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Education.

A concern with education has been inseparably linked with the development of **sociology**, especially in the French tradition. In defining sociology, **Auguste Comte** argued that there had been a historical progression in the advancement of all science from deploying religious and metaphysical conceptual frameworks to adopting procedures of positivist analysis, based on observation. This intellectual progression was mirrored institutionally by corresponding forms of social organisation – from feudal and aristocratic systems to that culminating form which would be the consequence of secular, social engineering. The emergence of positivist analysis of human and social relations would necessarily entail the construction of forms of social organisation which, for the first time, would be founded on science rather than prejudice or privilege. Positivist scientists would become the legislators of mankind. Comte was aware that the prevalence of positivist principles in social practice in **mass society** would require some emotional underpinning and he proposed the institutionalisation of a positive religion which would generate a sense of ideological and social inclusion, operating as a secular, surrogate Catholic Church.

The third French Republic – of ‘**intellectuals**’ – tried, from 1871, to introduce a system of state education which would perform the function that Comte had projected for an organised positivist religion. The function of the education system would be to generate social **solidarity** by initiating the whole population of the country into the secular values which informed its organisation and operation. It was **Emile Durkheim** who tried to implement Comte’s programme in the 1890s by carrying out sociological research and by articulating rules which should govern the method of sociological enquiry, but it is important to remember that he taught pedagogy at the same time as sociology for the whole of his life. In his first post at the University of Bordeaux, from 1887 until 1902, he gave weekly lectures on pedagogy to teachers and, when he moved to Paris, it was to the Chair in the Science of Education at the Sorbonne. Durkheim’s writings on education were assembled posthumously, notably *Education and Sociology* (1922)[1956]), *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (1925) [1961]), and *Pedagogical Evolution in France* (1938 [1977]). In his introduction to the first of these texts, Paul Fauconnet insisted that Durkheim’s parallel attachment to sociological and educational analyses was not at all accidental, but, rather, that ‘it is in as much as it is a social fact that he approaches education: his doctrine of education is an essential element of his sociology.’ The two dimensions of Durkheim’s thinking explain the traditional affinity between sociology and the study of education: on the one hand **pedagogical practices** within the educational system were necessary instruments for fulfilling the social mission which was the legacy of Comtist thinking. On the other hand, it was important that the study of education should exemplify sociological rigour. Typically, Durkheim began his discussion in *Education and Sociology* with a critical examination of the existing definitions of education. He argued that the word had been used too broadly to include the influence of nature on human will and intelligence and that, instead, it should be restricted to mean solely the action which adults exercise over the young. To define this education more closely would entail an analysis of educational practice in different times and places. In faithful positivist fashion, Durkheim concluded: ‘We do not know *a priori* what is the function of the respiratory or circulatory systems for living beings. By what privilege should we be better informed concerning the educative function? ... Hence, must it not be the case that to constitute a preliminary notion of education, to determine the thing which is denominated in this way, historical observation appears to be indispensable.’ His social history of pedagogy in France

fulfilled just this function. For Durkheim, the sociology of education was to be pedagogically prescriptive by being methodologically exemplary.

The inaugurating concern of sociology with education was the product of a particular set of social and intellectual circumstances in France at the end of the 19th Century. Consideration of the legacy of this concern raises broad questions about the trans-cultural and trans-temporal applicability of the social sciences. In considering the 'predisciplinary history of social science' in general in his *The Rise of Social Theory* (1995), Johan Heilbron has argued that this rise was part of a progressive secularisation of human societies. At first this involved a return to the works of classical antiquity and to Aristotelian 'practical philosophy' in particular but this was the starting-point for the articulation of modern notions which characterised the predisciplinary history of social science. There followed stages of development which, in Heilbron's view, moved from primary interest in conceptions of 'state' and 'law' to concern with economic theory until, in the Eighteenth Century, there emerged a secular approach to the concept of 'society' which meant breaking with both theology and political theory.

There is a reciprocal relationship between developing social conditions which generate new social sciences and the contributions which social scientific analyses of these emergent developments make towards their realisation. Durkheimian sociology of education was in a reciprocal relationship with those social and political forces which suggested that the introduction of a state-controlled national education system would actualise the concept of a *conscience collective* which would ensure social cohesion and foster a national identity. There was an affinity with the distrust of **individualism** manifested at the same time in Germany in the formulation of the notions of **Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft**.

