

Ashley Vancil

Prompt C: Education is both a social good and structurally unjust. Explain your understanding of this contradiction and ways it can be addressed.

Our Education system is a social institution existing with the intent to meet society's fundamental needs. It provides structure, guidance, and order starting from childhood into the transition to adulthood. The benefits are both societal and personal. It provides an opportunity to grow not only personally but as a member of society. These institutions aim to instruct youth on the social norms, expectations of behavior, knowledge, and skills needed to operate within their communities.

Education serves as a social good with the intent to impart knowledge and tools necessary in shaping individuals in order to elevate their skill set. It can challenge but also reinforce societal inequalities. Though the effects of educational systems are not always explicit; we have to recognize how schools transmit cultural, personal, and societal ideas beyond the intended goal. This is done through an informed or implicit curriculum consisting of unspoken personal values, beliefs, norms, and culture. Student's education and school experiences are affected unjustly by teacher expectancy, educational segregation, and educational stratification. Communities are already often racially segregated with minority communities possessing fewer socioeconomic resources. This affects educational outcomes because communities with greater socioeconomic resources can spend more on education. The result of this is that students in disadvantaged groups receive lower quality education than our more privileged students.

Education plays an important role in maintaining this stratification system and justifying the unequal distribution of wealth we see because of it. Beginning early on in education students are sorted and categorized on the basis of academic achievement. This creates inequalities and unequal opportunities, creating a snowball effect that influences opportunities later in life.

I think we first need to address financing, transportation, and financial barriers that prevent students from attending school regularly. Increase diversity of staff, require implicit bias training, implement fair funding models so that we allocate resources based on student needs, rather than property taxes. Our system prioritizes preparation for standardized tests. Rather than this, we should be teaching children how to think critically, and encourage inclusive teaching practices.