10 | Education

CHAPTER SUMMARY

One of the most important things for children and young adults in today's society is to get a good education in order to be able to provide for themselves and their family in the future. Chapter 10 briefly addresses education from the previous century, then presents a more detailed discussion of the changing face of public education in modern society. Through formal and informal forms of education, people within our society are socialized so that they can achieve the goals and meet the needs of the society itself. In our "knowledge-based economy" the capacity to learn, innovate, and apply knowledge to emergent situations is vital.

The author explains that education, understood in terms of formal learning, was not a common thing for children in the past. In many cases, children typically left school by their teen years to help their families economically. This was in large part due to a more rural lifestyle where farming and other agricultural work was being done. In today's societies, influenced by urban city life and industrialization, children are expected, at the very least, to finish their elementary and secondary education.

The structural functionalist view on education is mainly concerned with understanding how education contributes to, and maintains, the social and economic aspects of society. For Durkheim and Parsons, education allows society to recreate skills for various functions. At the same time, education is another way of enforcing norms and maintaining what society deems acceptable and necessary for its survival.

For symbolic interactionists, education and schools contribute to the development of our personality and identity. Schooling is a series of negotiations among teachers, parents, and students in their interactions with each other. This is expressed in things such as how students select which clas-

ses they take, the role of humour and laughter in the classroom, and how teachers report on their students' progress.

For conflict theorists, schools and education are important as they offer all a chance to succeed in society. Schools act as a mechanism to prepare people for the different positions in the labour market. Under capitalism, inequalities are bound to emerge. Social class keeps certain populations out of post-secondary education, which is usually required for the better and higher paying jobs.

Feminist theories of education share some of the observations of conflict theory with an explicit focus on the existence of and strategies for addressing social inequalities based on gender. In today's society, most people view access to education for women as a fundamental right. However, that has been far from the case in the past and there are still significant issues of inequality within the education system based on gender differences.

Lastly, the author introduces us to an emerging subfield of research in the discipline: the sociology of education. This incorporates many theories into understanding and analyzing the role of education in our society. With the inclusion of technology, education is once again changing. Whereas a few decades ago, public schooling was a radical concept, today it is a necessity and one that is sometimes being accomplished online and through various other new forms of technology.

KEY TERMS

Baby boom
Capitalism
Conflict theory
Discrimination
Education
Feminism
Gender
Globalization
Hidden curriculum
Human capital
Identity

Ideology
Knowledge-based economy
Lifelong learning
Macrosociology
Marketization
Microsociology
Negotiation
New (knowledge-based)
economy
Norms
Patriarchy

Pedagogy
Power
Schooling
Social interaction
Social structure
Socialization
Streaming
Structural functionalism
Symbolic interactionism
Symbols
Transitions

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do structural functionalists view education? (p. 228)

2. What are the two issues that are especially critical with respect to education and new technologies? (p. 229)

3. Growing emphasis on the importance of formal education and credentials has been matched by what three interrelated factors? (p. 231)

4. What is ethnomethodology? (p. 230)

5. Gender parity in education has not been achieved in several important aspects. What are some of these aspects? (p. 233)

6. According to Talcott Parsons, what are the school's two central functions within contemporary society? (p. 229)

7. How can human capital be advanced through education? (p. 229)

8. What are five persistent barriers to providing a proper education to children? (p. 227)

9. How did early advocates of public schools promote the widespread acceptance of schooling in Canada? (p. 225)

10. What are two key concerns researchers have about new technologies and their use in and impact on education? (p. 239)

READINGS AND WEBSITES

Apple, Michael, Stephen Ball, and Luis Gandin (eds). (2010). *The Routledge international handbook of the sociology of education*. New York: Routledge.

A massive collection of readings are available for students who take interest in this area of sociology. This handbook contains 36 chapters of various topics within this field. The first major section deals with many theories that inform our understanding of education. The next section jumps across numerous topics such as education in relation to the family, religion, governments and policy, the media, and economics. The last major section looks at education in different places around the world and addresses their advantages, disadvantages, and differences.

Edgerton, Jason, Tracey Peter, and Lance Roberts. (2008). Back to basics: socioeconomic, gender, and regional disparities in Canada's educational system. *Canadian Journal of Education, 31*(4): 861–888.

After studying a sample of 28,000 students across Canada, Edgerton, Peter, and Roberts identify three key dimensions of educational inequality in Canada: socio-economic status, gender, and geographical location. The first looks at how being lower, middle, or upper class affected the education of the individual. Gender looks at the differences between male and females. Although contemporary education has seen greater equality between the sexes, there are still some marked differences. The last variable is province. This looked at education in terms of the "have" and "have-not" provinces and how the economics of the provinces affected the education system.

OPLC Inc. (2017) *One Laptop per Child.* Retrieved from http://one.laptop.org/

This non-profit organization aims to provide each child with a rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected laptop. To this end, they have designed hardware, content, and software for collaborative, joyful, and self-empowered learning. With access to this type of tool, children are engaged in their own education, and learn, share, and create together. They become connected to each other, to the world and to a brighter future.

CBC News. (2016, Mar. 21). "A History of Residential Schools in Canada." Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280

This CBC report provides a detailed FAQ on the residential school system in Canada, compensation to victims, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2017). *UNESCO.* Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco

UNESCO works to create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values. It is through this dialogue that the world can achieve global visions of sustainable development encompassing observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty. UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.