

## **Sociology? Who Needs It?**

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Tatjana Zimenkova, Reinhold Hedtke

## Editorial

The core question of this issue of the JSSE, "Sociology? Who Needs It?", sounds rather radical and provocative. But it may simply mirror the real vanishing of sociological topics from civic education curricula in the past decades occurring at least in some European countries. At the same time, asking this question may hold high potentials of identification for all social scientists, teaching in schools, occupied with teacher training and developing conceptions for curricula of social science subjects and conceptions for school.

Many fellow sociologists, especially those active in teacher training, experience it as a big challenge to explain their teacher students why they and their pupils should study sociology or even sociological theories. Sociological theories in their complexity – so the conventional assumption – can hardly be presented to schoolchildren, it is even contested whether they should be mentioned in schools at all. The usual solution, to expect teacher students to know sociological theories as well as how to simplify them for making them teachable to schoolchildren, seems to fail. Even the very possibility of simplifying sociological knowledge in order to make it understandable for non-sociologists has turned out to be difficult enough to fill decades with controversial debates of academic sociological societies in many countries with no prospect of agreement. The same holds for the debate on the principal applicability of sociological knowledge. Finally, even if sociological knowledge proves to be applicable to teaching and learning in schools, how is this specific applicability meant? What could be the specific goals of learning and teaching sociology in schools? Who would benefit from being educated in sociological thinking? Who would be challenged by students being knowledgeable about sociology? And last but not least: How would sociological ways of thinking relate to approaches focused on political science, which seem to be predominant in current civic education all over Europe? So why instruct teacher students in sociology and why and how bring sociology to school?

During the preparation of this issue many aspects of this complicated relation between the discipline of sociology and its application in school again became evident. This number of the JSSE presents a dialogue on sociology in school which on the one side reflects central tensions, changes, current developments and self-perception of sociology as an academic discipline and at the same time raises very basic questions of the school systems' self-understanding between providing knowledge, being an agency of socialisation and producing not only practical skills, but politically and democratically approved world-views.

A short systematisation of problems, developments and challenges, analysed by authors of this volume in the tension field of sociology as a school subject and

sociology as an academic discipline, produces a list of three main questions:

1. Can sociology as an academic discipline, struggling with de-fragmentation and discussing since decades about possible de-scientification of sociology through application of sociology, at all afford to function as a basis for school training?
2. Can the school system and its institutionalised curriculum planning at all perceive the necessity of sociological knowledge and skills? Is the (self)-image of school in modern society compatible with using conceptions, theories and approaches of academic sociology?

And if we answer the first two questions positively, we meet the third question:

3. How can and should sociology be used in schools: in explicit form and from its academic perspective as neutral observation of the society within the society, or implicitly as conceptions useful for enhancing school development and individual development of values?

Paradoxically or logically, these questions, arising on the cutting edge between the academic discipline and a possible school subject or field of knowledge, mirror to a great extent problems of academic sociology's self-perception.

For some decades the questions of whether sociology is a unit at all, as well as questions of borderlines between sociology and other social sciences have been acute in different national and international sociological discourses (Gouldner 1974, Davies 1994, Balog/Es-ser 1999, Funken 2000, Rehberg 2000, and many others). These voices reflect about the de-fragmentation of sociology as discipline, including the multiplicity of partly non-compatible paradigms, research methods and schools. The results of this multi-faceted differentiation process, as elegantly summarized by Sztompka (2010), are pluralistic mosaic sociologies. In his analysis, Piotr Sztompka describes co-existing specific, national sociologies and one unified sociology (occupied with the society in its globality). This unified sociology is seen as emerging from historical and societal processes, bringing humanity to one society in many contexts. However, this prognosis of sociological unity emerging appears rather optimistic even to the theorists of sociology; so how is sociology perceived by



those outside the discipline? Especially relevant for our topic here is the strong heterogeneity of sociology, reflected in its self-image. Sociology as an academic discipline, either internationally or within national associations, does not make up *any kind* of unity which would be capable of developing some unified approach school teaching sociology in schools – there is even no entity in sociology which could provide this for university training in sociology with any universality (Zimenkova 2007). So, how can a de-fragmentised discipline, which does not understand itself as a unit – not even on national associations' level – develop and introduce a solid elaborated conception of teaching sociology in schools? And if the academic discipline itself is not able or not interested, who else should care?

Starting with the very beginning of sociology as a discipline, discussions about the necessity and the possibility of applying sociology have been present in sociological discourses; for the time being they can be best observed on the example of the debates on public sociology<sup>1</sup> (take, e.g. the opening debates of the European Sociological Association in 2009, discussing whether sociology can and should change society with Michael Burawoy, the author of a highly disputed conception of public sociology; see also Shore Scott 1979; Franz 2003). Academic sociologists see professionalisation of sociology outside of the academia as problematic, and fear the de-scientification of the discipline by application (Lumm 1985, Kühl 2004, Kühl/Tacke 2003). This debate pro and contra the application of sociology is relevant for sociology as a school subject insofar as it affects sociology, the self presentation / non-presentation of sociology in the media and thus affects the public presence and effectiveness of the discipline. How and why should actors of the education system and curriculum makers become interested in a discipline which tries hard not to be present in a public sphere?

Given these reservations from the side of the academic discipline, we are also confronted with corresponding reservations from the side of the school system, its teachers and curriculum authors: sociology, which does not present and perceive itself as a unity does not provide much help in curriculum writing. It even presents very different views on what is important and should be learned in sociology by schoolchildren. Working on applying sociology for a school, curriculum authors and teachers (even or especially those who studied sociology) could rather expect a dismissive attitude from the academic discipline.

Given, on the one hand, an academic discipline, claiming that it cannot be applied, and that it is too complex to be explained to schoolchildren and any layperson (which will lose its essence through such

explanations); and on the other hand, the mission of providing skills and values – especially in the area of social sciences, how likely is the school to take up sociology? Why should an academic discipline be applied to school-shaped learning about the society if its majority on principle rejects any application?

Summarising the articles of this volume, we are confronted with a rather specific situation. Although all authors are specialists in civic education and curriculum studies, they refer very explicitly to the academic discipline of sociology, thus implying the academic discipline to be an important actor in the process of bringing sociology to school. However, in principle it must be possible to bring sociology to schools on the initiative of the didactics of sociological or of the theory of civic education. The political and practical support of the academic discipline itself may be of minor importance and this educational initiative "from outside" could even contradict the discipline's self-perception as a non-applicable and a non-normative subject. But would a genuine interest from the side of the school system and from curriculum writers in sociology be enough to bring sociology into schools, irrespective of the disinterest of the academic discipline? If yes, the question arises why sociology – be it as a school subject of its own or a defined field of contents – does not expand in the curriculum? Why did the destiny of sociology in schools differ so much between different European countries, e.g. continuously declining in German curricula from its golden age in the 1970s and 1908s while gaining a quite comfortable standing throughout the same period in the French and Dutch system?

Is the situation of sociology at schools connected to a general lack of interest of the non-scientific community, politics and media in sociological knowledge? In the school context and school curricula, the relevance of economics and political science is recently increasing in many European countries, also in those areas which could as well be occupied by sociology – in the cases where social and political sciences are still considered important for school education<sup>2</sup>. How can

1 Public sociology calls itself, due to its applied focus, sociological reform movement, <http://publicsociology.com/>

2 If we analyse very briefly the development of the logic of the Life Long Learning Program of the EU on the school level, we see that – which is quite traditional for the EU's view on its citizens-employability and entrepreneurship play an important role in Life Long Learning, also on the school level (cf. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc830\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc830_en.htm)). The "European strategy and co-operation in education and training" states that "Politicians at European level have recognised that education and training are essential to the development and success of today's knowledge society and economy." ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm)). Although positions like "Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship" are strong in the conception of life long learning, in the quantified benchmarks qualification in the area of social sciences can hardly be found (ibid.)



this be explained? And which is the role of sociology in school curricula?

We see sociology as strongly bound to school subjects occupied with society: civic and citizenship education, political education, economics, history, culture and geography. Sociology, or, better to say, many hyphenated sociologies, would be able to provide relevant knowledge for each of these areas – but what would be specifically *sociological* about this knowledge? From our view on sociology as school subject we would expect sociology to provide students with a critical view on society and its developments, with skills for analysis of the societal rules, teaching to see social phenomena within bigger multifaceted contexts and to reflect about one's acting in society and about society as such. In this sense, sociology would complement perfectly other social sciences taught in school which might be designed more normatively for providing democratic values and affirmative knowledge about polity, policies and politics or for acquiring skills, competences and theoretical framings for rational economic activities. Sociology – if we permit ourselves to argue normatively against the normativism of others – could play the role of a counterpart subject enabling and fostering a specific form of open-mindedness and critical thinking not so common in neighbouring school subjects.

But this possible role of sociology does not happen in schools or it does not happen often enough. The reflective approach of sociology is not being pushed up very much. Is this the case because the contemporary school in many countries is just at the beginning of a democratisation process, having existed for centuries as a strictly hierarchical system and currently struggling with the challenge of democratising itself, rendering the distant stance taken by a reflective subject like sociology inappropriate for that task? Or is sociology expected to slow down the performance and achievement process which modern school has to push in responding to external pressures from politics and society of getting more and more oriented towards directly applicable knowledge and skills? Perhaps, these are only two of the many reasons why sociology as a school subject does not loom large.

The authors of this volume go deep into these problems, questions and tensions, providing elaborated analyses of sociology in schools, between the explicit learning of sociological knowledge and referring to sociology not only in teachers' training, but also in curricula and everyday learning in schools.

In their article on "*Why Sociology Has a Marginal Position in Civic Education in Bulgaria – Nationally Specific and/or Universal Trends?*" Georgi Dimitrov and Elena Stoykova address some genuine problems of the discipline with regard to the context of education, first of all the decline of sociology as discipline worldwide. Describing in detail some problems of the

discipline, Georgi Dimitrov and Elena Stoykova open up an important slot of the discussion on sociology in schools: How can a discipline, experiencing serious academic and presentation problems, find a way into school and in which form? De-fragmentation of sociology is addressed as a problem for sociology's use in school. Furthermore, some problems in Bulgarian sociology – characteristic for transformation societies, and relevant for sociology in schools – are addressed: on the one hand the underdevelopment of sociology in societies where Marxist theory had been prevailing for decades (and where the educational staff had not changed since the socialistic governing), on the other hand, the rise of applied sociology, not concerned with educational processes. Sociology does not have the opportunity to become the basic academic discipline for social sciences subjects in schools. Hence, sociology as a school subject in a transformation society faces a twofold problem: not only is it difficult to conceptualise a school subject between academic knowledge provision and active learning of skills and values, but it is as well difficult to realise such practical teaching in a society, in which this active form of teaching is neither practised nor acknowledged by the teachers themselves. Georgi Dimitrov and Elena Stoykova come to the conclusion that both reform of education and sociology as a discipline providing a problem oriented approach are needed in order to apply sociology in (Bulgarian) schools successfully.

Writing on "*Beyond 'Doom and Gloom' and 'Saving the World': On the Relevance of Sociology in Civic Education*", Vjeran Katunarić also starts with some genuine problems of the discipline, describing contemporary sociology "as beginning and ending its expertise with skepticism". Elaborating on the big challenge of applying sociology to schools, Vjeran Katunarić describes the dilemma of social sciences between figuring as a school subject, thought to prepare citizens for executing their duties and as a subject, based in its scientific contents on a discipline with strong "reservations towards liberal democracy" and a strong wish to preserve its value neutrality. Vjeran Katunarić describes in detail this tension field between sociology as school subject and citizenship education. He shows the whole range of problems appearing in the democratic school oriented towards educating democratic citizens: teaching students to execute their citizenship responsibility means at the same time to accept, in principle, the existing system; sociology sees itself as critics of society, not as its willing instrument for creating good citizens within the given system. The expertise of Vjeran Katunarić sheds light on a very interesting and multifaceted problem: sociology with its knowledge of social problems and its potential of reflective skills is important for citizenship education, but it cannot, due to its critical functions, be taken as a basic discipline for citizenship education. Reflect-



ing on co-operation or exclusion between civics and sociology in schools, Vjeran Katunarić comes to solutions which would, probably, satisfy to a big extent academic critics on applying sociology in schools: sociology should not melt together with civics, and they should not be mutually exclusive, but rather be concurrent subjects in schools.

In her article *"Sociology in French High Schools: The Challenge of Teaching Social Issues"*, Elisabeth Chatel gives an elaborated analysis of the development of sociology as a school subject for French lycées and its development between sociology and economics, between academic discipline and social problem orientation, showing the history of the complex school subject Economy and Social Studies (ESS) and the role of sociological knowledge, skills and theories within it. In her impressive analysis, including empirical data on results of studying ESS, Elisabeth Chatel shows tensions between ESS as knowledge production, as providing students with analytical perspectives, but also as training active citizens with critical attitudes and ways of overcoming these tensions. Developing her complex analysis, Elisabeth Chatel touches upon the central questions of sociology in schools between knowledge providing and application, and on academic sociological knowledge. Most interestingly, the paper shows that the expected impact of sociology at schools is a politically contested issue as this discipline is expected to encourage a critical stance on society, politicians and entrepreneurs. This hope or fear of sociology as a means of critical thinking goes well with some key arguments in the papers of Dimitrov/Stoykova and Katunarić. Moreover, problem oriented teaching may turn out to be reinforcing the critical powers embodied in the discipline of sociology. Incidentally, Economy and Social Studies in France seems to give an example of a peaceful and fruitful co-existence of economics and sociology within one and the same school subject.

The crucial differentiation between knowledge vs. action as subject and result of civic education, which appears to be a very central point for this volume, is addressed also in the article of Lieke Meijs and Ariana Need *"Sociology, basis for the secondary-school subject of social sciences"*. This text provides an elaborated example of history, traditions and modern development of social studies in the Netherlands and reflects on the crucial difference, making sociology a very specific school subject between providing knowledge and giving skills for acting. In this context, Lieke Meijs and Ariana Need point to the differentiation between academic and public sociology, which resulted in a long-time debate in Dutch sociology, difficult not only for the academic discipline, but – or especially – also difficult for the educational system with clear cut ideas and application orientation. This differentiation, relevant in civics as such, is becoming a central problem,

challenge and obstacle in the context of applying the academic sociological discipline in education. Showing the development of the social science curricula, Lieke Meijs and, Ariana Need demonstrate the difference between the self-image of the discipline and of the social studies subject in schools as oriented not primarily on introducing into social science, but using social science conceptions in systematic manner, for applied goals like explaining "social structure and social differences", and explaining (and developing) "political views and political decision-making". The tension between the discipline of sociology and the school subject of sociology proves to be a tension between an academic view on social sciences, oriented towards knowledge and research; and a school view, oriented towards competences. Lieke Meijs and Ariana Need create an interesting way out of this dilemma, as they show the possible development of this school subject towards a unification of sociology and political science within the 'concept-context approach, "characterized by the organization of a subject's body of knowledge into a framework of concepts". This article provides not only a theoretical way out of the problem, but also gives some relevant practical impetus for designing sociology as school subject.

