Forces that shape the education system

What is education?

- Stems from Latin educationem (nominative educatio) "a rearing, training
- Generally assumes that there is a person who "trains" the individual.
- Another essential way of learning is self-learning (Autodidact)

Questions to ponder?

- As a teacher, what are the ideal conditions for you to teach?
- If you were a student, what would be the ideal conditions for you to learn?
- As a parent, which are the ideal conditions for your child to thrive and learn?
- If you were the minister of education, what do you think the ideal education system should look like?

Historical Forces

- Modern curriculums are based in the 7 liberal arts. Those were first formalized in ancient Rome through the trivium (rhetorical, grammatical and dialectical knowledge) and the quadrivium (music, astronomy, arithmetic and geometry)
- Schools are a very novel institution
- In ancient times, no schools as we understand them today
- The closest equivalent is Plato's Academy (With focus on reflection and debate), and Sparta's Polis (With focus on military tactics, and discipline)
- For most of human history, knowledge and skills were practiced and taught in informal settings
- The needs and skills usually reflected the needs of the community, the child was a member of
- During middle ages, all cultural centers were linked to the church. Centers of learning included monasteries
- Formal education was reserved for the rich, and privileged*

The origin of public school systems

- The first genuinely public schools appear during the 1700's. Early examples are the danish 'Rytterskoler' or Prussian Schools in Germany
- Many of the early fundamental structures are still very visible in modern school systems
- Most school systems in the west trace back to colonialism and the industrial revolution
- As people left villages and become workers, there was an urgent need to train a disciplined, obedient workforce, which possessed a fundamental set of skills
- University education was reserved for the elite
- Curriculums were heavily influenced by religion

Preserving Power Structures

- Public education has always been an important pillar in supporting the existing order of society
- In medieval times, the clergy was the guardian of knowledge
- Early public school systems emphasized christian teachings.
- This emphasis is still prevalent in modern education systems
- Prussian schools taught patriotic values, national spirit, obedience and subservience

Ideology

- In the Marxist materialism, education is part of the ideological superstructure, which supports the economic base
- Through education, we create narratives that support the economic structure
- The Prussian school model focused heavily on building national identity
- This is still the case today. Frequently, curriculums fail to address inconvenient past atrocities
  (Example: Slavery, Institutional racist structures in western countries, etc.)
- Education policy is frequently an ideological battleground

The Superstructure

Marx saw that certain structures act to support this financial power-base. The 2 main ways this can happen is via repression or ideologically.

Repressive Structures: Those that threaten to act with force if rules are not upheld.	Ideological Structures: Those that act to construct the values and ideologies which govern the way people behave.
THE ARMY	SCHOOLS
THE POLICE	RELIGION
THE LEGAL SYSTEM	FAMILIES

Structural forces

- Competition and ranking, > standardized testing > teaching to the test
- Lack of adeqúate training of existing teachers, and leaders
- Bureaucratic structures
- Misaligned expectations
- Lack of adequate resources and infrastructure
- Squandered potential due to outdated assumptions and expectations
- Lack of flexibility (Not every student learns the same)
- Assumption that intelligence is fixed

A changing society

- Increasing wealth and technological development have transformed production
- Example: Media literacy
- A rapidly unfolding climate crisis
- Edutech

Conclusion

- The forces are converging
- This opens new ideological battlegrounds
- New, exciting opportunities
- Teachers play a central role
- A mega-revolution of education systems

Questions?