



Idea of Karl Marx on theory of education

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper that Karl Marx's social theory and class conflict cause the society to transition from one historical period to the next. This class conflict was a result of different classes having unequal access to society's material foundation. Marx's theory thus has social, political, and cultural ramifications despite being primarily economic in character. He believed that social theory ought to be based on the reality of living humans struggling to survive in a generally hostile environment. He was a social scientist and revolutionary who believed social theorists should focus on the material circumstances that affect people's lives in general and education in particular.

Keywords: social theory, economic, political, education

Introduction

Instead of being an educational theorist, Karl Marx (5 May 1818 - 14 March 1883) was principally an economic, social, and political philosopher. The materialistic view of contemporary capitalist civilizations was something he had developed. Due to the fact that Marx (unlike Durkheim and Weber) spoke very little explicitly about education, there are some issues with Marxist viewpoints in the sociology of education (Moore 2004: 47) ^[6]. Although Marx and Engels did not write explicitly on education, Saha (2011: 300) ^[8] notes that their oblique references to the education of working-class children and education as a means of achieving socialist change are incredibly insightful. Education was never fully incorporated into Marx's theories of capitalism and social class. But in their works regarding the class struggle, he and Fredrick Engels did regularly bring up the topic of education. They supported universal education, but their main focus was on the sort of education provided to working-class children and how this education suited the interests of the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) in preserving their social domination. Despite the fact that Marx's theory of society did not explicitly address education, his concepts served as the foundation for the later development of the neo-Marxist sociology of education. This viewpoint has a strong connection to forms of reproduction theory, which holds that the class system in society can be reproduced through education, thereby reproducing the privileges of the dominant class (Ibid: 300). We have pieced together a Marxist theory of education from various works by Marx and Engels on the analyses of the transformation of capitalist and socialist societies as well as works by Marxists and neo-Marxists. We implore you to think of this theory as ideas presented in logical order rather than as theoretical constructions. The theories of Marxian analyses of contemporary society and societal development are only a portion of what Marx, Engels, and Marxists believed about

education. Therefore, before studying Marx's and neo-Marxists' perspectives on education as a social institution, you will first get an overview of the Marxian theory.

Methodology

This paper is based on the secondary literature and reviews of various journals and books on Marxian perspective of education and its link with Marxian theory and education. This paper also discusses the characteristic of theory of Marx and its perspective on education.

Defining characteristics of Marxist social theory

According to Karl Marx's social theory, class conflict causes society to transition from one historical period to the next. This class conflict was a result of different classes having unequal access to society's material foundation. Marx's theory thus has social, political, and cultural ramifications despite being primarily economic in character. He believed that social theory ought to be based on the reality of living humans struggling to survive in a generally hostile environment. He was a social scientist and revolutionary who believed that social theorists should focus on the physical factors that affect people's lives. Many believe that Marx's emphasis on materialism stands in stark contrast to Hegel's idealism. In *The German Ideology*, Marx himself criticizes the new Hegelians and charges them with "theoretical bubble blowing." Young Hegelians, according to Marx, only experience big revolutions in their minds because no buildings are destroyed, no one is hurt, and no one perishes (Turner, *et al*: 2012: 142) ^[10]. In truth, Marx's understanding of society's nature emerged in response to what he perceived as the Young Hegelians' idealistic nonsense. However, Marx's criticism of the Young Hegelians should not be interpreted as a complete denial of Hegel's theories. Hegel held a lifelong interest for him, and he kept coming back to him to emphasize both their points of agreement and difference.

