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UNIVERSITY OF
DEBRECEN
FACULTY OF
HEALTH SCIENCES
NYÍREGYHÁZA

Review - Sociology of Education: Theories, communities, contexts

Zsombor Varga¹, Márton Markovics², Dalma Tóth³

¹PhD student, University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities Sociology and Social Policy Department, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0002-3176-7533

²PhD student, University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities Sociology and Social Policy Department, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0001-6235-1939

³ PhD student, Sociology and Social Policy Department, MTA-DE Research Group on Small Village Schools in Deprived Areas, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0003-4554-5998

Introduction

In our contemporary Hungarian society, the issue of education is of particular importance, as multi-level investment in the future generation requires actions based on awareness of good practices, the disclosure of research-based facts and the effort to transform the Prussian perceptions in public thinking. The structure of the book can be divided into three parts. The first part presents the theoretical approaches of the sociology of education, the middle of the section covers the most important groups of socialization and learning, while the final chapters show some interpretation approaches.

This book is a significant attempt to outline the foundations of the sociology of education with several important Hungarian perspectives. The book was created from the work of several authors, which can be read as a textbook, however, the single chapters can be read separately, as well. The book was published in Hungarian at 2020, which got an English translation at 2022. In this review we have introduced the English version.

Theories in the sociology of education

First of all, the book clarifies the basic concepts of the reactions taking place during the micro-level interactions of the sociology of education. The concepts of socialization, desocialization and resocialization are clarified in this section. The main paradigms of the sociology of education are also presented in order

to give readers a comprehensive picture of the various models. Two major aspects are distinguished by the authors within the book. These are called constructivist and reconstructivist models. Several theories are presented connected to these two models. The common characteristic of constructivist paradigms is that the focus is on the micro-level phenomena. The main approaches can be detected as phenomenological, individualist and symbolic interactionist paradigms, while the structuralist-functionalists and conflict theory approaches belong to the reconstructionist model.

The types of capital that are affecting students are presented in the book, based on Bourdieu's theory. The starting concept of it is human capital, which examines its impact on other types of capital, as well as its significance. In the analysis, great emphasis is placed on the dimensions of social capital that compensate for educational disadvantages, contrasting Coleman's and Bourdieu's definitions of social capital. In relation to Coleman's theory, Putnam and Granovetter's theoretical presentation of weak, egocentric bonds is also included.

In the following, there are more theoretical approaches discussed. The rational conflict theory and the common interpretation of the school career are presented based on Weber's action typology. It interprets educational differences not only in the choice of school, but in the status of the parents. Educational inequalities can therefore not be interpreted at the individual level, but at the institutional level. The status of the parents is important during the decision. Inequality between the sexes was also processed on a theoretical basis. By processing the horizontal and vertical inequalities between the sexes, the authors interpret the tendencies of labour market and education. Inequality between the sexes also presented along certain aspects, which is important to be able to see clearly.

In the last section of the theoretical part of the book, there is a broad analysis of the concept of resilience which is carried out in relation to the treatment of inequalities manifested in education. Factors determining resilience are considered as important approaches, and as it was highlighted, they can be divided into personal and environmental influences. The positive role of the community and the family in promoting resilience is emphasized, too. In the course of the study, individual internal and external risk factors, as well as compensating elements for educational disadvantages, are determined in connection with resilience.

Communities involved in education

The second and middle half of the book deals with the role and involvement of communities in the sociology of education. This section provides excerpts from the role of the most important communities in the sociology of education. The specific theories, typologies and measurements tools related to recent data are also presented along a similar scheme. The book mainly revolves around the role of the family and then goes beyond that to minorities, religion, volunteering, and sports communities. Media and work are also important when it comes to socialization and educational. Finally, the group of professional teachers has also got its own interpretation. These groups are described from the perspective of the sociology of education.

Family is the smallest unit of society, in which socialization takes place first. Furthermore, family is reproducing society and constructs the identity of individuals. Although the role of the school, according to some approaches, could be to catch up with children. It still happens that it is not able to do more than reinforce the acquired values and reproduce social status. Family, therefore, is interpreted as the strongest socialization environment. The question of minorities becomes significant in the interpretation process of a norm and socialization in an environment that is different from the majority society. It is therefore considered as a complex question, which has historical, traditional, cultural and identity-forming aspects. Minority identity and the associated mother tongue, which are its two most important factors. The issue of minorities thus becomes significant along the lines of socialization environment and adopted identities and values. The role of political decisions is also important. Roma communities were given a separate chapter related to minorities. Roma people have specific socialization patterns and therefore the interaction they are brought into through education is also different. In Hungary, Roma people are characterized by segregation processes in education. Special programs and experiments are being used for the domestic education of the Roma people, however, it seems that the education of the Roma people does not work properly, even if equal opportunity programs are taken into account. Religious upbringing and socialization belong to education in itself. On the other hand, it can be said that members of religious communities perform differently in education. Although religiosity and belonging to a religious community occur primarily through the socialization of the family, it is worth considering this as a separate topic due to its specific