In her article *"Social Theory: Who Needs It? A Didactic Substantiation of Social Theories in Lessons"*, Bettina Zurstrassen provides critique on the presentation of social theories in the lessons. She takes up the challenge of bringing social theory in its explicit form into school. Approaching this topic from a rather academic perspective, Bettina Zurstrassen elaborates on the opportunity and necessity to apply sociological theories in school explicitly, criticising the implicit use of sociology in schools. In this context, her critique does not go toward the textbook and curriculum authors, but rather toward the curriculum plans and publishing houses, who dictate the scientifically not sound manner of sociology's presentation in school context. Bettina Zurstrassen claims – within the framework of an approach focusing on conceptual change – that schoolchildren already work with theories – everyday theories – and that, in consequence, social science theories cannot be considered too difficult for them but can and should be used in school. The assimilation of sociological theories by schoolchildren is possible due to the fact that everyday theories, explaining social life phenomena, do already exist in the children's perception and explanation of the world. The paper gives applicable examples of sociological theories' integration into school teaching. In her suggestions, Bettina Zurstrassen manages to overcome the debate of sociology as academic theory vs. sociology in applied form and suggests using the method of Concept Maps. This shows the opportunities and chances of sociology brought to school – a form of applying sociology which – thank goodness! – appears





to be compatible with the academic self-image of the discipline. The author describes a concrete framework for the development and analysis of social theories which shows how to do this job in everyday teaching and learning in the classroom.

The next article of this issue of the Journal of Social Science Education also takes up a big challenge of integrating sociological theory into learning at schools: explaining sociology and using sociology in working with underachievers. In his article "*Do Underachievers Need Sociology?*" Aladin El-Mafaalani provides a view on overcoming the theory/application dilemma in a very specific and innovative way. His approach elaborates on Goffman's theory of social action, which is capable for serving as a "theoretical foundation for the lesson, but is also explicitly its subject". Aladin El-Mafaalani claims that the special situation of under-achievers in schools requires this approach, giving "social-theoretical background for the theatrical action" and at the same time serving as an instrument for reflection and analysis of the individual, interaction, and institution – reflections in and about school as an institutional setting. Reconsidering special challenges and problems of underachievers and school settings, in which underachievers study, Aladin El-Mafaalani suggest to use Goffman's theory for making institutional rules; theoretical thinking is thus used in order to reflect on and understand the rules, the history and situation of their appearing (analytical component) and to develop them (practical component, skills). Aladin El-Mafaalani describes the applicable way of using Goffman to work with underachievers in schools for helping them to "transcend their normal roles". The result of such an application of sociological theory is twofold: besides (implicitly) providing sociological knowledge, it also provides attitudes, action skills and experience. Crucial especially for underachievers, they make the the experience of being taken seriously and of discovering opportunities and outcomes for engagement. Despite the rather implicit use of the theory in the lesson itself, this conception proves to be a big challenge for teachers, who must be trained intensively in sociological theory. Thus, this article brings together academic training of the teachers and the implicit use of sociological theory in school and for schools.

The next article – written in German – gives a very detailed report on the implementation of sociology in three schools in Bremen, a German city. In her article "*...ich konnte viel über mein Leben lernen*" *Soziologieunterricht an der Gymnasialen Oberstufe in Bremen – Eine „Parallelwelt“?*<sup>3</sup>, Marianne Papke gives very interesting insights into the students' understanding of what sociology as a school discipline gives them, what they can learn from sociology for their everyday

life, while combining the theoretical knowledge and the new reflexivity which they gain with help of this subject. Marianne Papke shows how sociology works within the curricula and describes problems, obstacles and successes of this subject. Drawing a detailed picture of how students use theoretical and empirical sociological approaches and data in order to change their own attitudes and patterns in everyday life, this paper gives some very concrete answers to some of the questions guiding this issue of the JSSE. The example outlined by Marianne Papke shows that schools can deal with sociological theories, that working on a cutting edge between sociological theory and practical applications for students' life, including the development of active attitudes, is possible and can be successful. This experience from schools in Bremen demonstrates that sociology, when applied in schools, is inclined or even forced to give up its self-image of neutral observation and tends to become normative in a certain way. However – and this must be a crucial point for sociology as an academic discipline – going to school does not mean to give up its scholarliness. On the contrary, teachers and teacher students need the sociological perspective in order to be successful in explaining social phenomena in and to their classroom. But also students themselves report an improvement in understanding of their everyday life with help of sociological theories learned at school.

The last article – beyond the main topic of this issue – is "*Democratic citizenship – A conditioned apprenticeship. A call for destabilisation of democracy in education*". With this paper, Maria Olson opens up some other issues of crucial importance for social sciences education which are connected to the topic of sociology in schools insofar as they relate to the discussion of the application of democratic teaching between theories of democracy and practical politics. Maria Olson elaborates on social science education being confronted with European theory and practice of democracy. She describes citizenship education between Swedish challenges and international conceptions, shedding light on some very central problems of citizenship education in European states and opening up a discussion which is relevant for an understanding of democracy and citizenship in theoretical didactics of social sciences and for practical actions in schools. The paper shows aspects of understanding democracy in international educational contexts; it introduces the description of "resided" democracy and pointing to the "democratic not yet" – a conception highly relevant for citizenship education in all migration states. Maria Olson provides a systematic differentiation of people due to their corresponding or not corresponding to "the" democratic being – thus uncovering the normative basis for democracy teaching. In her suggestions she calls for liberation of the "relationship between democracy and educa-

3 "I Learned a Lot About My Own Life..." Sociology Classes in Bremen Gymnasiums- a Kind of "Parallel World"?



tion from the standardised view of a question of integration of not-yets, i.e. children and young people and ethnocultural 'others', in the present societal situation". With help of this fine-graded analysis, Maria

Olson opens up a highly relevant discussion worthy of being picked up for further theoretical development and practical implementation.

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Bettina Zurstrassen

## Social Theory: Who Needs It? A Didactic Substantiation of Social Theories in Lessons

### Abstract

Only marginal importance is attached to the analysis of social theories in textbooks for social science. Mostly, they are only taught in extracts, and the analysis of a text extract from a theory is seldom discussed in class. In particular, sociological theories are therefore only presented to the pupils in an abridged form. The didactic-methodical potential of social theories in the process of Conceptual Change – from the everyday theory to science-related theories – about aspects of social changes, the social order, or social actions, remains unused. This article deals with scientific, didactic and methodical questions on the use of social theories in social science lessons.

### Content

1. Social theories in social science lessons
2. What are social theories and why do we need them?
  - 2.1 The relationship of social theory and empiricism
3. Social theories in lessons
  - 3.1 The significance of social theories in lessons
  - 3.2 Didactic substantiation for the processing of social theories
    - 3.2.1 Conceptual Change of everyday theories through social theories
    - 3.2.2 Analysis of social theories as scientific propaedeutics
    - 3.2.3 Social theories are social orientation knowledge
  - 3.3 Social theories and problem orientation in lessons
4. Framework for the development and analysis of social theories

### Keywords

Social Theory, Conceptual Change, scientific propaedeutics, social orientation knowledge, analysis raster for social theories

### 1. Social theories in social science lessons

Why and how should social theories be treated in social science lessons? These questions are looked into in the article. First of all, it is shown in the first section which significance theories have in sociological research. This is followed by a didactic comment about the pros and cons of sociological theories in social science lessons. Development and analysis instructions for social theories are presented in the fourth section, with which the focus is placed on Concept Maps from a methodical point of view.

### 2. What are social theories and why do we need them?

Some readers will expect the term “sociological theories” to be used in an article for a periodical with the title “Sociology – Who Needs It?” Instead the term “social theories” is used here. According to Straub, the designation “social theory” tackles “newer trends of

theoretical discourse in social sciences. It aims at a theory of social sciences, i.e. at an integrating social scientific theory formation, which goes beyond the innate theoretical approaches of the subject” (Straub 2009). The segmentation into specialised disciplines is being increasingly abandoned in social scientific research. Experts expect this to result in important scientific synergy and innovation effects. Social processes and structures can only be comprehensively described and researched by bundling the various subject-specific questions and theoretical approaches of the individual social scientific research disciplines. This perspective also corresponds with the approach of social sciences as an integrated subject in schools, in which cross-subject, problem-oriented, key epoch-making problems are developed (Claußen 1997, 63).

The epistemological discourse concerning the question that has been raised at the beginning, “what are social theories and why do we need them,” can only be outlined at this point. It is treated as a subject to the extent that this is necessary for the didactic substantiation of social theories in social science lessons, which is presented in the following chapter. Although the term “theory” is of central importance for the social science subjects, so far there is no standard, epistemological understanding of the term. Balog formulates an extremely broad definition of the term “theory”, and defines as theory all statements that scholars understand and accept as “sociological theory” (cf. Balog 2001, 7-8). However, Balog thus broaches more the issue of the question of the power of definitions and not the theory term itself. With his definition, however, he circumvents the disputed problem, according to which criteria of the scientific nature of a theory are to be specified. On a basal level, generalising statements are understood as theories, according to Joas and Knöbel. Scientific theories would then be distinguished from everyday theories, if they pass a comparison with reality, or at least allow themselves to be examined based on criteria of reality (cf. Joas, Knöbel 2004, 19). The methods to verify whether theories correspond to their underlying reality, even the term “reality” itself, are disputed in sociology. The scientific ideal of “veri-





fiction” as a benchmark for the scientific nature of a theory, which was propagated at the beginning of the 20th century, failed to meet its demand. No one can provide proof that a generalising sentence is correct in all cases. Popper’s falsification principle should meet a far-reaching common sense in science today. A theory is only valid until it is refuted, thus it is falsified (Popper 1994, 8, 14 f). However, the problem is that there are often no clear criteria for when a theory is falsified. Thomas S. Kuhn demonstrates in his study “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions” that a change in theory occurs when the old theory proves to no longer be useful to solve a problem (Kuhn 1962, 74 f.). Before there is a paradigm shift, attempts are made to maintain the old theory. The advocates of that theory modify it, refer to changed, basic social conditions and formulate auxiliary hypotheses (Kuhn 1962, 78). The falsification principle therefore has a high demand, which is why Zima, referring to Neurath, proposes speaking of “shaking” a theory instead. The theoretical weaknesses of that theory would have to be disclosed in the critical discourse (Zima 2004, xii).

## 2.1 The relationship of social theory and empiricism

As far as possible, general statements are made in social theories, concerning social actions, social orders and the social transformation of society (Joas 2004, 37). The claim of being able to formulate those generalising statements leads to the question on the relationship of social theory and empiricism. Balog attributes a research-initiating function to theory. He describes it as a “(...) necessary aid in order to clarify problems and obtain clarity about facts, which then become the object of empirical analyses”<sup>1</sup> (Balog 2001, Preface 2). Social theoreticians do not see theory only as an “aid” to empiricism. They regard theory and empiricism as interdependent, as empirical data only unfolds its explanatory effect, which goes beyond the demonstration of correlations, through the theoretical integration and interpretation. Therefore, Merton writes “It indicates that theoretic pertinence is not inherently present or absent in empirical generalizations but appears when the generalization is conceptualized in abstractions of higher order (...) which are embodied in more general statements of relationship” (Merton 1968, 151). On the other hand, however, theory also needs empiricism. Metaphorically speaking, Merton demands that theory and empiricism enter a marriage (Merton 1968, 171). He explains four central functions of empiricism for the development of theories in his study “Social Theory and Social Structure”:

- the further initiation and development of empirical research

1 Translated by the author.

- the reformulation: New data forces an extension of the theory
- the refocusing of theory: New methods of empirical research press for the new weighting of the theoretical interest
- the clarification of theory: Empirical research presses for a clarification of the terms which are used in theory (Merton 1968, 157-171)

Regarding the question of why we do need social theories, they have, among others, the function of conveying research results. Theories serve to reduce complexity as a multitude of research results are bundled into one theory. They therefore also have an order function. Based upon this, it is imperative to assign an important position in social science lessons to social theories. They open up a direct, exemplary access to the analysis of social issues.

## 3. Social theories in lessons

### 3.1 The significance of social theories in lessons

On the whole, very little research has been conducted regarding social science lessons in Germany. No empirical data is available concerning the quantity and quality of social theories as an issue in social science lessons. An access to this subject area can be achieved through school books, which are presumably still one of the main media used in lessons. The analysis of the contents of selected, recent, German textbooks shows the following trends.<sup>2</sup> All in all, it can be seen that both in the school books for the lower forms of German grammar schools as well as in those for the upper forms it is not demonstrated which specific questions and methods of access political sciences, sociology and economics have, and how those can be synthesized. The potential of an integrated social scientific access with the analysis of key social problems in social science lessons is not shown. Moreover, it is often not made clear in the textbooks, on which scientific reference disciplines and subject-specific questions the teaching subject “Social Science” is based. An analysis of contents, which is differentiated according to school years, produces the following for the textbooks for years five to eight:

- Sociological contents are often addressed as an issue due to social educational motivation or for political awareness.
- Sociological knowledge is not received as such – a criticism which was also expressed by Kornelia Hahn 1997 (Hahn 1997, 81).<sup>3</sup>

2 A school book research concerning this subject aspect is still to be carried out. The Georg-Eckert Institute for international school book research in Braunschweig has a large stock of international school books for the subject of Social Science in the special library, <http://www.gei.de/index.php?id=institut>.

3 One exception is formed by the textbook „Politik/Wirtschaft 5/6“, that was published by Floren. Basic sociological terms



- A descriptive and empirical presentation dominates.
- Social theories are only addressed as an exception. The textbooks “Detto und andere” (“Detto and others”), which were published in Germany in the middle of the 1970s are a good example for how pupils of the years five to seven can be introduced to sociological or social scientific ways of thinking. The series features a translation from an American textbook that was published by Lippitt, Fox, and Schaible in 1969 under the title “Social Science Laboratory Units. Teacher’s Guide”. Sociological studies and technical terms of social actions, e.g. Sherif’s experiment or the Halo effect, are presented and instructions are given for social scientific research methods in a way that is suitable for children. In my opinion, the analysed books for the years five to eight fail to satisfy this demand by far with regard to the presentation of sociological contents.

