



Social Origins of Educational Systems (Classical Texts in Critical Realism (Routledge))

By Margaret S. Archer

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First published in 1979, this now classic text presents a major study of the development of educational systems, focusing in detail on those of England, Denmark, France, and Russia - chosen because of their present educational differences and the historical diversity of their cultures and social structures.

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- Rank: #3687295 in Books
- Published on: 2014-05-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.16" h x 1.78" w x 6.25" l, 2.65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 848 pages

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Review

Previously published reviews:

'A large-scale masterly study, this book is the most important contribution to the sociology of education since the second world war as well as being a substantial contribution to the consolidation of sociology itself.' - The Economist

'I cannot improve on her own statement of what she is trying to do: 'The sociological contribution consists in providing a theoretical account of macroscopic patterns of change in terms of the structural and cultural factors which produce and sustain them'...Unquestionably, this book is an impressive work of scholarship, well planned conceptually and uniting its theoretical base with a set of four thoroughly and interestingly researched case-studies of the history of the educational systems of Denmark, England, France and Russia.' - British Journal of the Sociology of Education

'This magnificent treatise seriously explores many of the most recalcitrant questions about institutional systems.' - Journal of Curriculum Studies

'A gargantuan and impressive socio-historical enterprise.' - Encounter

'...a major achievement.' - New Society

About the Author

My fascination with structure (where do they come from and how do they exert effects) was prompted by moving from the London School of Economics to become a post-doctoral student at the Sorbonne. Those were the years of the 1968 evenements. It seemed to me that the centralised structure of the French educational system was equally central in accounting for a political outburst which very nearly toppled the Fifth Republic. Conversely, the (then) decentralised nature of English education prompted localised outbursts, whose effects diffused rather than accumulating. The next seven years were devoted to understanding the structuring of national educational systems and their consequences for educational interaction and change. Thus Social Origins of Educational Systems (Sage 1979) is the key book for understanding the research trajectory that followed.

Margaret Archer is Professor of Social Theory Directrice: Centre d'Ontologie Sociale Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne

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