

## Education and the Distribution of Earnings: The Maintenance of the status Quo

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of human capital theory in the last one decade or so have hardly left any scholar in the field skeptical about the existence of a positive relationship between education and income. But there is no doubt that many of the researchers, including some of the proponents of the orthodox school (for example Blaug, 1976) are skeptical about the explanation given by human capital theorists, why these two variables viz., education and income, go together.

On the one hand we have the views of 'screenists' that challenge the basic tenet of the neoclassical theory that education enhances the labour market productivity of individuals, and thus, the low incomes of the down-troddens are correctable by distributing the appropriate 'doses' of different forms of human capital - most effective being education. 'Screenists' view education as no productivity enhancing device but merely as a tool to distinguish pre-existing abilities and that imparts a credential which acts (and is used) as a convenient and inexpensive hiring screen for the employers.

On the other hand, we have 'radicals' according to whom income inequality is a function of society's class structure. Education is simply a means of preparing the young for the highly unequal occupational structure and earnings position that characterizes the work place. Education thus reinforces the class differences between individual socio-economic background that already exist. Schools are nothing but mirrors of the larger society and the article of faith in education is regarded as one of the central myths of capitalism. Even if everyone is given a chance to enter an open public educational contest the affluent tend to be most successful because of their better parental background (King, 1970). Parental aspirations pertaining to the children's further education and future occupation are closely linked to their own educational attainment and social background. The schools are thus found to inculcate the personality traits according to social class. In a