

**Scott Davies and Neil Guppy****The Schooled Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education**

Oxford University Press, 2006, 275 pp.

\$52.50 paper (0-19-542108-6)

*The Schooled Society* is a well-written examination of the intersections between Canadian society, education, and labour market. As education and the institution of schooling become omnipresent and notions of equity, progress, and technical sophistication become entrenched within education, the relationship between schooling and society becomes increasingly complex. In this book, Davies and Guppy argue that transformations in families, economies, and politics shape schools and have come to inform the schooled society; a society where education has become a central institution, connected to other major institutions, sought after by increasingly numerous and diverse populations throughout the life course.

Schools have a variety of social purposes, ranging from socializing youth to shaping society through a variety of selection processes. In this book, Davies and Guppy explore the nature of social inequality in schooling through a systematic exploration of selection processes (Part II), legitimation (Part III) and socialization (Part IV), contextualized within both traditional and contemporary theories of educational reproduction. Throughout the book, they explore the extent to which schools have become a site where young people are socialized to the ideologies of the upper class, where education can be understood as a mechanism for maintaining the status quo through educational credentials that are necessary for acquiring meaningful employment. In this way, the acquisition of higher education and processes of educational socialization become legitimated as education becomes increasingly bureaucratized and new cohorts of students pursue increasingly higher levels of educational qualifications, reinforcing belief in its necessity.

After exploring how the classical social theories of Durkheim, Marx and Weber situate and explain the role of schooling and educational inequality, Davies and Guppy argue that contemporary societies differ greatly:

grand religious traditions are being replaced by new, rapidly shifting ideals, forcing schools to compete for the hearts and minds of young people. Social diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance ... are now proclaimed. Modern teenagers can actively choose among a far greater diversity of lifestyles offered by industries that seek their market share (31).

These changes mean that educational theories must also change to incorporate the new realities of contemporary schooling. They suggest that Ulrich Beck's theory of the risk society and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, alongside John Meyer's work on new institutionalism, the neo-Marxism of Bowles and Gintis, and Randall Collins's theory of the credential society have all been at the forefront of this theoretical shift. However, it is important to note that Davies and Guppy, for the most part, do not look at feminist and anti-race theories of education or explore the critical pedagogy tradition, such as the work of Henry Giroux.

Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings of educational inequality in Canada, Davies and Guppy examine the nature of educational inequality, both historically and presently. Despite being built on the premise of equality of opportunity, there exists a sharp division between those who "make it" and those who do not within the Canadian education system. Guppy and Davies take issue with the inherent contradiction between the exceedingly high educational aspirations held by today's

youth and the “forgotten half” who do not make the transition from high school to post-secondary education. For the “forgotten half”, they suggest that the hidden costs of educational resources are often out of reach for many families or they are unaware of the social mechanisms that may increase their likelihood for experiencing academic success.

Within the schooled society, Davies and Guppy argue that changes in the curriculum and the increasing bureaucratization of schools have resulted in changes in the status of teachers. While historically, teachers enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and often took on the role of disciplinarian and moral leader within the classroom, this is not so much the case within contemporary society. Teaching today, they argue, has created two paradoxes. First, within a schooled society, the status of teachers is elevated while at the same time has been subjected to greater scrutiny. Second, as politicians continue to invest heavily in education, they are more likely to challenge teachers’ authority as educators and as experts in their field of specialization. In this way, not only are youth affected by changes in schooling but so are the teachers who educate them.

This book excels through its recognition of the education system as a site for moral and social reproduction, while acknowledging the power of popular culture and peer groups. Davies and Guppy argue that an array of social forces, coupled with the changing organization of schooling into a culture of accommodation, limits schools’ and teachers’ ability to effectively socialize youth. However, the increased emphasis on credentialism and a growing number of jobs that require higher-order cognitive skills have increased the importance of post-secondary schooling, a reality that is often out of reach for many marginalized youth.

Davies and Guppy do not simply provide a narrow review of Canadian education and the inequalities that exist within contemporary school systems, they also provide an extensive examination of the social implications arising from the large systems of mass education that currently exist within industrialized societies. While their work reveals many interesting patterns within education that help encourage upward mobility while simultaneously perpetuating social disadvantages, the authors do not provide a systematic presentation of empirical research to ground their theoretical and social observations. This information would have been useful in allowing the reader to contextualize certain patterns of educational inequality that exist within Canadian society, particularly among various at-risk groups. However, the authors do point readers towards various projects if they are interested in such an inquiry.

In closing, this book is a fruitful, well-articulated examination of how industrialized societies, such as Canada, have transformed into schooled societies. Davies and Guppy clearly illustrate and take issue with the inherent paradoxes of the expansion and increased importance of education. First, as schooling becomes more pervasive, its singular socializing impact weakens. Second, through serving unprecedented numbers of students for longer periods of time in their lives, schooling comes to lose its “magical” quality and the association with elite rituals, aristocratic cultures, and pageantry. However, is this necessarily a negative for society? If the goal of education is to provide access to knowledge for the widest possible population, Canada is arguably improving in this area. However, if credential inflation has created a situation where the value of education is secondary to filling gaps in the labour market thereby rendering higher levels of education essentially useless, do higher levels of education among the population really translate into increased avenues for opportunity? While Davies and Guppy do not directly answer these questions, they leave the reader to reflect on the long-term implications of the schooled society and invite a variety of opportunities for future debate.

For researchers and educators, upper-year undergraduate and graduate students who are concerned with young peoples’ educational and social development and the changing role of schooling within

society, this book is an invaluable reference as it raises many important questions in the area of educational inequality and the changing role of schooling in a post-industrial age.

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July 2007

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