value and norm-creating properties. Volunteering and belonging to voluntary communities, like religious communities, generally have a positive effect on children's development and progress. Typologies also arise in connection with volunteering. It seems that this area is currently moving in new directions based on a new type of reaction of the younger generations. Sports communities are also important. Significant social capital can be built up and transformed, they form part of socialization and have positive effects in integration processes. On the one hand, the learning realized through sport can appear in the sport itself, which similarly to lifelong learning, in sport educates for lifelong physical development. The role of the media can also be prominent, mainly thanks to informal learning, which constantly shows new directions. In addition, the media plays a major role in the spread of information and knowledge, together with the Internet. The influence of pop culture and influencers are also important factors nowadays. At the same time, it can be also said that the negative and manipulative effects of the media on socialization should not be forgotten, either. Work and workplace can also be considered a socialization environment. It has a specific and significant role for the permanent participants of the labor market, as well as for the generations that are still studying. Working during the years spent with studying is becoming more and more popular and its sociological effects on education are important. Finally, the book discusses the community of professional teachers as they are the most important elements of knowledge transfer through schools. The particularities of the given systems and schemes already appear in their training. One of the most important factors in their performance is salary, which can improve their motivation and performance.

The arenas and groups mentioned and processed in this way can be called the most important arenas of the sociology of education, which, through their mediating surfaces, can have the greatest impact on our education and development in the interpretation of the volume.

The context of education

Finally, the third part of the book is entitled *The contexts of education*. There four aspects highlighted which are related to time usage, spatial inequalities, transmission of values and the impact of teachers on student achievement. These approaches focus on the systems in society, thus the phenomena that are connected to education are shown through these glasses.

The chapter *Patterns of Time Use* describes the historical and current affairs in connection with time management as it says that the skills and the patterns of time usage can be differentiated according to age, social groups and populations from different regions. The author identifies the origin of the problem in connection with time management as people (grown ups and children, too) are not always able to adjust to school schedules as these are not flexible enough. There are no choices in the schedule as these are not organized half-structured or button-up. Considering the fact that it is not only the pupils who need to adapt to the system it is a strength of the chapter that it shows the phenomenon as a system which contains the teachers, the parents and even every participant of the structure who are affected by the fragility of the schedule (let it be curricular or extracurricular). After discussing the conflicts about time comes the topic of *Inequalities of the Spatial Environment*. It examines the link between space and education, and at the same time, it aims to mention perspectives of research which are the center-periphery relations, the principle of neighborhood and the developmental disparities among others. These approaches can help the reader conceptualize and operationalize the key expressions if someone wanted to make a research in the field of sociology of education from a regional perspective. The brain-gain and brain-drain processes are also mentioned in connection with the regional perspective as these entail the danger of increasing social inequalities, too. In the following both values and student achievement are discussed as one of the most important aspects when it comes to the sociology of education. In pluralistic societies there is a diversity in value systems, however, the author draws attention to the processes of the transmission and acquisition of values and value preferences. Understanding these mechanisms is of utmost importance because the internalized values determined by society play a major role in shaping the decisions of individuals, be it parents, pupils or even teachers.

Conclusion

The authors aimed to describe this sociological area mainly for Hungarian audience. The chapters discuss Hungarian characteristics with gusto and bring up examples typical of the country. Nevertheless, it is also suitable for the transfer of relevant knowledge to non-Hungarian audiences.

The topics covered in this edition can provide readers with a theoretical basis that can be used to improve both general literacy and in-depth knowledge

of specific topics. It is clear to the reader from reading the contents that the aim of the editors was to provide as a perspective as wide as possible, rather than to reflect on the deeper context of particular areas of sociology of education. For this reason, the book can be used both in university courses and to satisfy the interests of the lay reader.

However, the sociology of education still needs more relevant writings. On the one hand, many phenomena belonging to this category are undergoing transformation, and on the other hand, the topic did not receive enough adequate emphasis in the past decades. The following initiative is promising and can be recommended to anyone who has not yet gotten their hands on the relevant literature on the subject.

Gabriella Pusztai (Ed.) (2022): Sociology of education: Theories, communities, contexts. Debrecen University Press. Debrecen.