The situation for school books in Germany for the upper form is much more heterogeneous. For example, “Dialog Sowi” presents social theories in a didactically sound fashion. It points out the relevance of social theories for research, and clarifies central sociological terms (Schrieverhoff, 50). The textbook “Politik – Wirtschaft – Gesellschaft. Grundlagentexte für den Unterricht” contains didactically processed, scientific, social theories. The readers receive biographical information about the scientists for each theory, and a classification of the text excerpt in the scientific context of the theory. A further development could include supplementary materials (statistics etc.) in order to look further into the critical analysis (Heithner 2008). The textbooks “Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Politik” by Franz-Josef Floren present themselves as follows:

- The meaning of sociological concepts and the theoretical context of sociological terms are not presented.
- Sociological theories are mostly lectured, often only presented in core sentences. Longer primary or secondary texts for the independent development of a theory are only printed in rare cases in the textbook.
- The analysis of social theories is not instructed from a methodical point of view.

This analysis is not representative, but it is based on a selection of textbooks with a particularly high circulation. Thus it is only able to show tendencies. A substantial research project for school books would have to be conducted to obtain valid data.<sup>4</sup>

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of group sociology and role theory are presented here (Floren 2008, 20-25).

4 Feasible empirical data, from which media teachers take material for the lessons, are not available. The author is currently carrying out an internet-based survey among teachers at grammar schools, with which the data relating to this range of subjects are collected. These could be supplemented still before the article is goes to press.

The list of the analysis of the contents as stated above, however, is not intended to support the often perceived attacks against the work of school book authors. The school book publishing houses and authors design the school books based on the official teaching plans of the individual federal states.<sup>5</sup>The authors are often given rigid stipulations for the conceptual design from the publishing houses, which are based on intensive market analyses. A reason for the decline in demand for more ambitious textbooks probably lies in the high share of social science lessons, which are given by teachers who are not familiar with the subject. For some school forms, it is almost 80 per cent of all lessons for the younger pupils (MSW, NRW, 85). School books for the lower forms, which presume elaborated expertise from the teacher, such as for example knowledge about social theories, empirical methods or social scientific experiments, have less chances on the market. However, this alone does not explain why social theories are often also represented poorly in the textbooks for the upper forms of the grammar schools.

### 3.2 Didactic substantiation for the processing of social theories

Is the analysis of social theories in lessons too demanding? The interpretation of the social world using theories is nothing new for pupils. The learners have subjective everyday theories about many social science issues, which are relevant for schools, for example about gender-specific role attributions or about the causes of right-wing extremism. Max writes “we see the world through theoretical glasses” (Max, 7), as concepts emerge from the total of detailed information, which are then bundled into everyday theories. The fact that anti-Semitism exists, although many people have no personal contact to people of the Jewish faith, illustrates however that the constructions are not radically subjective, but rather an interactionistic constructivism has to be assumed.

#### 3.2.1 Conceptual Change of everyday theories through social theories

Everyday theories have an effect on the subjective assessment of a social phenomenon and have an influence on the actions of the pupils. They provide security and stability for the behaviour. However, they are often wrong or at least restrictive. In many cases, the everyday theories deviate substantially from the actual, scientific theories. These misconceptions make the access to and the understanding of scientific explanation

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5 In the Federal Republic of Germany the education policies fall under the culture control of the federal states. In several federal states, for example in Hesse, North-Rhine Westphalia, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein school books first have to undergo approval procedure. Only the works, which are approved by the respective Ministry of Education may be used in the lessons.



models and theories more difficult. Everyday conceptions should be changed into science-related concepts through lessons at school. Lessons aim at a Conceptual Change, defined as "(...) learning that changes an existing conception (i.e., belief, idea, or way of thinking)" (Davis 2001, 3). The theory of the Conceptual Change is based on the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget and on Thomas Kuhn's notion of the "scientific revolution" (Davis, 2001, 4). Both demonstrated in their work that everyday concepts and scientific theories prove to be extremely resilient and resistant.

How can everyday concepts be changed through scientific concepts in lessons? The change of concepts according to Piaget is described as follows: People form organised knowledge and behaviour concepts, the foundations of human knowledge. If a Conceptual Change is now to be initiated in a lesson, the learner initially tries to integrate the new information into the existing concept (assimilation). The perception is, if it appears necessary, re-interpreted to the extent that the existing, cognitive concepts (schemata) are sufficient in order to be able to cope with the situation. The stability of existing concepts can be explained with the attempt to transfer the unknown back to that which is known. If at all possible, the unknown is integrated into the existing, cognitive structure, which explains the stability of social prejudices and misconceptions. Accommodation only takes place when the situation cannot be processed by assimilation. Accommodation means the extension or adjustment of the cognitive structures to a perceived situation, which cannot be managed with the existing concept. If learning processes are to be initiated, then a cognitive field of tension has to be built up. However, there is rarely a radical change in concept as individuals strive to achieve equilibrium of assimilation and accommodation processes (Baumgart 2007, 219-224). According to Max, the transformation of intuitive, social scientific concepts into science-related points of view requires an insight into the process of the acquisition of knowledge itself, such as the interpretation of theories and the formation of hypotheses (cf. Max, 6). Due to the fact that pupils analyse and reflect upon social theories, they acquire categories, with which they can also reflect upon their everyday concepts.

It is vital that thinking in theories exists in the cognitive structure of the learner. Scientific knowledge concepts are transported into social theories, which can be contrasted with the everyday concepts of the pupils. The treatment of social theories is possible from year five or six, when the theory is reduced and processed didactically according to the cognitive development status of the pupils. According to Piaget, the pupils are capable of concrete-formal or already formal-operative thinking operations from the age of 11 to 13 (Baumgart 2007, 238). The analysis of social theories can support the cognitive development of the pupils. This, however, does not mean that the lessons should only be

based on the analysis of social theories. For example, using personification and personalisation<sup>6</sup> to analyse sociological matters is justified due to psychological considerations as a didactic-methodical process that motivates the pupils and fosters learning. However, social theories create an analytical distance and therefore enable the learner to grasp the social responsibility of social actions of individuals, groups and societies when analysing case studies and sociological issues. The often strong empirical-descriptive, phenomenological access to social issues in school books is expanded when analysing social theories by steering the attention more to the analysis of exemplary social processes and structures. Pupils can learn not just to argue from how they are affected personally when analysing and forming a judgement on social issues, but to carry out analyses which are guided by theory.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of social theories as scientific propaedeutics

The analysis and addressing of social theories as an issue is also significant with regard to the scientific propaedeutics. It gives pupils a first insight into the nature of social sciences:

- Social theories illustrate the (re)constructive character of scientific research.
- Pupils learn that scientific knowledge is "provisional knowledge" that can be falsified.
- Through the analysis of social theories, learners can become familiar with fundamental, sociological technical terms, which are often bound to theory (Treibel 2006, 312). The ability for the systematic and structured thinking in categories can be promoted.
- The pupils can be sensitised handling language in the field of social sciences, which is fundamental to elaborate analysis and judgement competence.
- The analysis and political judgement competence of the learner can be promoted through ideological-critical occupation with social theories.

### 3.2.3 Social theories are social orientation knowledge

The ability to deal with social theories from an ideological-critical point of view is also important, because social theories on their part influence the social world (Joas, Knöbel 2004, 16). Some examples of those are the Marxist theory, Liberalism, behaviour which deviates from theories, etc., which are discussed far beyond the limits

<sup>6</sup> A process which has been discussed critically in the history didactics. Personalisation states that a social fact is presented based on the example of a famous person. With the process of personification on the other hand a fictitious person is presented who stands as a representative for a social group. The personification should have the effect to promote the identification. However, there is the danger that the view of the social structure is blocked (Bergmann 1997, 298-300).

of science and have an influence on political actions (cf. Joas, Knöbel 2004, 16). As presumed by Joas and Knöbel, three central questions are dealt with in social theories: "What is social action?", "What is social order?" and "What determines social transformation?" According to Joas and Knöbel, these three questions lead right to the field of tasks that makes social sciences interesting for a broad public: the task to understand the recent state of modern societies and to detect future trends (cf. Joas, Knöbel 2004, 37). Learners therefore also acquire an understanding of society and social orientation knowledge by explicitly dealing with social theories.

### 3.3 Social theories and problem orientation in lessons

Social theories offer a high didactic potential. The principles central to social science lessons, exemplarity and problem orientation, can be realised with help of social theories. Principally, scientific social theories, as stated above already, have the demand to be examples. Generalising statements are formulated through deductive or inductive derivations. They have the potential to analyse an exemplary problem, which is in accordance with the didactic principle of problem orientation. The research process, which is presented in the theories, can be analysed and reconstructed in those lessons under a problem question, which is formulated from a didactic point of view. The phases of the problem-oriented lessons for the theory analysis are as follows:

#### Succession of a problem-oriented theory analysis

**Problem presentation:** confrontation with the subject. The problem is presented in social theories through empirical data: Statistics, observations, etc. Scientists justify their interest in research.

**Problem question (didactic subject):** The problem question is formulated based on the confrontation with the subject. This didactically fruitful question is contained in the hypotheses the social theory is based on. Popitz's theory "processes of formation of power" can for example be implemented into the following didactic question: "Why is power so unequally distributed?" With regard to the theory of the Labelling Approach, work can be carried out in the lessons under the following problem questions: "Does society turn the people into criminals?"

**Problem analysis:** The problem is analysed based on the evaluation of case studies (observations, interviews, analysis of diaries, etc.) or quantitative data. Case studies are presented in many social theories, for example in "Phenomenon of power" by Heinrich Popitz, who elaborates and illustrates his theory of the formation of power based on the power formation processes on a ship and in a prison camp (Popitz 1992, 185-231).

**Interpretation:** In this phase, the relationship network of the theory explains and interprets the occur-

rence of the "problem", and thus also explains the reasons for the social transformation, for social actions or for existing social orders.

**Examination of the theory:** Examination of the internal logic of the theory, empirical examination of the generalising claim, etc. re-establishes the relation to the empirical findings.

**Formation of political judgement by pupils:** Based on the afore-mentioned phase, the political dimension is discussed (e.g. how can the author of the theory be classified from a political point of view? Which political consequences can be derived from the knowledge in the theory? For which political purposes can it be instrumentalised? To what extent does the scientific theory change your view of the problem?).

Some might argue that with this method of analysis the pupils merely understand the social theory and there is no "discovery learning". The reconstructive character can be abandoned, because by analysing social theories the individual development phases are carried out by alternating between the pupils' own interpretations and the interpretation of the scientist. The learners pursue questions that have also been discussed in the course of the original research. From a subjective perspective, they break new scientific ground, which of course objectively they don't (Reinhardt, 176). The analysis of theories in social science lessons is, however, also legitimised, because the pupils acquire skills necessary for scientific reflection and social interpretation, and gain orientation knowledge, as long as the analysis of theories goes beyond the limits of the objective analysis.

The succession of the phases presented above concerning the problem-oriented analysis of theories moreover gives the impression of a linear research process. However, in reality a theory develops like a network, as hypotheses are submitted and rejected based on new knowledge. In its entirety, the research process cannot be fully presented due to the necessity of a didactic reduction in the lessons. However, processing the social theories didactically for the purpose of teaching, the change in the hypotheses and the research methods should be presented as an example based on new knowledge.

### 4. Framework for the development and analysis of social theories

The framework presented in this chapter can be practised with students and pupils. It is similar to the well-known instructions for the analysis of texts. Social theories are, however, an own category of texts, because they transport scientific, generalising concepts. The structure of a social theory is a self-contained term network about a scientific social subject. The propositions of a theory stand in a logical relationship towards each other and have to be verifiable (Merton 1968, 143). As a result, they differ from fictional texts and non-fictional texts like newspaper reports or legal texts.



The analysis of original scientific texts is, according to Petrik, a special challenge for teachers. The gap between the pupils' everyday concepts and scientific concepts has to be closed (cf. Petrik, 5). There are several paths that lead to the adoption of social theories. Reinhardt describes four of those: social theories can be acquired through case studies, simulations, theatre plays or interviews with experts (Reinhardt, 173 f.). The analytical framework depicted below shows another way to close this gap in school. The framework is an ideal

type. Especially for younger pupils a didactic reduction will be necessary. For example, didactically processed material that shows the origin and the reception of the problem at hand can be helpful for those pupils. From year 11 on to university, the students may look into the historical origin of a theory and its reception with means of "researching, genetical learning".

The framework for the development and analysis of social theories is designed based on the most recent findings on Conceptual Change.

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## Development and analysis of a social theory

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### Everyday concepts

#### Detection of the everyday concepts

What do you think of when you hear the following subject (...)? Create a Concept Map (...).

### Confrontation

The development and analysis of the scientific theory

#### Analyse the theory according to the following analysis framework:

**Problem presentation:** How does the author explain what made him or her deal with the subject? Which reason does he/she state?

**Problem question:** Which research question(s) does the author look into? Which hypotheses does the author formulate?

**Problem analysis:** How does the author research the problem? Which empirical material (case studies, interviews, statistics, etc.) does the author use to support his/her position? How has the material been collected and evaluated?

**Interpretation:** Which theses does the author formulate based on the analysis of the material? What are the central terms? How are they defined? How does he/she present the interdependency of the core statements contained in the central terms?

**Task:** Individual work: Create a Concept Map with the help of the central terms. Cooperative work phase: discuss your Concept Maps in teamwork. Possible questions are: How do they differ? Which problems occurred during the development of the Concept Maps etc.? How did you solve the problems? Which pieces of information do you need in order to understand the theory?

### Examination of the theory

#### Examine the following aspects:

Can the theory be understood logically?

Did the empirical and factual substantiation of the theory correspond with the status of knowledge of science when the theory had been developed?

Are there newer scientific findings and social developments, through which the theory is supported or refuted?

Have the central terms been clearly defined?

### Political judgement

Ideological criticism, effect and reception history of theory

#### Look into the following questions:

Did the author pursue a political or social aim with the theory?

Which biographical experience and social events influenced the author?

How can the author of the theory be classified from a political point of view?

How was theory received in science and politics?

Which social groups or persons used the theory for their social interests?

Has the reception of the theory changed over the course of history?

**Task:** Write counter theses to the theses of the author. Research information and arguments for the counter theses.

### Comparison of the scientific theory with the everyday theory

#### Compare your Concept Maps :

Where are the differences?

How can these be explained?

To what extent does the scientific theory change your opinion of the problem?

### Elaborated practise and application of the theory

Transformation and application of the newly acquired information (social theory) in other knowledge presentations (role play, Battle of Theory<sup>7</sup> etc.).

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7 With the Battle of Theory several theories are represented and defended regarding one subject (e.g. anomy theory, labeling theory, Rational Choice theory) in one dispute.





