

Concepts and Theories in Sociology of Education

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ABSTRACT

Sociology primarily concerns itself with social relationships. A network of social relationships is called the society. The society is the sole concern of sociology. Though, there are other aspects of the social science that focuses on some other aspects of the society, the central concern of sociology is the social relationships of mankind. Sociology also uses scientific method in its study. Science is an accumulated body of systemized knowledge and widely accepted processes dedicated to the discovery of generalizations and theories for refining and building on the existing knowledge. The scientific method which is universal (though now objected to by some scientists) consists of formulating a problem to be investigated, formulating some hypotheses and conducting a research which must be public, systematic and replicable..

INTRODUCTION

Sociology of education is defined as a study of the relations between education and society. It is an investigation of the sociological processes involved in an educational institution. It is a social study and in so far as its method is scientific, it is a branch of social science. It is concerned with educational aims, methods, institutions, administration and curricula in relation to the economic, political, religious, social and cultural forces of the society in which they function [1]. As far as the education of the individual is concerned, sociology of education highlights on the influence of social life and social relationships on the development of personality. Thus, sociology of education emphasizes sociological aspects of educational phenomena and institutions. The problems encountered are regarded as essentially problems of sociology and not problems of educational practice. Sociology of Education, therefore, may be explained as the scientific analysis of the social processes and social patterns involved in the educational system. Brook over and Gottlieb consider that this assumes education is a combination of social acts and that sociology is an analysis of human interaction. Educational process goes on in a formal as well as in informal situations [2].

Sociological study of the human interaction in education may comprise both situations and might guide to the development of scientific generalizations of human relations in the educational system. The sociology of education is the study of how public institutions and individual experiences influence education and its outcomes. It is most concerned with the public schooling systems of modern industrial societies, including the growth of higher, further, adult, and continuing education [3]. It is a philosophical as well as a sociological concept, indicating ideologies, curricula, and pedagogical techniques of the inculcation and management of knowledge and the social reproduction of personalities and cultures. It is concerned with the relationships, activities and reactions of the teachers and students in the classroom and highlights the sociological problems in the realm of education [4].

Structural functionalism

Structural functionalists believe that society leans towards social equilibrium and social order. They see society like a human body, in which institutions such as education are like important organs that keep the society/body healthy and well [5]. Social reality is structured and differentiated and provides social science with its subject matter. This explains why individuals act as role incumbents and perform specific tasks on a regular basis as manifested at the level of observable event. The relation between teacher and student lies at heart of the realist conception of social structure. The internal relation between roles, distinct from the individual people who fill them and whom they casually affect. The relation between teacher and student is closely internal

because each could not exist without each other. Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in society [6]. They emphasize that education contributes to two types of functions: manifest functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent functions, which are hidden and unintended functions.

Filling roles in society

Education must also perform another function: As various jobs become vacant, they must be filled with the appropriate people. Therefore, the other purpose of education is to sort and rank individuals for placement in the labor market [7]. Those with high achievement will be trained for the most important jobs and in reward, be given the highest incomes. Those who achieve the least, will be given the least demanding (intellectually at any rate, if not physically) jobs, and hence the least income.

According to Sennet and Cobb however, "to believe that ability alone decides who is rewarded is to be deceived". Meighan agrees, stating that large numbers of capable students from working-class backgrounds fail to achieve satisfactory standards in school and therefore fail to obtain the status they deserve [21]. Jacob believes this is because the middle class cultural experiences that are provided at school may be contrary to the experiences working-class children receive at home [8]. In other words, working class children are not adequately prepared to cope at school. They are therefore "cooled out" from school with the least qualifications, hence they get the least desirable jobs, and so remain working class. Sargent confirms this cycle, arguing that schooling supports continuity, which in turn supports social order [9]. Talcott Parsons believed that this process, whereby some students were identified and labelled educational failures, "was a necessary activity which one part of the social system, education, performed for the whole" Yet the structural functionalist perspective maintains that this social order, this continuity, is what most people desire this is one of the most critical thing in sociology [10].

CONCLUSION

Sociology as a discipline is a product of modern society. Sociological theory, therefore, endeavours to account for modern society. This is true for all the classical statements about the emergence and transformation of human society more or less between the period of the French Revolution of the later half of the eighteenth-century and the end of World War I. It was a period that saw a dramatic change in people's lives and social living. A liberal, modern, bureaucratic nation-state grew in this period in the West, breaking away from the rural, conservative, theology-inspired feudal States.

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