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### The Road Map to Success

Schooling – and the process of going through it – is one of the most important things a person can do in their lifetime. It prepares them for the world they will live in. Students must work hard to get where they want to go. It reflects someone what of a journey, in which students grow over time, and learn new and exciting information. They learn the way they want to see the world, and how they wish to address the daily issues in society and life itself. Schooling is like a road trip. By reading the book *School and Society* by Walter Feinberg and Jonas F. Soltis, I have found my personal theory on schooling, and how schooling coincides with society.

Schooling is like a road trip because you start in one place, and the goal is to get to the other. At first, the road trip metaphor may be seen as a stretch, but upon further analysis, it is not. The interpretivists “view schools as places where groups and individuals interact through local, mutually understood ‘rules of the game’” (79). The first thing a group must get done when planning a road trip is establish ground rules. They must establish car rules, which person drives, who should pay for what, and especially where they plan to go. They must have these set rules, or the trip could not go smoothly. Students head out on a journey, from the beginning of school to finally, if the route is chosen, graduating college. College may not necessarily be the end of the education road either. People may go on to seek more than just that trip. There are many different trips a student can take, all depending on what he or she is interested in, and what he or she wishes to see. During the trip, students learn who they are, and learn about what influences

them. They also learn what intrigues them, which will guide them in the future to success.

Schooling is like a road trip, because students have to work hard to get to their end destination.

They have to adapt to their surroundings, work together, and adjust to the behaviors of the people they meet.

According to *School and Society*, the functionalists see “social institutions and practices in terms of their contribution to the adaptation and adjustment of the total social system” (14). In other words, they argue that school helps prepare students for society. I would say I agree with this. School gives students the necessary knowledge to function in society. They learn basic skills starting in kindergarten and going through high school. This relates to the road trip idea, because throughout the trip, the participants learn important strategies to getting to their goal destination. They learn how to balance their money, and how to interact with others. I agree with the functionalists that school prepares everyone for society. Without school, people would not know how to function. They would have no job, no money, no knowledge, and no social interaction skills.

The functionalists also believe that there are four norms taught in schools. They are independence, achievement, universalism and specificity. They believe that “these norms are essential to being an effectively functioning member of a modern, industrial, democratic society” (16). A student, in school learns how to develop responsibility for their actions. This can be applied to the road trip metaphor because participants must be responsible for their behavior to get to their end destination. There is also “the treatment of a person in terms of some standardized basis of comparison” (16). This is the norm of universalism. This can be applied to the metaphor because all the participants must be able to make comparisons between them. These norms are important to knowing how to act in certain situations. Together, all the people

on the trip must have some sort of relationship or be able to interact with one another. If they do not, they will have problems communicating about what they want to do, and how they wish to do it.

The functionalists also have this idea that in school, students are taught core subjects, but they are also taught, “hidden curriculum.” Hidden curriculum “refers to the organizational features and routines of school life that provide the structure needed to develop the psychological dispositions appropriate for work and citizenship in the industrial society” (19). The idea that students are taught more than just the basic subjects is something I agree with whole-heartedly. Students learn organizational skills, communication skills, technological skills, and most importantly, responsibility. School – as the functionalists believe – truly prepares the students for society. Critics of the functionalist approach say “the theory is not neutrally objective and scientific” (34). They believe that the functionalist approach is opinionated, and that students may struggle because of it.

During the journey, students experience lots of bumps along the way, which often happen on road trips as well. Sometimes the car breaks down, or the car runs out of gas. These can be related to the students’ education. Sometimes they lose their drive to work hard and sometimes they just cannot see where they are going. At times, they might even get lost, and need direction to get back on track. That is where the teacher comes in.

I would say that the teachers are similar to the GPS system in the car on the road trip. They help the student along and give them goals that they want to achieve. They direct the student on which way to go and can see the map to where the student is going. They provide comfort for the student when they drive off the beaten path, and guide them back to the route they were meant to go on. They inspire the student to continue their education, by always giving

them an end goal that they can reach. This goes along with the facilitator approach to teaching because I believe students should be guided through their education, much like a GPS system guides the student on their road trip to their destination.