Due to the limited scope of pages only some comments fundamental to the understanding of the framework for the development and analysis of social theories can be listed here. Decisive for the learning success and a change in concepts is the processing depth. If successful, the acquired competences are permanently encoded and consolidated in the memory. Lessons that are designed according to psychological and neurodidactic findings on learning and memory do not impart disconnected, detailed knowledge. Instead, the systemic connections of the learning material are demonstrated. This does not mean renunciation of the expertise; you cannot knit without wool, as they say. However, pupils also need the methodical competence to knit and the cognitive ability to develop knitting patterns in order to further develop themselves. The abundance of material in the teaching plans leads to a pressure in schools, which hardly leaves any space for elaborated and de-contextualising practice, which is important from the point of view of the psychology of learning, and which is vital to the processes of Conceptual Change. The poor performance shown by the PISA study is, according to neuro-didactic experts, a result of the abundance of material (Herrmann 2008, 121).<sup>7</sup> Conceptual Change needs time. The research of learning and memory underpins the urgency of a curriculum discussion in Germany, which is to be held by specialised didactic and social scientists in order to reduce the abundance of material. This discussion has to be conducted, contrary to the trend of the current educational policy towards output control, within a framework which focuses on learning facts again.<sup>8</sup> Conceptual Change as an aim of school requires the confrontation of existing everyday concepts with science-related concepts. This is carried out in the framework for development and analysis of social theories through the creation and comparison of two Concept Maps. During the development of the Concept Maps, the pupils should reduce the social theory to its conceptual core parts and visualise its inner relationships.

These concluding considerations speak in favour of Concept Maps from the psychological perspective of learning and memory: The Concept Maps can be used within the framework of the learning diagnostics by the pupils and the teacher, and as a means of self-reflection. The encoding of the learning material is increased through the visualisation, because more

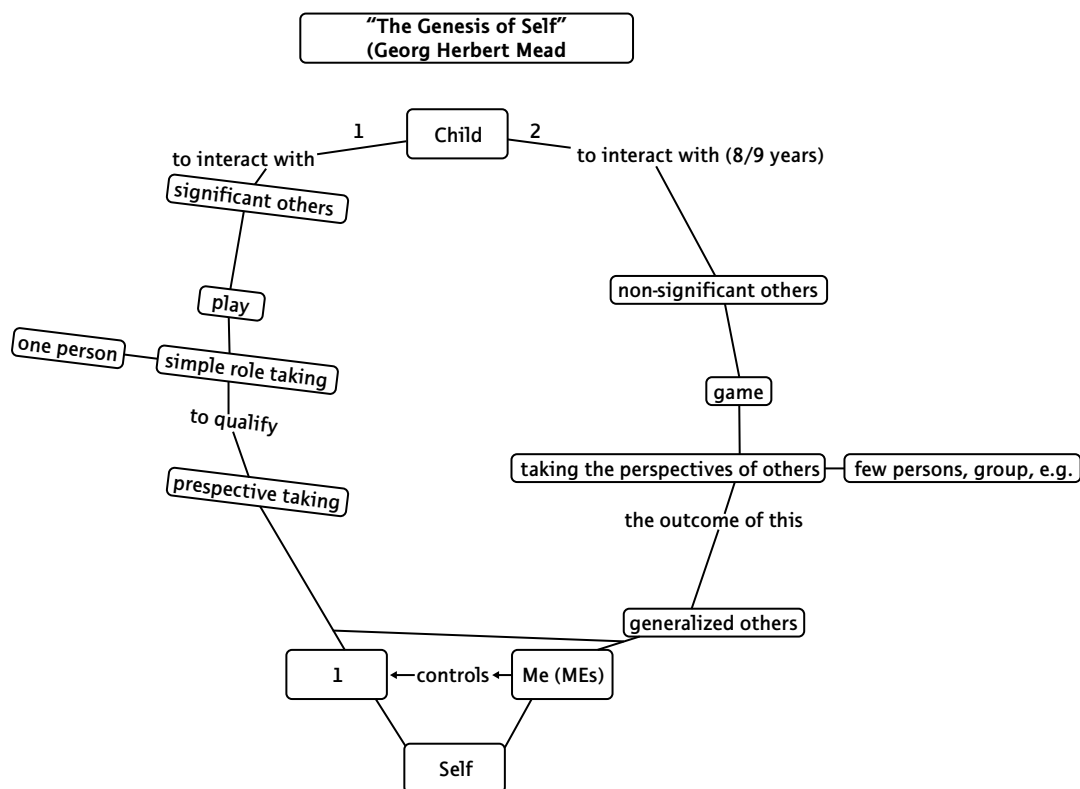
neurological, synaptic connections are formed in the memory. So the mnemonic potential and therefore the learning efficiency are increased. Also important is the relief of the brain when social theories are learned through the creation of Concept Maps, which are similar to the cognitive knowledge networks (also called semantic networks) in the human brain. In those networks, knowledge is linked and organised hierarchically in category systems. The organisation of social theories in the form of Concept Maps furthers encoding and consolidating knowledge in the long-term memory, and therefore increases the ability to recall the knowledge. School learning therefore becomes sustainable learning.

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7 However, there is a lack of a reference framework with the complaints about the fall in the pupils' performance since the PISA study. There are no studies available which allow empirically serious, comparative statements based on panel studies.

8 As empirical survey tools for examination of learning levels are currently only available for measuring the factual competence and for method competence in individual cases the lessons are focused on these competences. The contents of the lessons are adjusted to the empirical survey tools.

### An example of a Concept Map of a student:



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## Beyond “Doom and Gloom” and “Saving the World”: On the Relevance of Sociology in Civic Education

### Abstract

In this article some tenets of classical and contemporary sociology are examined with reference to social problems that are also topical in civic education. The social problems are: social inequality, inter-communal conflicts, and democratic participation. A major obstacle in adopting sociological interpretations of the social problems to contemporary civic education lies in sociological reservations toward liberal democracy as a remedy to the social problems. More properly, some utopian (from radical to conservative) ramifications of the sociological analysis cannot actually be adopted in civic education. As a consequence, sociology is often distanced toward normative order and dominant forms of social power and practice of the actually existing societies, including liberal democracies. Thus, one can argue that sociology educates “young skeptics”, rather than “young citizens” as postulated in some national curricula of civic education. Still, sociology may serve in civic education as an abundant source of knowledge for unraveling prejudices and false forms of democracy in the contemporary society, and also for questioning some national solutions to pressing social problems. Also, as long as civic education has a tendency to idealize the actually existing forms of (liberal) democracy and thus avoiding major criticism of the social order, teaching sociology in secondary education in concurrence with CE would be necessary for the sake of establishing a comprehensive education on the contemporary society and citizenship.

### Content

1. Classical sociology’s reservations toward liberal democracy
2. Contemporary sociological answers to the social problems
3. Conclusion

### Key words

Sociology, civic education, classical sociologists, contemporary sociology, young citizens, young skeptics

‘Viewed from within the legal system, the validity of norms remains unquestioned, but viewed from “society” (by, say, the sociologist), norms are seen as social facts and thus open to discussion’ (Luhmann, 2008: 18)

‘/W/hat has come to be understood as “democracy” is really just another form of Patriarchy which not only excludes most women from enjoying their most basic human right to equality, but actually oppresses the majority of people.’ (Facio, 2009: 2)

### Introduction

‘Why are my students always depressed when they leave my sociology class?’ is the subtitle of Brett Johnson’s illuminating article entitled ‘Overcoming “doom and gloom”’, consecrated to class-room teaching of social problems. He argues that “sociology courses often increase knowledge of social issues, while they have no effect on, or decrease, students’ levels of perceived civic efficacy” (Johnson, 2005: 47).

The difficulty with contemporary sociology may be owed to the underdevelopment of its capability of turning analytical models into predictable and broadly useful recipes for social action, on the one hand.

Yet, many sociologists want to preserve the cognitive integrity of their discipline by keeping up distance toward the social world, primarily its dominant norms and values. “Norms are social facts... open to discussion” says Niklas Luhmann in the above citation. In fact, a core of contemporary sociology both begins and ends its expertise with skepticism.

The underdevelopment of the applicative knowledge in the part of sociology that has the ambition of putting its knowledge into practice of social engineering is stressed by James Coleman in his seminal book on social theory (Coleman, 1990). The book, in its own right, represents a major effort of bridging the gap between theory and practice in sociology, yet with prerequisites of the rational choice theory which provides rather a reductionist account of social phenomena, which is akin to neoclassical economics.

Other and basically holistic sociological approaches are less geared up for finding proper solutions to social problems within a set of means disposable in current institutional policies, and are accordingly less appropriate for being adopted in civic education (CE). According to Scott McNall, the reason why sociology is less useful in understanding contemporary social issues and problems is that it is, esp. in teaching, too much oriented toward its classics who, as he puts it ironically, might have “saved the world in their own time”, but not in this, our time. Hence, “our grand theories choke us and our students” (McNall, 2008: 152). Again, one must bear in mind that this is a partisan, not unison, stance in sociology. As such, it is basically inherent to Robert Merton’s tradition in sociology, mostly cultivated in the United States, a sociology that pleads for the relevance of a local (“middle-range”) rather than world-wide perspective on society.



On the other hand, CE is, to paraphrase McNall's remark, oriented to "this world"-society and is prone, more than sociology, to accept its current shape, and democracy in the First World within, nearly as the ultimate one. According to a widely shared definition, "civic education, whenever and however undertaken, prepares people of a country, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens. Civic education is, therefore, political education or...the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation" (Crittenden, 2007: 1). Unlike sociological criticism, thus, CE encourages the acceptance of the existing institutional order. For example as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung highlights, in liberal democracies CE is an educational stronghold against illiberal education: „Civic education was indispensable in building a liberal democracy in the Federal Republic after 1945 and in reunited Germany after 1989... Addressing the destruction of the Weimar Republic by the combined efforts of extremists from the Right and Left as well as analysing the crimes of national socialism and the experience of communist dictatorship in the GDR will always remain core elements in civic education and its efforts to promote liberal democracy." (www.kas.de/.../42.5/). Very often, thus, liberalism is equated with democracy and criticism against liberalism, especially if it is inspired by ideologies opposing liberalism, such as Marxism or anarchism, used to be seen as antidemocratic.

Yet, from another viewpoint, for example that of Karl Polanyi (Polanyi, 1957), a political economist who is also taken as the one of the pioneers of historical sociology (cf. Skocpol, 1984), the occurrence of totalitarian regimes, such as Fascism and Bolshevism, is interpreted as a societal reaction to deep economic crises caused merely by the expansion of the free market economy, as the latter dismantled social bonds of economic reciprocity and redistribution which are fundamental structures of society.

In this paper, some tenets of major schools in sociology will be examined, which are concerned with social problems topical in the contemporary CE. The social problems are: social inequality, inter-communal conflicts, and democratic participation (for a list of key topics in CE see: Commission of the European Communities, 2006; Katunarić, 2009). Beforehand, certain reservations of sociological classics toward liberal democracy will be discussed. The reservations may reveal some grounds of the sociological "apathy" and the sociological "salvationism", respectively. In the conclusion, the sociological skepticism as well as utopianism is interpreted as intrinsic to the autonomous academic discourse on society, and, at the same time, inappropriate to CE as long as the latter is apologetic rather than critical toward the actually existing politics and policies of democracy.

### **Classical sociology's reservations toward liberal democracy**

In Europe, two main social science paradigms constituted in the 19th century, i.e. positivism and Marxism, were mainly opposed to the ideas and practices of liberal democracy, i.e. the political and economic system based on individualism, which limits the power of the state over the individuals, yet primarily economic entrepreneurs. The positivist and the Marxist stance against liberal democracy were accompanied by similar approaches of other classical authors. For instance, Tocqueville assessed the preservation of social inequality in post-revolutionary France as well as the middle class egalitarianism in America as basically anti-democratic. Next is Weber's argument that democracy is impertinent to a bunch of institutional sectors. It is similar to Simmel's doubt that democracy can entail the precious balance between competition and cooperation in the modern society. An exception among the European classics in this respect, and among positivists in particular, is Spencer. Yet, his liberalism is more utopian than realistic, for he claims for disarmament, which is in contrast to the fact that the most advanced liberal states had (and still have) the strongest armed forces.<sup>1</sup>

**Comte's conservative utopianism.** Comte was preoccupied with the idea of establishing a world order whose organizational backbone would resemble the Roman Catholic Church (cf. Turner, 1990). In contrast, when considering the case of France, Comte claims that decentralization is a genuine system of the political governance, whereas centralization applies only to the spiritual power (Comte, /1851-1854/ 1875-1877). In any case, he does not see democracy as a major force in constituting national or world society. For him, democracy seems to be a permanent source of societal instability and disruption, which opens the door to revolution. Comte basically aimed to synthesize liberalism and conservatism by combining the idea of progress with the idea of order. However, he opted for elitism rather than democracy, and for sociologically informed technocracy rather than broad civic participation in decision-making. Basically, Comte shares fears of post-revolutionary upper class in France against the so called "dangerous classes", i.e. the lower classes whose members increasingly protested against the existing political and economic regime of the time (cf. Moscovici, 1985).

1 The next presentation of sociological classics is selective both as regards to the authors and as regards to the topic(s). Still, the selection of the authors approximates some standard line-ups of the classics, as for example the one presented in the seminal work of Raymond Aron (Aron, 1998). On the other hand, the thematic focus of the paper, i.e. views of different sociologists concerning possibilities of liberal democracy for to provide cures for the major social problems, has determined the brevity of the next paragraphs.





**Durkheim's utopian corporatism.** Durkheim's idea of organic solidarity for the advanced industrial society is similar to Comte's idea of social order insofar as Durkheim's corporatism – i.e. the consensual tripartite governance of industrial workers, government and private employers – was also inspired by the Catholic social doctrine (Hawkins, 2002; Greve, 1998), although the latter propounds corporatism primarily in favor of the poorest. On the other hand, Durkheim's idea is also close to secular socialism (Durkheim, 1928). His oddness with liberalism is most clearly expressed in his theory of the *social division of labor*, where he reiterates his criticism of Spencer's liberalism and praise of competitive economy as congruent to anomic forces in society. Mostly, he rejects Spencer's assumption that society is based on contractual ties of cooperation between individuals. Likewise, Durkheim rejects liberal assumption of the existence of an innate human nature, whether egoistic or altruistic (e.g. by Adam Smith). Instead, he maintains that individuals and their orientations toward others, including the modern quest for happiness, are by no means "natural", but are products of social arrangements. (Durkheim, /1893/ 1947).