In the UK in the same period, the response to similar forces arising from similar phenomena of **industrialisation** and **democratisation** developed within a different conceptual framework – of **liberalism**. In his contribution to *The rise of the modern educational system: structural change and social reproduction, 1870-1920* (1987), the English Marxist social historian, Brian Simon, demonstrated that the consequence of the UK Elementary Education Act of 1870 was that three levels of schooling came into being in the period from 1860 to 1900: 'public' schools for the upper middle class, elementary schooling for the working class, and a new set of schools aimed at accommodating the middle classes. The outcome, he contended, was 'the establishment of a highly differentiated system in which each level served, in theory at least, a specific social class (or subsection of a class), with each having a specific function.' In the early years of British sociology, the problem of education was much less central than in France precisely because education was not required to perform the same social function. There was little expectation that the educational system should contribute towards the development of a self-conscious social democracy but, rather, the enlargement of educational provision was a carefully regulated mechanism for legitimating the allocation of individuals to pre-established, stratified, social and professional positions.

In general terms, the liberal tradition led to research which focused on the performance of individuals and on the relationship between educational and occupational hierarchies. In part, the emphasis was on educational psychology and the measurement of **intelligence**. In so far as this tradition generated a sociology of education it was a sociology which, particularly in the U.S., responded to the given structure of relations between education and the economy. It was the impulse towards egalitarianism provided by the Second World War which, in the U.K., stimulated an adoption of a Durkheimian orientation towards the sociological analysis of education. It is significant that it was in this period that Durkheim's texts on education were

first translated into English, and sociological analysis began to operate reciprocally in tandem with the movement towards the comprehensivisation of the schooling system.

The stimulus given to British sociology of education by the publication in 1971 of the collection of articles edited by M.F.D. Young entitled *Knowledge and Control. New Directions for the Sociology of Education* – which first popularised early articles by **Basil Bernstein** and **Pierre Bourdieu** – came largely from a re-discovery of Durkheim's societal perspective. In France, however, Bourdieu's work was provoked by his sense that the official ideology of the French educational system masked social differentiation and that it was no longer possible, in any case, to assume that the achievement of equality within an educational system could guarantee social equality. Bourdieu problematised the systemic legacy of third Republic educational **ideology** and also refused to limit the sociology of education to the analysis of pedagogical relations within schooling institutions. The shift in his thinking was accurately reflected in the English rendering of the title of his book on reproduction which, in France in 1970, was sub-titled: 'elements for a theory of the educational system' but, in English in 1977, was called: *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Writing within the Durkheimian tradition, Bourdieu offered a framework for analysing the function of schooling within a society which was conceived as being in a state of conflict or competition where educational attainment, cultural taste, occupational position are mobilised in inter-acting ways to acquire and legitimise the acquisition of **power**. Without renouncing the ideal of the socialist tradition - of achieving social **equality**, solidarity, and inclusion – Bourdieu provided a conceptual apparatus which could accommodate the interests of the liberal tradition. It is significant that Bourdieu's work of the 1960s became available in translation in the U.S at the end of the 1970s. The technocratic model of education had become dominant in the U.S. It operated on the assumption that the graded performance of students in education was a reliable indicator of eligibility for posts in a correlative hierarchy of occupations. Several challenges to this assumption emanated from the U.S.: the **De-Schooling** movement; the articulation of the influence of a **hidden curriculum** in formal learning contexts; and the critiques of **credentialism**. In different ways, these were all attempts to rescue the sociology of education from subservience to the status quo of assumed relations between school and work and, therefore, between educational and economic opportunities. The refusal to accept the a-cultural assumptions of the technocratic model was strengthened by the association with the **civil rights movement** and the concomitant interest in **affirmative action** as a way of enabling educational opportunity to overcome cultural disadvantage.

If we accept, firstly, that the sociology of education at any time is in reciprocal relationship with educational policies; secondly, that it has emerged in the West in two, ideal-typical, philosophical traditions of **socialism** and **liberalism**; and, thirdly, that its history in the West demonstrates the effects both of the internal reciprocity between theory and practice and of cross-cultural conceptual transfer between these competing traditions, two provocative questions arise, one local and the other global. If the Conservative hegemony in British politics from the 1970s to 1997 suppressed the resurgence of socialist sociology of education, has the effect of the New Labour accommodation with Thatcherism, associated with the sociological work of **Anthony Giddens**, neutralised sociological critique and encouraged the development of a postmodern version of the technocratic model? Does the appropriation of cultural difference through the overriding force of economic performativity now mean that a sociology of international education is doomed to stand impotently by as the technocratic model begins to prevail globally?

1843 words.

Derek Robbins.