

Problems of Education

- Sociological Perspectives
 - Functionalist, Conflict, Interactionist
- Educational Attainment and Achievement
- Education and Equality: Equal Access
- Preschool Programs
- School Reform and Institutional Change
- Social Policy

Sociological Perspectives

- Functionalist Approaches
- Stresses stability and consensus
 - Homes and cultural
- Education should complement a smoothly functioning society
- *Problems in the educational system are a symptom of social disorganization
- *Problems of education stem from deviance from accepted norms of achievement
- *Problems occur when schools attempt to change their organization

Sociological Perspectives

- Conflict Approaches
- Schools reproduce society's system of inequality and class stratification
- Focus on coercive aspects of education
- *Marxian Conflict-stresses reducing inequality and social stratification
- *Value Conflict-focuses on intergroup conflicts that arise out of the desire to maintain or defend a group's status in a particular community

Sociological Perspectives

- Interactionist Approaches
- Expectations of students' performance actually determine their performance
- Schools label students “achievers,” “underachievers,” or “rebels”
- Labels stick
- Consequences for “slow learners”
- Students use labels to explain their cliques and academic performance

Educational Attainment

- From 1940-2000, the U.S. changed from a norm of dropping out of school to school completion (pg. 357)
- **Educational attainment**-the number of years of school an individual has completed
- Attainment gap between whites and blacks narrowing
- In 2005, 85% of Americans 25+ had completed four years of high school or more
 - Blacks-80%
 - Hispanics-57%
- College, attainment gap is due to lack of financial aid due to cutbacks or aid being given in loans instead of grants
- High school graduates make \$200,000 more over a lifetime than do non-graduates

Educational Achievement

- Achievement rates highly correlated with income level and concentration of poverty in a region (pg. 359)
- The lower the income of fourth-graders and the greater their concentration in the schools, the less well they do on standardized international tests
- **Educational achievement**-how much a student actually learns, measured by mastery of reading, writing and math skills
- SAT scores have declined since the 1960s
- Much controversy exists over what the reason is for the drop
 - Preparedness, irrelevant, measure what is currently taught, etc...

Educational Equality

- Educational attainment highly correlated with SES
- 4th graders whose parents graduated from:
 - College-70 % reading at/above grade level
 - High school-54% reading at/above grade level
 - Dropouts-32% reading at/above grade level
- Education quality lower in inner-city schools where there are usually high population of minorities
- Native American/Inuit schools also have inadequate education

Education and Equality

- Blacks
- Education gap between whites and blacks rose after 1915 because
 - Competition with European immigrants
 - Unemployment gap-dropouts
 - Segregation-increases disparities because minority schools usually have less resources and minority schools do not learn middle class values, work habits & skills needed for larger society (cultural capital)
- Hispanics
 - 10% of U.S. population
 - Language barrier/Bilingual/bicultural education
 - Bilingual programs in early grades and instruction in ESL in primary and middle grades result in highest levels of achievement by non-English speaking students
- Both groups experience de facto segregation in poor schools

Preschool Programs

- Evidence has accumulated from the success of Head Start and other preschool programs
- Perry Preschool Project-an organized educational program directed at the intellectual and social development of young children
- Results-improved cognitive performance in early childhood and school years, decreased rates of delinquency, crime, use of welfare services and teen pregnancy, increased HS graduation, and college enrollment rates
- **Human capital**-the skills and capabilities of a nation's citizens
- Investments are profitable for both individuals and society as a whole

School Reform

- Schools act as total institutions in some ways-administrators tend to place a high priority on maintaining their authority
 - Schools as bureaucracies-tend to maintain society's conventional wisdom, traditions, legitimize them
 - Division of labor-Employees have specialization in their field
 - Decreasing diversity and variation among schools nationally because schools having to "teach to the test"
- Smaller class sizes make it easier for teachers to provide high quality instruction-should be no more than 25 per classroom
 - National average class size in primary grades-23 students
 - Ideal class size according to teachers-17 students
 - Inner-city class sizes-often more than 30 students

School Reform

- Charter schools-reflect philosophies, programs and organizational structures of their founders
 - Don't include proportionate numbers of students with special needs or English language deficiencies
 - Charter school students don't perform better on reading/math tests
 - Disadvantaged children did not score as high compared to similar children in public schools
- Homeschooling
- 850,000 children being homeschooled in 2000 (1.7% of students)
- Students perform as well if not better than students graduating from public schools

School Reform

- Technology-often believed that technology can solve any problem
 - \$4 billion a year is spent on wiring classroom computers to internet
 - Much of the money is spent buying new technology but not on training teachers to be able to take full advantage of what it offers
- Teachers' Unions-30% of teachers represented by a union
 - Support smaller classes, resources for handicapped and slow learners, and training for teachers
- School Violence-the number of violent victimizations of any kind in schools decreased from 59 per 1,000 students in 1993 to a low of 26 per 1,000 in 2,000
 - Security guards and metal detectors are present in many schools
 - Do not convey authority to teachers

Social Policy

- Educational conservatism-the schools' job is to preserve the culture and transmit it to future generations
 - Concentrate on essentials
 - Schools should be agents of social control; order, discipline, and obedience
- “Back to basics movement”-stresses longer school hours, more homework and more discipline
 - Teachers will get salary increases based on merit rather than seniority
 - More rigorous standards
- Led to the year-round school
 - Los Angeles school districts found it complicated and unpopular
 - More support in regions where there is a heavy influx of new students due to immigration or other reasons

Testing in Schools

- No Child Left Behind Act-stresses results and accountability through the use of standardized tests
 - Results disappointing
 - 3 years after it was implemented, scores had improved slightly in math but declined in reading among 4th graders
 - “Drill and kill”-testing is the measure of educational success
 - If reading and math aren’t improved, other curriculum areas may be cut such as art, music, science and social studies
- Based on “Texas Miracle”-testing in Houston schools
 - Claimed to have a high-school drop-out rate of 1.5%
 - Schools actually had between 24-25% dropout rate
 - Because it relies on a single measure of educational outcomes, it creates incentive for unethical practices

Humanism and Open Education

- **Humanism**-intellectual tradition that is concerned for the welfare of man; emphasizes the maximum self-development of the individual learner
 - Each learner establishes own goals
- **Progressivism**-movement begun in the U.S. in the early 1900s; emphasized vocational training, daily living skills, and a child-centered curriculum
 - Associated with John Dewey
 - Learning is expression of individuality; learning through experience
- **Open education**-individualized instruction in schools; the goal is independent, self-paced learning
 - Little evidence it improved students' intellectual achievement