**Marx' democracy-from-below utopianism.** Marx would say that the latter, i.e. the quest for happiness, is most certainly the psychological construction of the late capitalism, i.e. consumerism, for happiness is increasingly conditioned by the power of individual to purchase the produced goods... Certainly, Marx is the most ardent critic of liberalism among the classics. His disdain of liberal democracy and its "parliamentary chatterbox" is notorious, as is his reason for such position: so long as the parliament confirms the class exploitation, it cannot be taken as democratic. Thus, the parliament basically misrepresents the people's mind (Marx, 1871). Hence liberal democracy being the scenery for an essentially undemocratic regime. A true democracy, according to Marx, will follow the removal of the capitalistic exploitation and the establishment of a federation of communes and industrial companies (cf. Held, 2006). More radically than Durkheim, thus, Marx contended that the market rules, and the economic laws derived from them via the classical economics, are ideological constructions rather than scientific or universal truths. Consequently, he expected that democracy-from-below should replace the representative democracy of bourgeoisie, as much as the redistributive economy should replace the free market economy. In turn, basic democracy and redistributive economy would eliminate major social inequalities and conflicts between nations.

**Tocqueville's utopianism of petite owners.** Often portrayed as an "aristocratic liberal" (Kahan, 1992), Tocqueville was genuinely worried about the destiny of freedom in a post-revolutionary regime and was consequently susceptible to new forms of despotism,

i.e. a "tyranny of the majority", under disguise of democracy (Tocqueville, /1835/ 1990: 254-270). His vision of the future, yet viable, democracy consists of "an innumerable multitude of men...who... possess sufficient property to desire the maintenance of order, yet not enough to excite envy" (Tocqueville /1840/ 1990: 252). Accordingly, poverty and wealth should be reduced as unacceptable polarities. In a way, this vision anticipates the idea of the "people's capitalism" of Margaret Thatcher, unlike Social Democracy whose middle class is basically property-less and thus, according to Tocqueville, may easily succumb to (statist) despotism. Such a way, by rejecting the real existing liberal society, i.e. America and post-revolutionary France of his time, which consists of both propertied and dispossessed classes, Tocqueville shares the predilections of the classical sociology for the vision of a society which transcends the society of their own times.

**Weber's polyarchic society.** Weber's view of the democracy that cohabitates with undemocratic forms of rule can be comprehended on the basis of his three ideal types of authority, i.e. charismatic, traditional, and rational (Weber, /1914/ 2005). It is not that only rational authority, and bureaucracy as its central mechanism, have survived the modernity. All three types have actually survived modernity and are incorporated into its tissue in different portions. To be sure, all types may equally be destructive or constructive. For example, charismatic power is not only a synonym for despotic whims, but also creativity of some extraordinary individuals. Similarly, traditional authority, such as monarchy or patrimonial rule, is pertinent to churches, for instance, but not to parliaments. Eventually, rational or legal authority may be beneficial in many areas of society, unless it renders the rule of "specialists without spirit" (*Fachmensch ohne Geist*) (Weber /1920/ 1986). It seems that Weber, similarly to Simmel (see below), envisages a modern society in which democracy and liberalism, as much as the rule of law, do not constitute the entire social universe, but only a part of it. This part should accordingly be combined or balanced with other parts of the society and their procedures of rule, respectively. For example, science, economy, arts and medicine are sectors mainly ruled by meritocracies, i.e. a mixture of charismatic, traditional and rational authority. Furthermore, democratic politics cannot work without bureaucracy which, but, as Weber's student Robert Michels contended, leads ultimately to the rule of oligarchies (Michels, /1916 2001).

**Simmel's liberalism in balance with socialism.** Although Simmel has been ironic toward egalitarian ideologies, saying that money, not democracy, is the leveller of the world (Simmel, /1903/ 1997), he has appreciated the idea of Socialism as a social order that may bring more happiness to people than liberalism which is an



individualistic idea and can as such hardly be satisfied (Simmel, 1900). On the other hand, he argues that the principle of individual competition, which is constitutive to liberalism, is indeed indispensable, for competition may improve the qualities of both products and people. In other words, competition and markets are instruments for moving guilds, trade-unions, states and other collectives to a higher level of both individual and social existence. Above all, liberalism, according to Simmel, takes the competitor as a partner rather than an enemy. However, he suspects that the nature of the modern economy, i.e. monetarism, where money virtually replaces all other values, may truly contribute to the individual growth and further civilization development. For him, money makes individuals frail and societies shapeless. Does it mean that a higher developed civilization should cancel money as a means of payment, what Marx did hope for as well, and would instead be ruled by an enlightened technocracy? These implications, which are pertinent to Simmel's thought, make it even more alien to the contemporary CE which takes monetary economy for granted, as a necessary condition for democracy to happen.

**Spencer's reluctant liberalism.** Although Spencer is the only one among the European classics who overtly advocates liberalism and competitive society, his liberal ideas are sometimes ambiguous. For example, he is bewildered by the non-ethical character of the liberal order and wonders why liberal nations are so militaristic and prone to colonialism, and why primitive peoples are still unmatched in the art of peace and social harmony (Spencer, 1851). Also, he was not always consistent in his writings as regards different aspects of liberal democracy. For example, commitment to the right of universal suffrage wanes in his later writings, especially when women's rights are concerned, because the latter elicit, allegedly, an "over-legislation" (Spencer, /1897/ 1978). In general, his liberalism is idealistic rather than apologetic. For instance, he propounds peace and disarmament despite that it is obvious that most developed liberal nations are at the same time the most armed nations. Likewise, Spencer is utilitarian and rather inconsequential when the diffusion of freedom is concerned, when it is needed to protect a large number of people, women in the first place, because such protections, e.g. quotas for new jobs or employment, contradict to the principle of free competition.<sup>2</sup>

**Mead's liberalism as ideally balanced world society.** The genuine adherent of the idea of liberal democracy, based on capitalism, among the classics is not a European, but an American, George Herbert Mead. He argues that the likeliness of Rousseau's "common will" strongly depends on the functional division of labor

by the means of market exchange (Mead, /1934/ 1962: 287). This conclusion is basically similar to Durkheim, although the latter would not subscribe to the market optimism. Mead points out, similarly to Durkheim, that all human needs as well as human happiness may come true only in a "universal society" (Mead, /1934/ 1962: 281 et passim.). Mead basically shares this position with religionists, for the belief in the existence in a universal society seems to be taken coterminous with its practical existence. Nevertheless, even Mead's enthusiasm for a worldwide liberal society is provisional, for market alone obviously does not work as a Great Balancer of human needs and gratifications. Perhaps, a Pareto optimum for the global economy and the establishment of a universal society are religious or utopian rather than capitalistic prospects.

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The above reminder of the notions of sociological classics on democracy shows that classics mainly were not consigned to ideas and practices of liberal democracy. Instead, they were prone either to propound a form of liberalism, which is far detached from the actually existing liberal democracy, or to disclose liberalism, like Marx, as a mask for undemocratic rule. On the other hand, classics have proposed other forms of rule, such as direct democracy, social corporatism or enlightened technocracy. Here, one can concur with Boudon when he argues that Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, and Tocqueville were strong supporters of the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, i.e. that they were basically committed to the idea of progress, and even that they were 'liberals', deeply influenced by Kant (Boudon, 2004: 122). Nevertheless, their 'liberalism' seems to be reluctant, as much as it was that of Kant. For him, democracy based on peace requires a genuine cosmopolitan legal order, certainly not the one with the agenda endorsing the forcible "spread of democracy" and secret prisons (cf. Lucht, 2009). The classical sociologists actually reject the "perverted effects" (Boudon's phrase) of liberalism, such as anomie, vulgarity of taste or disdain toward art, all of them being caused by profit-seeking and power-seeking as the only valuable goals for individuals or society.

### Contemporary sociological answers to the social problems

The contemporary sociology did not take a much more favorable attitude toward liberal democracy than classical sociology. Thus far, sociology does not occupy a prominent place among disciplines eligible for being included into CE teaching. Still, sociology has produced an enormous knowledge, which may facilitate the understanding of the causes and consequences of different social problems. Certainly, one of the central competences of CE is cognitive as well, i.e. to enable students to recognize social prejudices and

<sup>2</sup> Hence, a new form of "democracy" may render a new form of Patriarchy, as Facio contends in the above citation.



stereotypes, and to debunk them by the means of empirical evidence (cf. DeCesare, 2005). In this respect, a great deal of sociological knowledge might be useful, for instance in reducing social distance toward people belonging to other cultures (cf. Jedlicka and Katunarić, 1985). Yet, different sociological interpretations of the causes and consequences of prejudices and stereotypes, and how to reduce or eliminate them, may not only expand, but also curb the possibilities for finding practical solutions to such problems. For example, some sociological explanations of social prejudices highlight group-maintaining function of prejudices, although the explanations do not advocate prejudices as such (cf. McLemore, 2004). Nevertheless, researchers may be skeptical, for instance, as regards the impacts of the educational efforts in divided societies as long as these are replete with tensions and conflicts, or where no interethnic civic associations exist (cf. Varsheney, 2002; Ajduković, Ćorkalo, 2008).

In general, one part of sociology builds knowledge (of society) for its own sake, and the other addresses social problems, but most effectively through empirical analysis (Goldthorpe, 2003), and only rarely by providing practical guidelines aimed at solving particular social problems, which would be, as a competence, applicable to CE (Mobley, 2007).

In the following, some basic tenets of the major contemporary sociological schools – i.e. functionalism, class analysis, social constructionism, and rational choice – will be exemplified in the way they address solutions to the social problems topical to CE as well, i.e. social inequality; inter-communal violence, and democratic participation. Here, some retention of the sociological reservations toward liberal democracy, as a remedy for the social problems, can repeatedly be recognized. For the sake of making the presentation of the topic in such a broad spectrum of sociology as clear and coherent as possible, tenets of one representative author of each school will be presented briefly like in the previous paragraphs on the sociological classics. The contemporary sociological authors are: Niklas Luhmann (representing functionalism/system analysis), Immanuel Wallerstein (representing class/world system analysis), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (representing social constructionism), and James Coleman (representing rational choice).

### **Functionalism: democracy as a product of the functionally differentiated society?**

Luhmann interprets social inequality as a remnant of traditional societies, in which division of labor overlapped with social ranking (Luhmann, 1997: 1055–1060). The inequalities can accordingly be reduced or even eliminated in the modern society where – similar to Durkheim's vision – different profession and occupations will be treated as equals, and thus lined up horizontally.

By the same token, horizontal or functional differentiation should eliminate ethnic and similar communal conflicts which also, like classes, originate in traditional segmental society (Luhmann, 1997, Ch.2). This conjecture is also similar to Durkheim, i.e. his evolutionary typology of society and his explanation of the sources of anomie or conflict in the older, i.e. segmental, society.

For Luhmann, furthermore, the political theory of (liberal) democracy must be transformed into sociological theory. This is because the evolution of the modern political system is concomitant with the evolution of law, and the purpose of the politics is to implement law. Yet, democratic political parties are immoral insofar as they defend their cause or their vote as the only "true", whereas others are rejected as "untrue". Thus, unlike impartiality of the universal law, politics is partisan and as such inappropriate for governing over a functionally differentiated society; otherwise, politics must structurally be "coupled" with the legal system (Luhmann, 2000: 390; cf. Thornhill, 2006). This deduction is akin both to Durkheim's corporatism and to Simmel's implications of an enlightened technocracy.

### **Class analysis or how to secure the transition from liberal to direct democracy**

Wallerstein's world system analysis modifies Marx' class analysis for the sake of its application to the global society. In Wallerstein's interpretation, class inequalities are commensurable with inequalities between rich and poor countries, and the divisions between core, periphery and semi-periphery correspond to the divisions between upper, middle and lower classes on national levels (Wallerstein, 1974). Furthermore, the upper class in a country on the periphery, according to Wallerstein's model, must be taken as the member of the core capitalistic class.

He has predicted that capitalism should collapse around the middle of 21<sup>st</sup> century, but he could not anticipate as to whether capitalism will be replaced by a more adequate economic and social system (Wallerstein, 1996)

Wallerstein's interpretation of inter-communal conflicts, particularly nationalism, is subdued to class analysis. Simply, he argues that nationalism and racism are ideologies that defend capitalism in its downward cycles, and that the upper classes are those who benefit from the conflicts. Nevertheless, he forfeits that all successful revolutions from below had a national form and that the national would be a center-stage of the future political struggles for democracy (Wallerstein et al., 1990).

As far as democracy is concerned, Wallerstein shares the central Marxist assumption that genuine or basic democracy is possible only as a follow-up of the establishment of the socialistic economy.



### **Social constructionism without civic issues**

In their seminal book *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann did not mention democracy and human rights whatsoever. In the introductory part of the book, the authors argue that such topics, including the idea of freedom, are not properly sociological:

*'Is man free? What is responsibility? Where are the limits of responsibility? How can one know these things?... /T/he sociologist is in no position to supply answers to these questions. What he can and must do, however, is to ask how it is that the notion of "freedom" has come to be taken for granted in one society and not in another, how its "reality" is maintained in the one society and how... this "reality" may once again be lost to an individual or to an entire collectivity.'* (Berger and Luckmann, 1975, 14-15).

This way, social constructionism assumes that freedoms and rights can sociologically be considered only as facts that vary with different societies or cultures. Accordingly, there is no absolute or prior meaning of rights and freedoms and similar issues. Perhaps, this approach might fit chapters in CE which tackle multicultural democracy and citizenship, i.e. where liberal assumption of rights and freedoms meet with collectivistic assumptions of democracy (as elaborated, for example, by Kymlicka, 1995). However, there was no place for the word "culture" in Berger's and Luckmann's foundational work on social constructionism. Nevertheless, social constructionists of the subsequent generations have contributed much more to the knowledge of different cultures, including how cultures were used in generating ethnic or religious boundaries and also violent conflicts (cf. Joireman, 2003). Still, their contribution to the peace research and, generally, to the skills of conflict management is not exclusively sociological, as it cannot be understood nor performed without broad interdisciplinary collaboration, primarily with cultural anthropology (cf. Galtung, 2002).

### **How rational is choice in a suboptimal democracy?**

'In an absolute democracy (where all rights are held collectively), the people may be as coercive and arbitrary as an individual despot' (Coleman, 1990: 337). This assertion represents Coleman's response to the so called *Sen's paradox*. The paradox says that liberalism cannot be acceptable or optimal for all members of a society. To be sure, Coleman is right when revoking the despotic nature of collectivism. Nevertheless, the vices of the latter do not automatically provide virtues for the former. Basically, Coleman underlines the profound difference between the two systems of allocation of resources, since the latter 'evaluates policies according to their consequences for each individual separately, whereas liberalism... judges policies ac-

ording to the liberty they permit for each individual' (Coleman, 1990: 335).

Coleman argues that democracy is a majority rule principle and cannot be otherwise, because there would be no possible democratic choice anymore, including emigration of persons to societies where they can employ their abilities at the best, which is their inalienable property. 'I/f a subordinate class eliminates property rights following a revolution, they must also effectively eliminate emigration rights. This may, however, eliminate the incentive for individuals in the next generation to acquire the personal resources that make them productive, so such a system may be foredoomed to a lower level of productivity' (Coleman, 1990: 356). So far so good. But, how to qualify developed countries' restrictive policies of immigration aimed at protecting the resources of their own citizens against immigrant contenders?

