Book Review

Sociology of Education – Theories, Communities, Contexts

Zsófia Vincze[1]

Edited by Prof. Dr Gabriella Pusztai and published by the University of Debrecen, this book presents eighteen research papers written by fifteen authors. This edition demonstrates the results of researches carried out by the alumni of the Doctoral School of Human Sciences in the field of educational sociology. The book consists of three units: in the first unit, different theories of educational sociology are presented; the second unit confers the communities that take part in the upbringing of the individual, and the third unit examines various contexts on macro-level. The structure of the studies is clear; they begin with the explanation of relevant notions concerning the research, they end with a summary and conclusion, and there are extra questions at the end of the chapters that help the reader learn the information.

The first study in the unit *Theories in the sociology of education* discusses the various dimensions of socialization. There arises the idea of reconstruction and construction paradigms, the former being the theory of copying patterns, and the latter interpreting the individual as an actively participating member of society. The second study is about the theory of capitals, a concept which has been taken from economics. According to the theory, the individuals own different types of capitals that they can benefit from throughout their educational career. Success at school is greatly affected by the human, cultural and social capital of the student. Based on the information disclosed in the chapter, it can be concluded that the social capital is extremely important. The next chapter follows the topic of capitals and examines the decisions made in the selection of schools. According to the study, parents make decisions that affect their children's own school careers based on the types of capital and information available to them. The goal is to achieve the most results with the least investment. The results show that children from families with the least and most capital achieve the highest results. The fourth study discusses gender in education. The study shows that traditional gender attitudes we know today were mostly developed in the previous century on the basis of various historical events, but have started to vanish. School performance of boys and girls shows that they react differently to problems in education. The paper addresses gender integration in the labour market, horizontal and vertical segregation, and the glass ceiling affecting women. The last chapter of the first unit is about school resilience. Resilient students perform better than to be expected, in spite of social disadvantages. In such cases, the 'bounce-back' phenomenon occurs, meaning that hindering factors are driven away from the individual. A resilient person not only sees the positive aspects but is also able to turn the negatives to their advantage. The bounce-back phenomenon means that the deeper the disadvantage someone comes from, the more successful they will be. Based on the above definition, we can discuss resilience not only in the context of students but also in the context of teachers. In this sense, successful teachers are those who have the ability to remain resilient in both their private and professional lives, i.e., who respond to challenges in a resilient way, who are flexible, adaptable and creative.

The first study of the second unit, entitled *Communities involved in education*, covers the importance of family communities. The chapter argues that the family is the primary agent of socialization. Children familiarize with the world through the family, and the patterns they learn there have a lifelong impact. Formal and informal education for prospecting family life is important in terms of the way society functions. In terms of school

[1] Partium Christian University, Oradea, Romania; vinczezs.a@gmail.com

careers, the socio- economic situation of the family affects students' performance. The second study focuses on ethnic minorities and explains the basic concepts relating to ethnic minority communities.

Minority communities have a much stronger sense of identity than their mainland counterparts, as they are forced to assert their identity due to everyday challenges and are thus protected from assimilation into the majority society. The paper is based on John Ogbu's findings on minorities concerning autonomous vs. immigrant and voluntary vs. involuntary communities. In case of minorities, the choice of school is particularly important, as education can be provided in the language of the country or the language of the minority.

Minority communities can take advantage of the challenges posed by the country, which points to the resilient behaviour discussed in the previous chapter. The next topic is the place of Roma in education. It presents the problem of segregation, which can occur within and between schools. The paper shows the findings of Bernard Formoso, while other researchers' findings highlight that Gypsy communities are rather family- and child-centred. The main reason of failure at school is family socialization, in which education is not a priority. The conflicting relationship between Roma parents and school is a result of the focus of the two cultures. Schools can boost social inclusion, but religious communities also play an important role in Roma integration, which is discussed in the next chapter. This chapter introduces the concept of religious capital, which can be included with the concepts of human, cultural and social capitals discussed earlier. Religious schools are an important venue of religious education, and the attendance and social background of their students may vary by locality.

