

# Emergence and focus of the sociology of education in late 1970s essay

[Life, Relationships](#)



Sociology is the study of society, which is particularly concerned with the social relationships. It includes topics such as social structure and organization, the interaction of social groups, and the means of social control and the processes of social change. One of the biggest confusions in this field is the definition of society. Most often than not, society is used interchangeably with the word community because their characteristics somehow overlap. There really is not much issue with that but for the purpose of this paper's discussion, it is pertinent to draw a line between the two concepts. A.

K. C. Ottaway (1960) has made some distinctions on community and society.

According to him, community may be taken to be a more general word, while society is taken as a particular type of community. Similarly, a similar discussion is made by R. G. Colingwood (as cited in Ottaway, 1960). He mentions that a community is composed of everybody, who is living in a certain territory, where all share a mode of life, but not all are conscious of its organization or purpose. A society, on the other hand, is a particular type of community, whose members have become socially conscious of their mode of life, and is united by a common set of aims and values.

From here, we may have a vague idea where education might come in.

Sociology has many specialized fields and one of which is education.

Education is an institution of society. Its aims and methods depend on the nature of society in which it takes place.

It has four major tasks or functions in the society: 1) to transmit culture; (2) to integrate immigrants and minorities into the society; (3) to select the educational paths that will best serve students' needs and capacities; and (4) to contribute to the students' personal development (Bonjean, et. al. , 1990) Thus, sociology of education may be briefly defined as the study as the study of relations between education and society. It is a social study in so far as the method it uses is scientific, it is a branch of social science. It is concerned with educational aims, methods, institutions, administrations and curricula, in relation to the economic, political, religious, social and cultural forces of society in which they function (Ottaway, 1960). In one of Durkheim's (1858 - 1917) discussion, he mentions that education is " socially constructed. " This underlies the notion that education is influenced by the existing norms and morale that is evident and existent in a particular time of a particular society.

In 1950 - 1970, certain issues and debates on education have emerged and this revolved around three educational policy themes: 1) equality of opportunity; (2) organization and selection of pupils for secondary education; and (3) curriculum (para. 3, The Curriculum as Socially Organized Knowledge, <http://books.google.com>)

During the times of these intellectual crises, sociologists took advantage of the opportunity to inject some of their ideas in response to the issues being presented at that time. Some scholars have argued that somehow the curriculum, which educational institutions use, tend to alienate both teachers and students to the knowledge outlined in a particular

curriculum. The knowledge, which human beings have created now, starts to have a life of its own. It then leads to the fact that knowledge becomes a mystified entity that is transmitted and interpreted by the teachers and students. Most of the sources that I have seen speak of inequality in education.

One of these materials which I would like to give attention to is *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family of Schooling in America* (Jecnks, et. al. , 1972). This book mentions that schools serve primarily to legitimize inequality. In relation to this, schools then become certification agencies. It cited that in America, there is no national certification system.

The primary criterion for certifying a student is usually the amount of time he has spent in school and not really the skills he has learned, and this may be evident in an obscure reality that the only way to keep many of these students in school is to make a continued school attendance the quickest route to certification. Another evidence, which the book mentions, that makes schools certification agencies is because attending school serves the interest of a society that wants people sorted and graded but does not have a specific standards of what certification process to follow. Nothing is stated in any constitution about it.

Another evidence, which was also given in the book is that employers usually look at the what school a potential employee may have come from, for him to have a vague idea of what his future employee might be. Such generalization may come to be accepted. I have emphasized the

aforementioned resource because it shows how some of the New Sociology of Education made their analysis their basis.

The New Sociology of Education (NSOE) provided a number of contributions in attending to the rising debates in the field of education. However, amidst all their efforts to contribute not only the field of sociology but the society as well, this sub-discipline lived too shortly. In the book, *Curriculum of the Future*, by M. F. D. Young (<http://books.google.com>), he mentioned possible reasons for such outcome.

Let me give two of the reasons he provided, which shall serve as the take-off point of the analysis in this paper. The first probable reason he provided is because the reasons they have provided and explanation they used to support their plight is mostly based on the common sense view. The second reason is because they took a highly unreflective view of the role of academic subjects in educational studies.

Part of what separates sociologists from laymen is their thirst for empirical basis. A common sense view to support one's sociological ideas does not make it sociological at all. " Popular consciousness can never be a basis for democratic curriculum," as how M. F. D. Young has put it. Furthermore, if what the sociologists of education wanted in the first place is to devise a new curriculum that shall answer to the inconsistencies of the former curriculum, their proposal needs to be supported by hard evidence.

The last thing that an educational institution will need is a common sense-based curriculum. Sociology is tied up with different bodies of knowledge. It

is always interrelated with other aspects that are concerned with society as well. To overlook the role of academic subjects in the academic studies is so much going against the " tenets of sociology. " However, amidst all the shortcomings of the sociology of education, it does not necessarily mean that what they have contributed to the field of sociology and society itself is less valued. They have made contributions that have been very much helpful in the changes in the field of education itself.

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