Unfortunately, in place of considering the cases of serious inter-communal conflicts whether in the US or in the world at large under auspices of the rational choice model, Coleman illustrates his assumptions on a relatively trivial example, namely a conflict over the curriculum in Pasadena schools in the US. On its hand, this example might have been used to make comparison to some other (inter)communal conflicts. Yet, he does not do such an analysis, nor does his method of producing evidence deal with corresponding social-historical contexts. Instead, most of his examples are fictive and garnished with invented characters or persons, which reminds of experimental science designs rather than sociological analysis.

Nevertheless, perhaps the production of empirical evidence is not important at all, because the assumptions cannot be conclusively tested as long as the social problems – such as inequality, participation and conflicts in the context of liberalism and democracy – are attempted to be explained, or even solved, on the level of methodological, or even political, nationalism. This means that rejecting the others under the pretext of their belonging to "another" world, and not "our" world, cannot sociologically be justified. The only adequate meaning of contemporary industrial society in sociology is global. It is a society in which all members are interdependent in their actions, and even their feelings and thoughts, and where there are no barriers for their interactions, unless created by artificial boundary-makers, whether empires, states or just by criminals.

Unlike Coleman and many other contemporary sociologists, classics – at least Comte, Marx, and Durkheim, and Simmel in some respect – have postulated methodological cosmopolitanism or the world society as a proper framework for solving social problems such as social inequalities, inter-communal conflicts, and democratic participation. Such way, the social problems traditionally seen as internal or external to





a society, and divided in such respect, now become internal or "our" common problems. Unfortunately, neither CE curricula nor textbooks in their present shape postulate the world integration of polities, economies and cultures as the ultimate solution for the fundamental social problems. They rather cherish methodological nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusions

Limited adequacy of sociological knowledge to CE is due to underdevelopment of the applicative dimension of sociological knowledge as far as the solutions of the pressing social problems are concerned. More properly, in its positivistic design sociology finds its application in empirical analysis rather than social action or interventionism. Yet, a more important reason for sociological inadequacy to contemporary CE might be epistemological. It is that a core of sociology, especially the classic one, is prone to a variety of utopianisms: conservative, communist, corporatist and liberal. In any case, sociologists rarely or never see actually existing liberal democracy, and capitalism alike, as a remedy for the social problems that it produces, i.e. social inequality and poverty, inter-communal conflicts, and limitations to democratic participation. Furthermore, a part of sociology, but again mostly the classic one, cherishes a holistic and cosmopolitan rather than particularistic and nationalistic notion of society, which surpasses the methodological scope on society, mostly limited to nation-state, in a typical CE curriculum.

Thus, the central problem in establishing a more encouraging relationship between sociology and CE is that reformist, let alone radical, ramifications of sociological analysis cannot actually be adopted in CE, for they can supposedly be labeled as "subversive" or "antidemocratic". On the other hand, CE is a primarily normative, and partly apologetic, form of education for liberal democracy. It is normative in the sense that it teaches students to behave differently than they used to. For example, how to adopt social skills in order to participate in a public dialogue (as declared in the national curriculum of CE in Finland, for example) or how to tolerate diversities (Netherlands), or how to collaborate with others (Norway) (see more details in: Katunarić, 2009). CE is also partly apologetic for it educates "young citizens" (as declared, for example, in the national curriculum in Scotland), rather than "young nonconformists", for instance, in the sense that

the former are expected both to respect and to accept actually existing institutional policies or practices in their countries, while the latter are not.

In the end, one may contend that sociology educates "young skeptics", similarly to "non-believers" when attitudes toward religion are concerned. Here, religion is substituted for the belief in democracy as a real possibility, paradoxically, in a society occupied with oligarchic patterns of social power and prestige virtually in all its spheres, from schools to companies and government. Perhaps, this is the main reason why the sociological enlightenment provides cognitive rather than moral incentives to the learning of/about democracy, and that sociology with its insistence on the basic distinction between values and facts, and between institutional norms and social practices, respectively, approaches to the normative dimension of civic education rather with vigilance.

Still, sociology may represent an abundant source of knowledge in CE, especially for unraveling the false forms of democracy in the contemporary society, and for deconstructing questionable national solutions to pressing social problems. Alternatively, as long as civic education has a tendency to idealize the actually existing forms of (liberal) democracy and thus avoiding major criticism of the social order, teaching sociology in secondary education (which has a rather long-lasting tradition – cf. DeCesare, 2005) may provide a complementary solution. In sum, sociology and civics should be concurrent rather than mutually exclusive subjects. Accordingly, CE may represent a sort of normatively oriented subject, while sociology may represent a critical and fact-oriented subject in contemporary education on society and citizenship.

3 Virtually, in all curricula in the twelve countries under research – Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Scotland, England, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, and Croatia – it has been taken for granted that the social problems are basically solvable within actually existing nation-states (cf. Katunarić, 2009). Likewise, the curricula do not see problems emerging in the Third World countries as something that concerns the domestic agenda of the First World countries.





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Lieke Meijs, Ariana Need

## Sociology, Basis for the Secondary-School Subject of Social Sciences

### Abstract

This paper reformulates the question of 'sociology, who needs it' in two ways, The first question we address is that of the reason why the educational system itself did not come to sociology for help in their long quest for a clear-cut content of the subject. The second question is why sociology did not adopt the orphaned subject of social studies back in 1960.

The answer to the first question lies in the vulnerability of a subject that is dependent for its continued existence on the political leanings of the day. This led to a new goal for the subject almost every decade: from social education in the sixties and social and political education in the seventies, to a focus on citizenship education in the nineties. Although the objective was renamed on several occasions, the prescriptive viewpoint is recognizable in each. This perspective is difficult to reconcile with a social science content.

The answer to the second questions points towards Dutch social scientists with a strong focus on academic sociology and not for critical, policy or public sociology. This choice was also made in order to win the competition with psychologists and for the discipline to get rid of the poor image it had acquired in the 1960s. The new subject social sciences, with a strong focus on science made it possible for sociology to become the pillar of this new subject.

### Contents

1. History of social studies as a secondary school subject and the role of sociology in it
2. Social sciences: new opportunities for sociology
3. Looking back on fifty years of social studies
4. Looking ahead: opportunities and threats
5. Literature

### Preface

The question this paper addresses is twofold. First, given the fact that sociology became the basis for social sciences<sup>1</sup>, a new subject in secondary education, we wonder why the educational system did not come to sociology for help in their long quest for a clear-cut content of the subject. Secondly, we wonder why sociology did not adopt the subject earlier. This article provides an answer to these questions by characterising the role of sociology in the history of social studies<sup>2</sup>, decade by decade.

### 1. History of social studies as a secondary school subject and the role of sociology in it<sup>3</sup>

In this section, based on a number of important milestones, we will describe the history of social studies as a subject taught in secondary schools in the Netherlands. We start in 1957, when the first requests were made to establish a subject like social studies. From here, we will sketch the subject's development in each of the following decades according to the objectives that prevailed during the respective periods and the role played by sociology and the sociologists – or sociological associations – at that time. As we will see, the goals pursued by social studies differ from one period to the next. Furthermore, those goals determine the role attributed to sociology in development of the subject's content, as this brief historical sketch shows.

#### 1.1 The 1960s: modest role for sociology in the subject that had 'social education' as its goal

In 1957, for the first time a plea was made in the Dutch parliament to '*establish a proper and for these times*

1 *Social sciences* (plural) (Dutch: maatschappijwetenschappen): a secondary-school (elective) examination subject, a higher level of social studies.

2 *Social studies* (Dutch: maatschappijleer): a secondary-school compulsory subject, often comprising citizenship.

3 The focus of this article – in a special issue entitled *Sociology, who needs it?* – lies on the role of sociology in the history of social studies as a subject taught in secondary schools. We want to note that this focus on sociology does not mean that this discipline was the only one to have an impact on the content of social studies. More specifically, there was a large role for political science in the development of social studies. The discussion of the role of political science is, however, beyond the scope of this article. For literature concerning the role of political science in this process we refer to, for instance, Dekker (1983), Langeveld (1966), Patrick et al. (1977) and Vis (1988).



*suitable means of citizenship education*' (Dekker 1979)<sup>4</sup>. It took until 1962 – with the implementation of the 'Mammoetwet'<sup>5</sup> – for this education to take shape, in the form of the secondary school subject of social studies. With this subject, the then minister for education, Cals<sup>6</sup>, hoped 'to impart a degree of knowledge and insight about human and group relations'<sup>7</sup>. To the question of whether the minister saw the subject as dealing with knowledge of social and cultural life or as sociology in a simple form, he responded: 'Of course the way this subject is taught will depend on the objectives of the school [...], but its essential objective should be to instil some insight into societal relations, without the pretence of becoming a kind of pocket-sized sociology'<sup>8</sup>. The further elaboration of the subject was initially left to schools and educational professionals. Teachers, subject-matter specialists, ministerial advisory commissions and various project groups tackled the job together, debating goals, content and methodology.

In this vacuum of a yet-to-materialise subject, arguments were made for sociology to make a small contribution to social studies. In the academic journal the *Sociological Guide (Sociologische Gids)*, Langeveld<sup>9</sup> (1964) made a case for active involvement of sociologists in the shaping of social studies as a school subject. But then he commented that – given the goal of the subject was to be 'social education' by which influencing attitudes was to come first – students needed more than just to learn to think in sociological terms. Social studies, according to him, ought to be a subject with contributions from social psychology, political science, economics, jurisprudence and history. Such a broad interpretation of the subject of social studies stood in the way of a strict sociological set-up. A year later, the Dutch Sociological Association published a report with recommendations on the content of social studies as a secondary school subject. This commission too warned that social studies must not be reduced to 'a theoretical introduction to sociology'<sup>10</sup>. Social studies was not to be a 'theoretical subject' in the usual sense; the em-

phasis was to lie on providing practical insight, rather than on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. The professional organization of sociologists viewed self-activation of the student as the main thing.

A side effect of the unremitting debate about the content of the subject was the never quite satisfactorily answered question which teachers would be pronounced qualified to teach it. In the end, competent teachers were deemed those qualified to teach a related discipline<sup>11</sup>.

The many topics covered in the various early textbooks reflect the lack of clarity that persisted as to the subject's content and show little evidence of any predominant contribution from sociology. In the foreword of the textbook *Life and Society*, Van Wakeren (1966) wrote that he considered the most important aspect of a social studies teaching method to be knowledge of and insight into human and group relations. In particular, he covered topics such as individuals and the ties that bind them, individuals and their group, the town, the city, and individuals in modern society. In the textbook *Social Orientation*, by Banning and Banning-Westmijer (1962), a wide range of issues were addressed in an encyclopaedic manner. Topics included aviation, the hospital, the cinema, postal services, defence, spiritual movements, home nursing services and emigration. Finally, the textbooks from this period show that social studies was used to present topics that were not covered or were insufficiently covered in other school subjects. Examples of these topics are the Delta Plan<sup>12</sup>, nuclear power and population growth<sup>13</sup>.

## 1.2 The 1970s: discord about the role of sociology in the subject that had 'societal and political education' as its goal

While in the early seventies, the discussions concerning the content of the subject continued unabatedly, there was no longer a need to struggle for its legal establishment. The subject had secured a place in Dutch secondary education.

In 1971, the Ministry for Education and Science mandated the Commission for the Modernization of the Social Studies Curriculum to formulate an educational curriculum for social studies with the goal of '*not primarily the acquisition of knowledge, but the development of social awareness and social skills*'. Textbooks for the subject were to be aimed at teaching students to perceive social reality, to judge it for themselves and to learn to act on the basis of their own findings

4 Draft report of the Dutch Upper House regarding the 1957 budget for education, culture and science.

5 The 'Mammoetwet', also known as the Secondary Education Act (1963) aimed to enable all children to obtain a diploma in general and a vocational education. It changed the nature of Dutch secondary and tertiary education. An important characteristic feature of the Dutch system after the 'Mammoetwet' is that more routes became available to a given level of education.

6 He was a member of the Catholic People's Party

7 Memorandum of Reply to the submitted draft law on the structure of secondary education, Parliamentary Documents 5350, 1960-1961, no. 8.

8 Ibidem.

9 Langeveld studied both political and social science

10 Dicmap 15-17, (1972) Maatschappijleer p. 154-158. Report of the Social Studies Advisory Commission (1965) from the Dutch Sociological Association.

11 Art. 114, Secondary Education Transition Act, DGO 1217.

12 Deltaplan concerns measures and initiatives taken by the Dutch government to protect Dutch territory against the water and to protect regions that were frequently flooded when the water levels were high. The immediate cause of these measures was the flood disaster of 1953.

13 Knoppien & Meijs (2000), p. 15.



and judgements. In other words: sociological information was to play only an introductory role towards the ultimate goal of self-activation<sup>14</sup>.

In 1971, the Dutch Sociological Association once again presented a report with recommendations for a social studies curriculum<sup>15</sup>. This report argued that social studies ought to be an introduction to society and in that sense sociology's role was limited. Nonetheless, analytical and teaching aids from sociology could certainly provide valuable support. Thinking according to social science<sup>16</sup> categories and perspectives ought to be the final phase of the learning process, not the start, according to the report.

In response to a discussion paper by the Commission for the Modernisation of the Social Studies Curriculum and the ensuing debate, dissent emerged about the role of the social science in developing the social studies curriculum<sup>17</sup>. Some felt that the substantive content of the subject as taught in secondary schools could be straightforwardly and deductively derived from the social science, while others spoke only of a supportive and limited role for the social science (see, for example, Athmer- van der Kallen & Klaassen 1979).

Moreover, the 'engineered society' became a key source of inspiration for social studies curriculum development in the seventies. Next to social education, political education was now also designated as an important goal of social studies. The subject was to instil political self-confidence in students and prepare them to take part in decision-making as up-and-coming citizens. Attitudes such as interest in political and societal dilemmas, democratic conviction, tolerance and defending one's own and others' rights were given a place of importance in the seventies. By the end of the decade, we see such attitudinal goals slowly falling out of favour. The pretension of turning the subject into "world improvement studies"<sup>18</sup> began to fade.

The dissent in the seventies about the substance of the subject is reflected in the social studies textbooks from that period<sup>19</sup>. In 1968, sociologists Bouman and Derksen published *Social Studies, Concept and Practice: A First Introduction to Sociology*, a textbook that was labelled 'sociology in pocket form'. In later textbooks<sup>20</sup> more attention was given to topics like family, mass

media, work, development issues, and war and peace. The fundamental problems as defined by the sociologists were generally not central.