Hegel, who was among the most important intellectuals of the nineteenth century, put forth the theory of philosophical idealism. The belief that matters is a creation of the mind rather than an independent entity is known as philosophical idealism. In the end, the world, which is full of things, is a mental construct. We can only obtain a complete comprehension of human existence by looking at abstract philosophical notions. Marx questioned Hegel's philosophy's contribution to our comprehension of human existence. Marx believed that philosophical idealism led to a distortion that ignored the more significant and practical issues that people faced because its emphasis was on abstract processes rather than tangible reality. Marx held that people couldn't focus on their intellectual wants until their bodily needs were addressed so that directly productive work satisfies these material requirements. This way of thinking helped to create the materialistic viewpoint. Marx's materialistic view of history is primarily based on Hegel's contention that history happens through dialectic, or a collision of opposing forces, even if it is diametrically opposed to Hegel's idealism. Marx, however, asserted that his dialectical approach is in opposition to Hegel's dialectic. Marx held that the central principles of change were manifested at the level of class formations and in the concrete historical development of economic production in society, in contrast to Hegel's view that the principles of development found in concepts like contradiction, opposition, affirmation, and negation were represented by ideas acting in history (Morrison 2006: 144) ^[7]. Marx's analysis of history is based on his distinction between the social relations of production, or the social relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production, and the means of production, literally those things, like land and natural resources, and technology, that are necessary for the production of material goods. These collectively make up the mode of production. Marx noted that the mode of production varies within each culture. This shift in the mode of production ushers in a new historical stage in society and is frequently the outcome of conflict between the forces of production and relations of production. "The history of all previously existent society is the history of class struggle," said Marx. There were always competing interests between those who controlled the means of production and those who did not in every community. Every period of history, with the exception of the first, has seen this struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. There was no private property, no class structure, and no exploitation on the basis of class throughout the early stages of communism. But over time, the earliest form of exploitation (slavery) arose, where rank and status were defined by who owned whom among other people. After slavery came feudalism, in which the interests of the two classes landowners and landless (serfs) were at odds. Capitalists only employ the proletariat if they make a profit, replacing feudalism as the dominant economic system. Marx predicted that capitalism would stretch its tentacles like a huge octopus until almost every aspect of human activity was debased and could be bought and sold (Turner *et al.* 2012: 161) ^[10].

Marx believed that capitalism will eventually collapse due to its inherent contradictions and the profound alienation it caused among the working class. This would usher in a brief period of socialism that was characterized by the proletariat's tyranny. Marx foresaw that communism would eventually take hold,

resulting in a society without classes where everyone would be able to contribute as they could and receive as they needed. A revolution that would speed the demise of capitalism was required for this utopian society to materialize. Therefore, the goal of Marx's praxis was to start and advance this revolution. The current situation had to change for revolution to take place. Because they were few in number and formed a distinct class, the capitalists were conscious of their shared interests. They began to work together to facilitate the exploitation of the workers as a result of their increased awareness. On the other hand, despite sharing common living spaces, the workers do not acknowledge their shared interests, maybe as a result of their size. They continue to be in a class of their own. The growth of worker consciousness of their shared interests is a prerequisite for revolution. From being a class unto themselves, they must become a class unto themselves. Marx foresaw two factors as the causes of this shift in class consciousness: They converse and identify their shared interests as a result of being physically close while being crammed inside factories. Second, the eventual revolution would be accelerated by some bourgeoisie members defecting to the proletariat. A communism would be the result of the revolution, which would be the culmination of the dialectical process that started at the conclusion of the first stage of history. Marx and Engels made observations about the operation of social institutions in contemporary societies while promoting their theses on the exploitative capitalistic system and its ultimate collapse. Examining Marxist perspectives on education is the focus of this paper.

Marxian perspectives on education

The non-explicit attention Marx and Engels gave to education and their understanding of the role education plays in building class consciousness among the working class. These working classes are two remarks that should be made before exploring the Marxian ideas on education. As a result, the study of Marx in relation to education can be divided into two broad categories: (1) An analysis of the direct references to education made by Marx and Engels in several of their writings, and (2) a look at the Neo-Marxist and Marxist perspectives on education. The first part demonstrates how Marx and Engels viewed the educational system in the context of their overall analysis of capitalist society and their desire to convert it into a socialist one. Engels' "The Condition of the Working Class in England" (1845) ^[12] will be our first consideration among the numerous publications. Then, we'll quickly go through a couple of Marx and Engels' other writings. In his writings, Engels described the appalling living circumstances and disorderly lifestyle of the workers in his time. According to him, the working-class children's attraction to numerous temptations was caused by the neglect of their education (Engels 1845: 67) ^[12]. The education that was planned for the kids was the education that the bourgeoisie believed the working-class kids needed. Additionally, educated workers were not wanted by the capitalists. Engels draws the following conclusion regarding the dismal educational opportunities for working-class children: "It cannot be otherwise; the bourgeoisie has nothing to hope for and much to fear from the education of the working-class" (Ibid: 71). We can understand Marx and Engels' views on the function of education in the coming classless society by looking at the allusions they make to it in the Communist Party

Manifesto. Three specific allusions to education are found in the Manifesto (Waugh, 2010) ^[11]. The discussion of the bourgeoisie's ascent took place in the first. The bourgeoisie sought the proletariat's assistance by educating them on the benefits of industrial capitalism and the factory system when they were engaged in constant conflict with other classes, including aristocrats, rival bourgeoisie, and bourgeoisie from other nations. The bourgeoisie "furnishes the weapons to fight for their cause" through education. The industrial bourgeoisie works to create among the proletariat a group of educated adults. The Manifesto's second explicit mention of education is when Marx and Engels respond to the criticisms of communism leveled by representatives of the privileged class:

"But you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations, when we replace home education by social. And your education! Is it not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of the society, by means of schools etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education: they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class." (Marx, Engels 1982: 50) ^[5].