The next theory believes that “the driving force in complex societies is the unending struggle between different groups to hold power and status” (41). This is called the conflict theorists. They do not necessarily like that this happens in society, but they know that it is there. I do not agree with this theory. There are class struggles in society, yes, but that does not apply to schools. Schools are not about conflict; they are about learning and gaining knowledge to succeed in society. The conflict theorists also think that schools serve the privileged class; “They believe that the schools reproduce the attitudes and dispositions required for the continuation of the present system of domination by the privileged class” (41). This I do not agree with either. I agree with the functionalist instead, in the idea of equal opportunity. “The idea of equal opportunity means that individuals are to be chosen for certain roles and rewarded on the basis of achieved, rather than ascribed, characteristics” (18). All students should be judged on what they achieve. Their background and financial situation should be acknowledged, but should not be weighted in the student’s educational success.

The conflict theorists also believe in the concept of hegemony. Hegemony “exists when one class controls the thinking of another class through such cultural forms as the media, the church, or the schools” (48). I agree that this goes on in society, but I do not agree that it has an impact on schools. I do not believe that idea of classes should go anywhere near the school. Everyone is equal until they show academic – not financial – progression over another student. Critics of the conflict theorist approach state, “there are other problems with the claim that the structure of schooling can be causally explained by the interests of capitalism” (66). I would

have to agree with the critics. Capitalism does have an impact on schooling, but it is not the central focus. So, some people are better off than others. That should not be a factor in a student's education. It should be focused on the student gaining knowledge (like the executive approach) and becoming ready for the world they live in (functionalist approach). The students, the teachers, the administration and the parents all play a role in getting a student to their goal.

The parents are the money. They fuel the trip, and allow the student to continue their journey to success. They pay for the supplies and the resources similar to how they would pay for gas and food for the road trip. Now this may seem along the line of the conflict theorist ideas, like if the student falls into a certain class, he may not have the resources that he needs to succeed. The teachers though, should be able to find a way to get the student those resources. The student's financial situation should not interfere with his or her educational journey. Students know in the back of their minds that their parents are always there for them, if they ever need guidance or help. The parents also support the students by checking up with them, and making sure they are headed in the right direction. They guide the students down the path, where they learn some basic understanding for their education. The parents also remind them of their values and morals, which keep them in line. Students need this set of morals to back their education, and something they can base their education off of.

The interpretivist point of view is the one that make the road trip metaphor become plausible. The interpretivists "are more concerned with the culture-bound frameworks of particular schools and the ways individuals understand and act in specific social contexts than with finding general laws or all-encompassing explanations" (79). On the road trip, students must realize and react to certain situations they are going to be put into, whether it is meeting someone new or picking a place to stay that looks safe. This relates back to the interpretivist

approach because they argue that students must know how to interact with each other. The interpretivist also believes that “people engage in the activities of social life with some *shared understanding* of the reasons for the activity. They know what is allowed and what is expected” (88-89). They are basically saying that students engage in social events based on some social understanding. This, I agree with. Students need a basis to go on for them to be successful. They need, as the book states, to know “what is allowed and what is expected” (89). With the basis set, students can grow from there, and they can get the social interactions and knowledge they need to function in society. I agree with the ideas of the interpretivists, because I believe the only way students can learn is to have a basic set of rules and morals to work off of. “Instead of offering a strictly causal account of social life, it provides an account in which individual reason and cultural rules are given a primary role” (107). This is the criticism placed on the interpretivist approach. Basically critics say that the interpretivists are too wide spread, and need to narrow in on their theory more. The theory is a bit vague, but is also understandable for the ideas of schooling.

Going back to the road trip metaphor, the administration fits in to the trip as the law enforcement. They oversee the trip and make sure that students do not get into any trouble. They make sure that the student stays focused on the tasks in front of him/her (his/her destination). They may be harsh at times, but they know what is best for each student. They might have to pull the student over, but it is all a learning experience. Students need these guidelines to keep them on their journey to success.

Each individual plays a role in the students’ journey. The teacher helps guide, the parents fund them, and the administration enforce the law. Based on the how the perspectives fit the road trip metaphor; I would say I am a functionalist and an interpretivist. I believe students get

prepared for society through school and that they must have a basic set of ground rules to go on to be able to interact with other students and learn. This, in part, goes along with the facilitator approach to teaching, because I want to guide the students through their education, so that they are prepared to be an active member of society. Every person involved with the school system work to better the student. Together, they all want the student get to their end destination: success.

## Works Cited

Feinberg, Walter, and Jonas F. Soltis. *School and Society*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. *Teachers College Press*:  
New York, 2009. Print.