**Marxist View of Education**

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist, argues that education plays a significant role in reproducing and maintaining social inequalities. He contends that the education system works in ways that engineer middle-class success and working-class failure. In this text, we will explore how Althusser explains the reproduction of social inequality through the structure of the education system and the hidden curriculum. Additionally, we will examine how the existence of public and private schools reinforces social inequality.

**The Structure of the Education System**

 According to Althusser, the education system is structured to engineer middle-class success and working-class failure. This is necessary to reproduce social inequality. The bourgeoisie, who hold the power, influence the education system. They ensure that the working class becomes an unqualified workforce, while the middle class takes on managerial and ruling class type roles. Althusser argues that this is achieved through the use of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum refers to the rules, norms, and socialization processes in schools that are not part of the academic curriculum. The middle-class values are perpetuated in the hidden curriculum, and these values support the success of the middle class.

**The Hidden Curriculum**

The hidden curriculum plays a significant role in the reproduction of social inequality. Althusser argues that the norms and values perpetuated in schools are middle-class and ruling-class values. Working-class values are different, and the working class has a different set of foci. The ruling class assumes a value consensus, which is a way of ensuring that the middle class succeeds, and the working class fails in education. The hidden curriculum supports the middle classes and engineers their success.

**Public and Private Schools**

Althusser also argues that the existence of public and private schools reproduces social inequality. Private schooling prepares those who can afford it for positions of power. Private schools provide a higher level of education and opportunities to network with influential and wealthy people. These connections lead to higher paying jobs and intermarrying within influential circles, which creates a newer wealthy family. The working class, on the other hand, lacks the same opportunities to reach higher levels of education and employment because they lack the right connections. The existence of public and private schools separates people and allows the wealthy to remain wealthy, while the working class is not able to break into that world.

**Conclusion**

Althusser's argument suggests that one of the primary functions of education is to reproduce and maintain social inequalities. The education system works to engineer middle-class success and working-class failure, and the hidden curriculum supports the middle classes. The existence of public and private schools reinforces social inequality, as it separates people and allows the wealthy to remain wealthy while the working class lacks the same opportunities.

### ****Social Inequality and the Education System****

Louis Althusser also believed that the education system is a tool for legitimizing social inequality. In this system, social inequality is made to appear natural, which encourages people to accept it as the norm. Althusser emphasized the importance of cultural and economic capital in shaping students’ educational experiences. The middle classes have more cultural capital, which gives them an advantage in the education system, as they have already been exposed to topics that they will encounter in school. Additionally, they have economic capital, which allows them to access additional resources, such as uniforms, stationery, books, and internet access. These resources give them an advantage over working-class students, who do not have the same financial resources to supplement their education. Although the education system is free, hidden costs contribute to the disparity in resources, which gives the impression that the working class is not doing as well in education.

**The Hidden Curriculum and False Class Consciousness**

The education system has a "hidden curriculum" that teaches capitalist values, such as materialism, profit, and greed. Students are encouraged to pursue success, which means getting a good job, making money, and buying things. Althusser believes that this perpetuates a false sense of class consciousness among the working classes that "if you work hard, you can become the ruling class." He argues that the education system is brainwashing working-class students into believing that this is the way things are, when in fact, social inequality is a social construction. The hidden curriculum, therefore, serves to reproduce and legitimize social inequality, creating the illusion that it is a natural occurrence.

**Criticism of Althusser's Perspective**

Critics have suggested that Althusser's perspective is too deterministic, arguing that students are not passive recipients of messages transmitted through the education system. Anti-school subcultures, for example, show that students can reject the messages of the hidden curriculum and the false class consciousness that it creates. However, Althusser believes that the negative label attached to anti-school subcultures is a way of legitimizing and reproducing social inequality.

### ****Maintaining Capitalism****

In this section, we will examine the role of education in maintaining capitalism. We will analyze the perspectives of Marxists who argue that education serves to perpetuate the capitalist system and the counterarguments from new right thinkers who believe that education is failing everyone.

**The Correspondence Principal**

Marxist thinkers, Bowles and Gintis argue that the education system help to maintain capitalist systems by following the correspondence principal, which explains the ways in which the education system mirrors the world of work. For example,   in school students are told the structure of their day, to obey the instructions of teachers and staff members and follow school procedures such as registration and lesson expectations. Similarly, in a workplace, employees are required to follow certain rules and procedures. Failure to comply with expectations can result in sanctions, job loss, or other consequences. In both environments, there are hierarchies that determine power dynamics, from immediate supervisors to company owners.

**The Myth of Meritocracy**

Functionalists argue that the education system is meritocratic, but Marxists believe this to be a myth. While hard work can lead to success, the education system favours the middle class in terms of language, cultural capital, and structure. This advantage perpetuates the belief that hard work is all that is required to achieve success. However, there are limits to what one can achieve based on their class, such as limited access to certain universities due to fees or location. This can perpetuate false class consciousness, where students are told they can achieve success despite these limitations. This also supports the capitalist system as it ensures that there are a steady flow of unqualified workers to provide labour whilst the owners continue t make profit.

### Criticisms

**New Right Criticism**

New right thinkers, Chub and Moe, argue that the Marxist perspective is too limited in its focus on the working class. They believe that education is failing everyone and not preparing children to compete in a global job market. They argue that education should prepare students to work in a global environment rather than just a national one.

**Determinism: Neo Marxist Criticism**

Giroux rejects the view that the working class passively accept their position to become compliant workers. Evidence of anti-school subcultures suggest that thee hidden curriculum and correspondence principal have failed.

**Social Democratic Criticism**

Halsey Floud and Martin challenge the Marxist view by suggesting that education policies and processes are in place to create a more equitable education system. Policies like comprehensive education, which abolished the 11 Plus and grammar schools, and the allocation of laptops and routers to disadvantaged students during the pandemic, are examples of steps taken to create a more equitable education system. These policies ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the same quality of education.

**Willis' Study on Agency of Students:**

Paul Willis' study, Learning to Labour, challenges the Marxist view that working-class students are passive and accepting of the hidden curriculum. The study examined 12 working-class boys from the Midlands and found that they had agency in making decisions about their future. The boys actively chose to follow their family traditions and pursue manual labour. This shows that the family had a greater influence on educational achievement and expectations than the education system.