The fifth chapter, *Volunteering communities*, presents old and new types of volunteering. The old type of volunteering is traditional which conveys altruistic values, while the new type is associated with new values: it is more self-serving, be it for professional development, experience or leisure. Volunteering has always been a part of human history, particularly in the post-war period, where volunteer groups were created, in order to educate students on how to become law-abiding citizens. Volunteering in education is a means of sensitizing students and instilling a sense of responsibility.

The sixth chapter confers the topic of sport. Here, like in the previous chapter on religion, the term 'sport capital' appears. The sociology of education observes the impact of sporting communities on individuals and how sport educates them, in contrast to sports pedagogy, which is concerned with the relationship between sport and education. 'Socialization into sports' is also an important concept that covers the education to doing sports; the family and family patterns are the primary agents, however, the habitus of social class is also very important, as different social classes do different sports. Similar to the U-shape of student achievement, a J-shape can also be observed in sports: more people participate in sports in the lower classes, while it is less so in the middle classes, and it is popular again among members of the upper classes. The next level of studying communities is the impact of the media in chapter seven of unit two. Different forms of media can contribute to the education of the individual in informal, non-formal and formal ways, as well as in ritual and instrumental roles. The two-step model of communication illustrates the interventions of influencers from the source to the wider audience. The danger of the media is posed by the lack of censorship, so critical thinking is essential in the reception of information. One of the aims of education is to prepare students for work, to teach them how to stand their ground in the world of work. When determining the time of entering work, the types of capitals emerge again, as the economic situation and economic capital of the family also have an impact on the employment of the future worker. However, the work culture does not start with employment but with the early observation of the parents' work attitudes. A few important concepts in this chapter are extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Work experience is also a significant part of a career nowadays, though like sports, activities of the sort can take attention, time and energy from actual learning. The final chapter in unit two observes the teacher community from the decision-making through the whole school career. Wages, working conditions and social esteem are the main reasons for becoming a teacher. Teaching time and working time are not the same, most people do not know how much time they actually spend working when they are on 'holiday', as the amount of workload requires an elongated working schedule. The number of teaching hours decreases with time and seniority, and actually has been decreasing since the mid-20th century.

The third part is entitled *The contexts of education*, and its first chapter introduces time management and its determinants, with the aim of exploring the causes of time-management problems in different groups. Socialization into time management takes place primarily in the family, but school plays an important role, too. The choice of leisure activities is influenced by the cultural capital of the parents: children often participate in various artistic activities from a very young age. Organisational time is allocated by those higher up in the hierarchy, and students may rebel against it by delays and postponements. The second chapter focuses on the

inequalities in the spatial environment, that is, the different (back)grounds' effect on students' school progress. In terms of spatial location, we can speak of external and internal peripheries, the former being mainly physically distant from the centre, the latter being distant in terms of development. It can be observed that disadvantaged areas have a greater impact than more advantaged areas, and that areas with better conditions have a greater impact on better outcomes, while areas with worse conditions also have worse outcomes, with or without a disadvantaged family/school background. The third chapter deals with values and their transmission. Transmission of values also takes place mainly in the family, where, according to Berta, cognitive processes are also involved, as individuals weigh and select on the basis of the influences they are exposed to. While growing up, it is more about what the individual does not want to be associated with. The perception of values has changed throughout history: while in traditional societies the emphasis was on church values and the life of the saints, in the modern-postmodern world the world of work and individualism are in the centre of focus. The book concludes with an examination of the impact of school teachers, which is quite difficult to measure. Research on human capital has shown that students with more highly qualified teachers achieve better results. A career trajectory of teachers suggests that they start working more efficiently after a few years of practice, but teacher effectiveness may decline towards the end of their careers.

The research papers on problems in the field of educational sociology are interesting to read, and they provide valuable information for the effective development of education, pedagogical work and cooperation with students.