### 1.3 The 1980s: no explicit role for sociology in the examination subject that aimed to impart knowledge, insight and skills

In December 1979 the Dutch Parliament passed a motion to conduct a study of the conditions under which social studies could be established as an elective examination subject (one that students could apply towards their secondary school diploma). The key reason for this was that students had shown little interest in social studies, because it was not a subject in which they could take a final examination which would count towards their diploma. Most preferred to focus on subjects that they could count among their examination subjects.

In 1983, a project group on social studies as an examination subject tabled a recommendation to start a pilot study with a final examination in social studies<sup>21</sup>. In the recommendation the goal of social studies was described as 'political and social education'. Though the objectives distinguish between knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes, the project group proposed that the examination programme be oriented towards subject-specific objectives related only to knowledge, insight and skills. Attitudinal objectives were omitted from the central examination for reasons of practicality (not testable) and principle (deemed too dependent on individual views of humanity and society). It was also noted that shaping attitudes could not be considered unique to social studies, but in fact was part of education in its entirety.

The project group's vision was detailed further by the Social Studies Final Examination Structure Commission and finalized for the pilot study. In 1990, social studies became a standard (elective) examination subject in all tracks of Dutch secondary education. That meant that every Dutch secondary school decided for itself whether social studies would be offered in the upper classes as an examination subject. The number of schools that did in fact do so was limited<sup>22</sup>. The social studies examination programme was based on six thematic areas drawn up by the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO)<sup>23</sup>: upbringing and education, home and living environment, work

14 Klaassen (1979), p. 23.

15 Dicmap p. 159-160. Report of the ad hoc Social Studies Curriculum Commission of the Dutch Sociological Association.

16 *Social science* (singular): the university studies, comprising any or all of a number of subjects, including: economics, history, political science, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

17 Kerngroep Commissie Moderniserend Leerplan Maatschappijleer (1976).

18 Amsterdam-based sociologist Abram de Swaan – who obtained his PhD in political science – cited in Van Rossum (1999), p. 8.

19 Brochure for social studies teachers, p. 40-41.

20 A. Hooymayers and H. Vannisselroy, Themaboek maatschappijleer (1979) and H. Mulder, Wegwijzer, maatschappijleer voor 16+ (1979).

21 Towards a social studies final examination: recommendations of the project group on a Final Examination in Social Studies, established by the secretary of state for education and science (1983).

22 In 2007, 27 per cent of the university-preparatory secondary schools and 31 per cent of the higher general secondary schools offered civil sciences as an elective examination subject (Tweede Fase Adviespunt, 2007).

23 Project maatschappijleer (1983), p. 27 e.v.





and leisure time, technology and society, state and society, and international relations.

An analysis of textbooks from this period for social studies as a compulsory subject<sup>24</sup> does show some influence of social scientists on the information covered. This is evident in the way information is organized or categorized and in the thought processes that questions evoke or trigger for analysis. However, the number of textbooks that work with concepts from the social science was limited.

#### **1.4 The 1990s: the content of the subject is established, limited role for sociology**

In the Dutch secondary school curriculum of the nineties, two social studies subjects appeared: one was a compulsory subject for all students and the other was an (elective) examination subject. For the latter, the content was defined in the official examination programme, but for the compulsory social studies subject, the content still had not yet been established. In 1988, the ministry commissioned the development of a core syllabus<sup>25</sup> which, though non-obligatory, made recommendations on how teachers might give substance to a 2-hour weekly programme lasting one school year – this was the magnitude of the subject. From the perspectives of three social science disciplines (sociology, political science and cultural anthropology), the choice was made to provide students with a cognitive foundation for attitudes. The syllabus consisted of three basic themes: (i) culture and cultural transfer, (ii) social structure and social differences, and (iii) political views and political decision-making. Thus, the core syllabus did not constitute an introduction to the social science, though it did use core concepts from the social science in a systematic manner<sup>26</sup>. The implementation of the core syllabus in secondary schools, however, progressed with difficulty. The freedom that social studies teachers had for years enjoyed to develop lessons at their own discretion rebounded. Teachers did take up parts of the syllabus, but few worked through it systematically. A 1993 study by the Inspectorate of Education found that in only half of Dutch secondary schools could one speak of social studies as being a fully fledged subject. This was not true for thirty per cent of the schools, and for twenty per cent it was only partially true<sup>27</sup>.

When, in the early nineties, a reform began of the upper classes of the Dutch secondary school system<sup>28</sup>, new content was defined for all school subjects, in-

cluding social studies. For social studies, the debate as to content burst out anew, if only because of the new requirement that all social studies subjects had to demonstrate more mutual coherence and that more emphasis had been placed on the teaching of skills<sup>29</sup>. The largest change for social studies brought about by implementation of the new structure (the so-called 'second phase') was the fact that social studies as a compulsory subject was now given the status of examination subject. The final grade in the subject was now to be included in the calculations determining whether a student qualified for graduation, thus bringing an end to the weak position of the subject in the overall secondary school offerings. Nonetheless, the content of the required class was still not definitively established.

An attempt followed to design a combination social studies/history subject, that would be required for all students attending an upper track Dutch secondary school, but the combination class idea was met with little enthusiasm. In 1996, social scientists signed a petition in support of the preservation of social studies as a separate subject, for fear that it would disappear permanently if the combination subject was implemented. This petition heralded in a period of active involvement of social scientists in the position of and later, also with the substance of, social studies as taught in secondary schools.

#### **1.5 The new century: separation between education and knowledge creates new opportunities for sociology**

After many years of lobbying, the Dutch Association of Social Studies Teachers (NVLM) saw its efforts rewarded: the combination social studies/history subject was taken off the table for good and social studies retained its position as a compulsory subject for all students and with a prescribed examination programme. Both internationally and nationally, the importance of 'civil society' rose to the fore, and this led to a renewed interest in citizenship<sup>30</sup>. Social studies was deemed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to be the most appropriate platform for providing the citizenship education now considered so urgently required. The objectives of the subject were to trace back the rights and duties of Dutch residents to the constitution; to learn how the Netherlands developed towards a constitutional state, parliamentary democracy, welfare state and pluralistic society; and to examine the degree to which these ideals were realized in practice<sup>31</sup>.

24 Aarts & Gerritsen (1989), p. 12 e.v.

25 Gerritsen & Klaassen (1992).

26 Klaassen (1993), p. 7.

27 Brouwer (1993), p. 14.

28 The so-called 'second phase' secondary school reform implemented an independent study centre didactic in the upper classes of Dutch secondary schools by which students were obliged to be more autonomous in dealing with the lesson materials.

29 Among others, the independent acquisition of information, the carrying out of simple research and the argumentation of a viewpoint about social issues.

30 Vis & Veldhuis (2008), p. 371-372.

31 Commissie historische en maatschappelijke vorming (2001), p.



Outside the compulsory subject of social studies, with its emphasis on citizenship education, social studies as an (elective) examination subject was renamed ‘social sciences’. In 2005, a commission led by sociologist Schnabel designed a new syllabus for this subject. The starting point was that the name ‘social sciences’ (plural) would imply that the subject sought linkages, in particular with the social science line of disciplines<sup>32</sup>. In this, sociology and political science formed the basis.

This choice meant that for the first time in the history of social studies as a secondary school subject a distinction was made between two types of social studies: one type that was geared towards citizenship education and as such had a socialization and prescriptive character. That subject retained the name ‘social studies’. The second type (social sciences) aimed to give students an impression of the fields of inquiry, methods and theories typical of social science.

This separation of social studies into two variants with different goals and substance appears to have paved the way for allowing sociology to take a leading role in filling in the content of the social sciences as taught in Dutch secondary schools. The next section will go further into this.

## 2. Social sciences: new opportunities for sociology

In designing the examination programme for the social sciences, the commission charged with this task chose the ‘concept-context approach’. This starting point was also chosen by other reform commissions in the Netherlands, for example, for the subjects physics, chemistry, biology and economics. The concept-context approach is characterized by the organization of a subject’s body of knowledge into a framework of concepts. The framework limits the subject, preventing it from becoming overloaded, while countering the content fragmentation and arbitrariness that was increasingly evident in examination subjects. The contexts create ‘bridges’ between reality and the concepts. They also provide links among the concepts themselves. The idea behind the concept-context approach is that the emphasis on core concepts and skills in a subject area provides teachers an opportunity to cover the lesson materials based on contexts that are meaningful and motivating to students.<sup>33</sup> In the social sciences examination, students must be able to apply the conceptual framework independently to new content.

The framework contains four main concepts (bonds, education, relations, change), under which both sociological and political science core concepts can be

classified. Brought together under the title ‘social sciences’, sociology and political science are classified according to the type of bonds that tie individuals to one another; the way individuals, in the framework of these bonds, alone and together acquire an identity; the social and political relations that develop between people; and the changes demonstrated in these bonds, education and relations.<sup>34</sup> Figure 1 shows these core concepts.

**Figure 1: Concepts in social sciences as derived from sociology and political science<sup>35</sup>**

Main Concepts	Sociology	Political science
	Society/community	politics/management/government
	<i>CORE CONCEPTS</i>	<i>CORE CONCEPTS</i>
Bonds	social cohesion institutions group formation culture	political institutions representation
Education	socialization/ acculturation identity	political socialization ideology
Relations	social equality / social inequality	power/authority conflict/ cooperation
Change	modernization individualization institutionalization	democratization globalization state formation

The social sciences naturally possesses an unending supply of social contexts. The commission made a selection from among these using the criterion that a chosen context must lend itself to illuminating concepts and to clarifying cross-linkages among them. The commission chose four contexts, each of which starts from one of the main concepts *bonds*, *education*, *change* and *relations*. Each context is further elaborated, starting from one of the main concepts, based on core concepts from both sociology and political science.

The context *Safety*, for example, starting from the main concept *bonds*, is elaborated in relation to social cohesion, socialization and political institutions. In addition, cross-linkages are made to other main concepts. Thus there is the cross-linkage with the main concept *relations* – when we speak of social inequality in safety –, analogous to the main concept *change*, when trends in safety are coupled with processes like modernization.

As such, in the overall examination programme containing four contexts, all four of the main concepts

140-141.

32 Commissie Maatschappijwetenschappen (2007), p. 12-13.

33 Ibidem, p. 19.

34 Ibidem, p. 22-23

35 Ibidem, p. 28.



are covered (in multiple contexts), and they are also investigated in more detail in terms of the sociological and political science core concepts that belong with the main concepts.

The new secondary school subject of social sciences, with its substance derived from core concepts from sociology and political science, thus gives students an impression early on of the areas of inquiry, theories and methods that are characteristic of sociology and political science.

### 2.1 More science, less doctrine

In order to indicate the way the new subject of social sciences is distinguished from social studies we take a brief look at one of the chosen contexts, 'Forms of Community'. This context used to be covered as a theme in social studies. In social studies, teachers discussed issues such as living together without being married, homosexuality, generation conflicts and divorce. The prescriptive and socialization nature of social studies was clearly evident in this: often the discussion of such themes provided occasion for debates among students in which the students' own opinions and experiences were central issues.

In the new situation, starting from the concept-context approach, the set-up is more scientific. Not only is it more theoretical, it is more empirical as well. In part, social sciences as taught in secondary schools covers the characteristics of the social and political map of the Netherlands in modern times and in the setting relevant to the country.<sup>36</sup> But social sciences goes one level deeper as well, offering insight into the structures and processes that form society and human interactions.

In the context 'Forms of Community' the choice was made to start from the main concept *education*. In the new syllabus, students must learn to describe the process of socialization based on the concept *education* and to recognize examples of socialization. In this case, they will learn theories about socialization, and are introduced to empirical data about, say, divorce rates, and also to hypothesise trends, such as changes in the transfer of values and standards expected as a result of the empirical data on divorce.

### 3. Looking back on fifty years of social studies

Looking back on the fifty-year history of social studies in Dutch secondary schools, two questions can be answered. The first question is that of the reason why the educational system itself did not come to sociology for help in their long quest for a clear-cut content of the subject. The second question is why sociology did not adopt the orphaned subject of social studies back in 1960.

The answer to the first question lies in the vulnerability of a subject that is dependent for its continued existence on the political leanings of the day<sup>37</sup>. This led to a new goal for the subject almost every decade: from social education in the sixties and social and political education in the seventies, to a focus on citizenship education in the nineties. Although the objective was renamed on several occasions, the prescriptive viewpoint is recognizable in each. This perspective is difficult to reconcile with a social science content.

Next to the shifting goals, even the position of social studies as a secondary school subject remained shaky up until 2007: there was no prescribed content and until 1997, the compulsory subject did not count towards the official graduation requirements. As a result, it was turned into a plaything for continually changing political desires and new educational developments, and social studies teachers chose instruction methods such as debates, role playing and guest instructors to motivate students to remain interested in a subject with a low status. The fear was that abstract introductions with high information density would be unable to gain a foothold. Statements like 'social studies is not a theoretical subject in the usual sense' and 'influencing attitudes is the main thing'<sup>38</sup> demonstrate the obstacles that existed in the field of education, even to employ sociology as a frame of reference in the further development of the subject.

The lack of clarity about the position and content of the subject also meant that for a long time there was no separate qualification for teaching the subject. Teachers qualified in a related discipline (in many cases the history teacher) were allowed to teach the subject. It wasn't until 1981 that an accreditation scheme was devised for teachers of social studies. The fact that for a long time there were few social studies teachers with a sociology background also explains why the influence of sociology was limited in the development of social studies as a secondary school subject.

The answer to the second question is provided by the sociologist Engbersen<sup>39</sup>. In the struggle for sociology to earn the label 'science', the choice was generally made in the Netherlands for academic sociology and not for critical, policy or public sociology. This choice was also made in order to win the competition with psychologists and for the discipline to get rid of the poor image it had acquired in the 1960s. With a few exceptions, sociologists have, for decades, hardly troubled themselves with the subject of social studies. The Dutch Sociological Association did, however, make repeated attempts to contribute and advise on

37 Abram de Swaan, as cited in Van Rossum (1999), p. 8.

38 Dicmap 15-17, (1972) Maatschappijleer p. 154-158. Report of the Social Studies Advisory Commission (1965) of the Dutch Sociological Association.

39 Meijs (2008), p. 11-13.

36 Ibidem, p. 15.



the way the subject of social studies could be shaped in Dutch secondary schools, but the Society too had doubts about how the science could be translated into an attractive subject for 16 to 18-year-olds. At the start of the twentieth century, it appears that the conditions were in place to give sociology a more prominent role. Next to social studies, the 'social sciences' emerged with a clear goal in terms of knowledge and understanding. In this subject there is a need for a firm framework. With the concept-context approach, the choice was made for a sociological perspective, which is applied to social themes that have been part of the subject for a longer period. With a theoretical sociological foundation, students are taught to apply this perspective in other contexts as well. Thus, sociology provides an important foundation for social sciences.