The Manifesto's agenda for educational reformation in the future communist society emphasizes the Marxian perspective on education in light of the prevalence of child labour and the bourgeoisie's dominance over formal education. While outlining the "public programmes of action (they are 10 in number)" in the future Communist State, the third explicit mention of education is made. According to Marx and Engels, the particular plans of action under a communist state will vary from one nation to the next. Nevertheless, they offer 10 such broad plans of action. The ninth of these programmes of action focuses on education. "All students in public schools are given a free education, elimination of child labour in factories in its current form, combination of industrial production with education, etc. (Marx and Engels 1982: 53) ^[5]. Marx and Engels promote increased access to public education for the working class in a number of their writings. They considered themselves as educating and advising the socialist movement on theoretical matters. Marx and Engels did not create many models for education in socialist communities or write much about bourgeois society's educational institutions. However, their historical materialist theory of history has been applied to analyze and criticize bourgeois society's educational institutions as well as to create substitute notions of education that are in line with Marxian socialist ideas. For instance, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976, 1981, and 2002) have critically discussed education in capitalist America in their numerous publications since 1976. In the latter decades of the 20th century, the Marxian theory of education gained a number of new facets. While discussing the conflict-oriented perspectives on education, Saha (2011) ^[8] discusses two perspectives that were influenced by Marx: neo-Marxist approaches and the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Many authors who share this viewpoint have put forth their own theories about how elites control education and use it to uphold their standing. These authors and their works include Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (1977), Apple's *Ideology and Curriculum* (1979), Giroux's *Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling*

(1981), and Carnoy's *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (1974). Saha (2011) ^[8] continues by describing the Frankfurt School's critical theory as yet another variation on the Marxist approach to education. It is important to highlight that the Frankfurt School's six critical theories offer a critique of numerous institutional structures and cultural norms. Of these, education is one. Critical thinkers used notions like the totally regulated society, the one-dimensional man, and communicative competency to characterize social life under capitalism. This viewpoint is relevant to social institutions like schooling. Critical theorists work to understand society and free it from capitalist exploitation. They aim to expose how this kind of capitalism has intruded on social life and liberate people from their delusion. Critical theory is applicable to the study of the curriculum (including the hidden curriculum), educational administration, and teacher preparation in the field of education. The application of the Marxian perspective to education in the former Soviet Union and the modern People's Republic of China is another aspect of the perspective. Education has evolved into a tool for establishing and sustaining a classless society in each of these nation-states. The government has supported education in both of these states. Education is considered in such educational approaches in universal terms rather than particularistic terms. "Education for all through the state" is the guiding principle of education in communist and socialist countries. Education is a private business that is governed by some regulatory legislation in capitalist states (Tandi, 2019) ^[9].

The state abdicates its duty to guarantee universal access to education. In India, where socialism is one of the founding principles of the political system, the state is in charge of providing free and compulsory education as well as overseeing education at all levels. We can therefore draw the conclusion that the Marxist concept of an egalitarian society influences Indian educational practice to some extent.

Concluding remarks

A philosophy of education was not developed by Marx and Engels. Their primary goal was to use historical dialectic technique to analyze the nature and operation of capitalistic systems. They did, however, make numerous references to the part that education plays in upholding the oppressive class system. They also alluded to the establishment of working-class education in a society devoid of classes following communist revolutionary change. The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, in particular, subsequent Marxist researchers, identified education as a significant component of the cultural industry. It should be underlined that Marxian theory and recommendations for socio-political practice are pertinent in all efforts to prepare the younger generation for an equalitarian social order.

Acknowledgement

When examining Marx's contribution to knowledge, it is important to recognize the lifelong intellectual friendship he shared with Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), a Prussian manufacturer's son, which began in Paris in September 1884. Therefore, we must recognize them as the thoughts of Marx and Engels on education when referring to Marx's theories on education.

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