative - Bournemouth and Poole, for example).

- The main ideological reasoning behind the development of Comprehensive schooling was the desire to remove the socially-divisive bi-partite system that had effectively developed into a strongly class-based system of education. Grammar schools were dominated by the sons and daughters of the middle classes, whilst Secondary Modern schools were mainly the preserve of working class pupils.

15. The final developments we need to consider are those introduced from 1979 onwards by the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. The 1998 Educational Reform Act, for example, established a National Curriculum for the first time in England. In effect, the government decided which subjects should be compulsorily taught in schools (prior to this, it was left to schools themselves to decide which subjects they would offer to their pupils).

16. Throughout this period, various government-sponsored training schemes tried to develop a system of post-16 vocational training (a system of workplace-based training schemes) that shifted the educational emphasis away from a philosophy based around education as a general preparation for adult life to one in which training was explicitly related to the demands of a Capitalist industrial economy.

- The bi-partite system was reflected in a new form of vocationalism that tried to tie education into the specific, narrowly-based, demands of the economic system.
- The split between “education” on the one hand and “training” on the other has become more solidly entrenched and reflects the non-manual / manual economic division of the workforce. From a Functionalist perspective, this division can be interpreted in terms of the changing needs of the economic system which forces changes in the organisation of education.
- Where work is increasingly deskilled through the application of computerisation and automation, the skills demanded of an adult workforce have also changed. The emphasis is increasingly placed on transferable skills for the majority of the population whilst a minority are still encouraged to pursue the classical educational forms that lead into various types of professional employment....

A. Education and Work.

1. Education systems must be geared to the needs of the workplace, since there is a necessarily functional relationship between the two institutions.

- If the educational system does not fulfil the needs of work (for example, children are socialised into an “anti-work” culture), tension develops between these institutions. Since this tension (anomie) would have to be resolved, the result would be a change in the organisation of work or education.

2. In “The School Class as a Social System” (Harvard Educational Review, 1959), Parsons argued that the structural role of the education involves four main ideas:

- The emancipation of the child from primary attachment to his / her family.
This relates to anomie and the way its potential effect is limited by providing a cushioning institution between the emotional closeness of family life (characterised by affective relationships) and the emotional detachment required by work (characterised by mainly instrumental relationships).
- The internalisation of a level of society’s values and norms that is a step higher than those he / she can learn within the family group alone.

This is a secondary socialisation argument. Through exposure to others in the educational system the child begins to learn and internalise (that is, adopt as part of their personality) wider social values. This is necessary as a way of integrating people into wider (adult) society and, of course, for the promotion of social solidarity, value consensus and so forth.

- A differentiation of the school class in terms of both actual achievement and of a differential value being placed upon that achievement.

This involves the “sifting and sorting” of individuals on the basis of their educational achievements. This serves a number of purposes:

- a. It provides employers with “objective” standards (qualifications) by which to measure the suitability of various people for particular types of work.
- b. It forms the basis of a social differentiation of work roles. Society requires a wide variety of roles to be filled by adults and people have to be selected for these roles on the basis of ability.
- c. It motivates people to spend time studying on the understanding that their likely rewards in later life will be higher.
- d. In broader Functionalist terms, differentiation links-in with social stratification.

3. The Davis and Moore thesis (“Some Principles of Stratification”, 1945) is that social stratification represents a mechanism through which those who are most able

~~and talented intellectually~~ are allocated work roles that offer the highest rewards in terms of income, power, status and so forth. This is seen to be because the adult roles that are seen to be the most functionally important must be filled by the most able, capable and competent members of society. As, Davis argues:

“Education is the proving ground for ability and hence the selective agency for placing people in different statuses according to their abilities”.

4. Finally, Parsons argues that what is required “from society’s point of view” is “a selection and allocation of its human resources relative to the adult role system”.

This simply means that society has to devise some way of ensuring that people are adequately prepared for the kinds of roles they are destined to play in their adult lives.

5. For modern industrialised society to develop successfully it is necessary for the most able and talented to take-on the most functionally important adult roles in the workplace. A society that allows affective relationships to dominate in the workplace (involving, for example, ideas like nepotism) will not be making the best use of its human resources. As Parsons puts it:

“...it is fair to give differential rewards for different levels of achievement, so long as there has been fair access to opportunity and fair that these rewards lead on to higher-order opportunities for the successful”.

6. As long as an equality of opportunity exists within the education system, Parsons sees it as both fair and, most importantly, functional.

B. Summary and Criticisms.

1. There are general criticisms of Functionalist theory we could note relating to things like:

- a. The underlying or domain assumption that social relationships are based upon a fundamental value consensus.
- b. The reification of “society” as something that has needs and purposes.
- c. The absence of an explanation of social inequalities created by power differences in society (nepotism - in one form or another - for example, does appear to be a common occurrence in our society).

2. Parsons insists that, for the educational system to function efficiently, it must be based upon equality of opportunity, but a major problem here is how to define and operationalize these ideas.

- In Britain, for example, it is illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of gender and ethnicity but, there appears to be marked differences in educational opportunity for people of different genders, ethnic groups and social classes.

3. How do we know when the education system is operating “fairly” and “efficiently”? How could we demonstrate that the system is functioning correctly?

There appears to be no possible way of testing these ideas. Ultimately, it would seem that you are asked to accept these ideas as a matter of faith.

4. Finally, a constant theme running through the work of Functionalist writers in relation to education is the relationship between:

- a. Individual levels of intelligence.
 - b. Individual levels of attainment (as measured by educational qualifications).
 - c. The kind of employment that people attain (their occupational position).
- Apart from the problem of how to reliably and validly measure “intelligence”, a number of points can be noted:
 - The relationship between educational attainment and occupational rewards is not, in our society, a very strong one. Educational qualifications appear to be used more as a barrier to occupational access than as evidence of ability, aptitude or suitability for certain types of employment. For example, when an occupational group (such as nurses, teachers or stockbrokers) attempts to raise the social status (and income) of its membership it uses educational qualifications as a barrier to entrance of the profession.
 - Accountancy is a particularly good example here. Qualifications for entrance to this profession are specifically designed to (artificially) limit the numbers of people who are allowed to qualify and practice this occupation. The qualifications required to become an accountant appear to have less to do with its “functional importance” than with a desire of its practitioners to maintain their levels of income by restricting the numbers of practising accountants.
 - Children are “sifted and sorted” in schools that may take little account of their levels of intelligence. In this respect, there seems to be no guarantee that the people who achieve the highest levels of qualification are necessarily the “most able” in our society.
 - Finally, although Davis and Moore characterise social stratification as a kind of “benign influence” on the education system, Marxists such as Bowles and Gintis (“Schooling in Capitalist America”) characterise it as something rather more destructive. In this respect, we should be aware that systems of social stratification may be based upon fundamental imbalances of power and opportunity.