#### **4. Looking ahead: opportunities and threats**

It will certainly take until 2013-2015 before the new social sciences examination programme is implemented in the Dutch secondary school system. In past years it has become a good custom in the Netherlands to first test disciplinary innovations for a few years in

school-level pilot studies. In this way, bottlenecks can be spotted and adjustments can still be made in the examination programme or in the manner of testing.

For the social sciences programme, a key goal of the pilot period will be to look at the degree to which the concept-context approach is feasible in practical terms in the lessons and whether the students prove able in an examination situation to apply the sociological body of knowledge to other societal dilemmas. Herein lies an opportunity to investigate in greater depth this means of combining science with contexts that are recognizable to students. For sociology, a longstanding connection to the subject social sciences is in the offing. Sociologists – like political scientists – are the most likely candidates to contribute to the development of the examination programme. They are also needed to provide the necessary training for the teachers of the subject. The main threat is presented by the fact that teachers will have to be given the time and resources to educate themselves on the new content; also, they must be given the chance to integrate the new approach into their everyday teaching practices.

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Aladin El-Mafaalani

## Do Underachievers Need Sociology?

### Abstract

This paper presents a promising model for using sociological learning to support the education of young people who are socially disadvantaged or display behavioral problems. A great many of these students are trapped in patterns of negative behavior. The goal of the model is to enable these young people to think explicitly about the role they are playing and to encourage them to strike out in a new direction. To this end, Erving Goffman's sociological insights are used to stage a theatrical performance about school. This approach is informed by the microsociological tradition of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract in order to facilitate inductive learning and self-reflection. Goffman's theory of social action provides the social-theoretical background for the theatrical action, while also serving as a medium of contrast for the analysis of the individual, interaction, and institution in subsequent reflections about school. In this way, sociological theory not only serves as a theoretical foundation for the lesson, but is also explicitly its subject.

### Zusammenfassung

Der Aufsatz zeigt eine erfolgversprechende Möglichkeit auf, soziologisches Lernen als Beitrag zur Förderung sozial benachteiligter und verhaltensauffälliger Jugendlicher in der Schule zu implementieren. Die meisten dieser Schüler sind in ihren Handlungsmustern gefangen. Ziel ist es, diesen Jugendlichen die Möglichkeit zu eröffnen, bewusst über ihre Rolle nachzudenken und einen anderen Weg einzuschlagen. Hierfür werden Erkenntnisse aus Erving Goffman's Soziologie für ein schulisches Schauspiel genutzt, um ganz im Sinne der mikrosoziologischen Tradition vom Konkreten auf das Abstrakte zu schließen und damit induktives Lernen sowie Selbstreflexion zu ermöglichen. Goffman's Theorie sozialen Handelns bildet für das szenische Spiel zunächst das sozialtheoretische Hintergrundrauschen, um schließlich in der Reflexion der sozialen Situation in der Schule als Kontrastmittel für die Analyse von Person, Interaktion und Institution zu dienen. Die soziologische Theorie dient hierbei also nicht nur zur theoretischen Fundierung des Unterrichts, sondern wird auch explizit zum Unterrichtsgegenstand.

### Contents

1. Introduction
2. Underachievement and behavioral problems
3. Goffman in brief
4. Planning, implementation, and analysis of student-organized instruction
5. Experiences and goals
6. Opportunities and risks

### Keywords

Promoting underachievers, staging an ordinary school day, reflection and deconstruction, teaching Sociology, sociological learning, theatrical performance, Erving Goffman

### 1. Introduction

Over the course of our lives, we obtain implicit knowledge about how we are supposed to behave in social situations and which social norms make life possible as we know it. In principle, this socialization process provides every individual with the knowledge required to "find his or her way" in society. This trivial observation is not so obvious at first glance, however: most individuals would freely admit that they lack the medical knowledge to treat themselves when ill; that they do not possess the architectural skill to build their own home; that they do not have the legal knowledge to represent themselves in court – even in

the area of psychology one is more likely to turn to an outside professional than to the field of sociology.

But what happens when the socialization process is dysfunctional? What should one do when young people are not up to the task of adhering to complex social norms and instead demonstrate antisocial behavior? What if obvious aspects of social interaction are no longer obvious? Precisely those young people who demonstrate behavioral problems are the ones most likely to be educationally deprived. The assumption that there is an "elevator effect" (cf. Beck 1992), by which a "rising tide lifts all boats" in schools, does not apply by any means to all young people. The socially disadvantaged are stuck where they were before, and the distance between them and other young people continues to get larger (cf. Solga 2005). Growing social disparities are both a product of particular socialization circumstances in families and of educational decisions (cf. Boudon 1974). Every effort to provide compensatory support to disadvantaged students in schools must involve teaching methods that integrate social pedagogical elements. This paper represents an attempt to sketch out a model for such an effort.



## 2. Underachievement and Behavioral Problems

The German educational system<sup>1</sup> has been an object of criticism for some time. According to official statistics, 20% of students display insufficient mastery of basic skills, 22% of students only obtain the lowest-level degree (*Hauptschulabschluss*), and another 10% depart without any degree whatsoever (cf. Allmendinger/Helbig 2008). While the extensive media discussion of international comparative studies has made the public well aware of such deficits in Germany's educational system, there is little awareness for the fact that the responsibility for educating underachievers – a risk group composed predominantly of young men – falls for the most part to vocational training schools (*Berufsskollegs*). For a long time, even the field of vocational pedagogy largely ignored such disadvantaged youths (cf. Bojanowski 2006).

Nationwide there were approximately 400,000 youths in 2004 waiting for a training contract and a seat at a vocational training school – youths with no chance of obtaining a job or traineeship in the labor market.<sup>2</sup> By 2006, this number had increased to 500,000, despite the overall strength of the economy (cf. Schelten 2006 & 2009). At such vocational schools, courses are offered with the aim of enabling that ever greater number of students to attain professional qualifications. In their mission to educate disadvantaged students, vocational schools only have a good chance of success if the mechanisms that have previously impaired a student's academic performance can be identified and diminished as much as possible. In particular, the "support theory" often used to promote the selection and homogenization of learning groups has shown little effectiveness. Early selection systems<sup>3</sup> have a particularly negative effect on

children and young people with immigrant or educationally deprived backgrounds. In a large number of studies it has been shown that the social habitus of the student is a significant factor in the outcome of performance evaluations. Not only cognitive ability, but also good manners, positive social behavior, the ability to express oneself, and discipline are "factored in" when grades are awarded (cf. Ditton 2008). In this way, processes can be identified that may occur without any willful intent, but which might well be categorized as institutional discrimination (cf. Gomolla/Radtke 2002).

Based on these circumstances, the typical composition of a remedial class for underachievers is perhaps not surprising. In Germany, two groups of underachievers are "Young persons without apprenticeship" (*Jugendliche ohne Ausbildungsverhältnis*) and those in the "Vocational preparation year" (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*).<sup>4</sup> These groups are composed in large part (up to three quarters) of students with immigrant backgrounds. Their families are mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, Eurasia and North Africa. Most of them were born in Germany and have German citizenship. The students are between 16 and 24 years old and come mostly from *Hauptschulen*, *Realschulen*, or *Gesamtschulen* – in rare instances have they previously spent time at a *Gymnasium* or a special needs school (*Förderschule*). They rarely have a qualifying diploma of any kind, typically not even a secondary general school certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*). About a third of the students have previously had to repeat at least one year of school. Their experience with teaching staff is quite variable, as is their general attitude toward school. Familial living circumstances are also heterogeneous. While a few students are themselves mothers of young children who have had to interrupt their schooling because of pregnancy, most of them are living with their parents, not infrequently with a single parent. Many families are affected by long-term unemployment. The monthly income available to students is somewhere between 30 and 250 euros (principally from pocket money and side jobs).

To support students it is important to take into account their motive for attending school. Motivations

- 1 In Germany's multi-tiered educational system, *Gymnasium* is the best class of secondary school, followed by *Realschulen* and *Hauptschulen*. *Gesamtschulen*, by contrast, are composed of students with mixed academic ability. *Sonderschulen* (or rather: *Förderschulen*) are special needs schools.
- 2 Training carried out at two different places of learning (dual system), i.e. at the workplace in companies and through part-time attendance of a vocational school (*Berufsschule*). Young people who leave school but are not ready for an apprenticeship regularly go on to attend *Berufsschule*, i.e. in the "Vocational preparation year" (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*) with full-time instruction. For an overview of the German educational system in English, please see KMK 2009.
- 3 In the German educational system, students are sorted based on performance at nearly all age levels. From the start of school at the age of 6, students can be held back to repeat a grade. Students begin to receive formal grades at the age of 7 or 8, depending on the region, and with few exceptions are redirected to one of up to five different types of schools in the fifth grade, in which qualitatively different educational goals are set. Approximately 90% of students remain at the type of school selected for them at the end of elementary school, despite the fact that students can formally apply to change schools. In the few ca-

ses in which students move between levels, students usually drop down to a worse school, i.e. from the *Gymnasium* (the school for the "best" students) to the *Realschule* (the school for mid-level performers), or from the *Realschule* to the *Hauptschule* (another notch down) or *Sonderschule* (a "special school" for students with learning disabilities). When the discussion turns to the issue of inter-school mobility in Germany, it should be emphasized that, according to official statistics, mobility normally means a "step downward" for students (cf. Bellenberg et al. 2004).

- 4 The following passages describe the students and classroom setting where this concept was implemented. The descriptions correspond to large extent with the scientific literature (cf. Schelten/Folgmann 2007).



range from a desire to receive government aid money to a dedicated commitment to reach a specific professional goal. Accordingly, there is a great deal of divergence between the students with regard to work attitudes and social behavior, as well as in their readiness to learn. In general, one can distinguish three broad groups of students. The individuals in the *first group* have adopted a position of protest against school and authority, and convey the impression at first glance that their primary goal is to voice their attitude of resistance as consistently as possible – by means of aggression and disrespect (the “trouble-makers”). The resistance of these youths indicates that they do not view success in school as a realistic option for escaping their current situation. This attitude of protest displays recognizable parallels to the “counter-school culture” of working-class students, as Paul Willis described it in the 1970s (cf. Willis 1977).

The *second group* has withdrawn and become trapped in a passive role. Passive behavior in particular is often not recognized by the teaching staff as problematic. A large proportion of these students can be assumed to also have a negative self-image (the “withdrawn ones”). The *third group* consists of students whose life circumstances have not permitted them to successfully complete their general school education (for example, because of pregnancy, death in the family or severe illness). These students are especially difficult to describe in a unified way (the “others”). A striking fact is that additional subgroups are also normally formed at early stage based on sex and ethnic identity. These subgroups regularly transcend the borders of the three types described above.

In general, it is important to note that these three categories of students are not only characterized by cultural heterogeneity, but are also highly diverse in terms age, maturity, competencies, experiences, preconceptions, motivation and social life circumstances. Unfortunately, a checkered educational history and problematic behavior are the sole characteristics that unite nearly all of the students – even if a more precise assessment would in fact reveal many subtle differences.

These circumstances pose a number of special challenges for the design of the classroom lesson. Accordingly, every form of remedial education must keep the following in mind:

- Neither the pedagogic nor the disciplinary function of school grading has the desired effect upon problem students. This fact, together with the students’ unruly behavior, leads to great reluctance on the part of many teachers to work in remedial school settings. One should stay away from selection mechanisms, especially at the beginning, to whatever degree possible.
- Teachers and students must get to know one another quickly; the teacher must foster good learning

conditions for the students and personal conversations must take place. Experiences, particularly having to do with school, need to be spoken about and reflected upon. At the same time, attempts must be made to integrate the three groups of students described above.

- The raised (pedagogical) index finger needs to be avoided. A routine needs to be developed collaboratively with the students that is acceptable to the institution and at the same time enables these students to become participants. In this way, synergy effects can be set in motion, under which rules no longer seem like something external, but rather appreciated as bridges between the institution and the individual.

The goal is to facilitate the preconditions necessary for learning. In particular, the third point suggests – as *one* possible strategy – that one has to first step back significantly from the current practices of the school institution so that something truly “new” can be invented and internalized. To this end, theatrical *dramatization* as a collaborative act will be presented as a potentially helpful method. First, however, we will turn to Goffman’s theoretical perspectives as a point of departure for pedagogical considerations.

### 3. Goffman in brief

*“Not men and their moments, but moments and their men.” – Erving Goffman (1967, 3)*

The American sociologist Erving Goffman (1911-1982) did not view individual consciousness as the central point of reference in his microsociological analysis, but rather the collective public practice of interaction. His concept of the “frame” makes this focus clear. The term refers to meaningfully “framed” social practices that are anchored in a collective inventory of knowledge and which enable the mastery of day-to-day activities. A frame is thus a set of rules through which situations are signaled and performed by social actors. The actor’s frame knowledge enables the identification of a situation and allows the actor to react appropriately. An otherwise meaningless process only becomes meaningful within the context of a frame (cf. Goffman 1974). In this way, daily rituals and scenarios come into being, which Goffman elucidates by means of analogies to theatrical performances.

In terms of the school, it is clear that teachers and students must act together to make the rules of the institution their own. This is always a daily compromise between the personal life histories and character traits of the actors and the school as an institution. It is not possible, however, for every actor to bring his or her own interpretation of the rules into synchrony with the prevailing regulations of the institution (cf. Zinnecker 2001, p. 251). For this reason, actors develop alternative sets of rules (for example, cheating), while continuing to maintain that they are following the



rules. Such strategies for the circumvention of official rules are not typically authored by a single individual, but rather collectively. In Goffman's terminology, we can speak here of *secondary adjustment*. Secondary adjustment offers actors the possibility of distancing themselves from prescribed institutional roles (cf. Goffman 1961). This is to be distinguished from *primary adjustment*, whereby actors support the institutional process and follow the role expectations placed on them.

Goffman draws an additional distinction between *front* and *back stages*. On the front stage, official rules are the center of the focus. On the back stage, by contrast, alternate, unofficial rules are valid (cf. Goffman 1959). The classroom is the point of intersection between students and teachers and constitutes the front stage of the school. Here the students critically observe the actions of the teacher. Conversely, the teacher evaluates the behavior of the students. As soon as students and teachers retreat to separate domains, they act on the back stage. For the students, the back stages at school are the activities between classes, on the playground, or in the school bathrooms. Exchanges between teachers in the faculty room, by contrast, constitute the back stage for teachers. While teachers give priority to the interactions that take place on the front stage, the students themselves place considerable weight on back-stage events. Now, it can be observed that the role of the teacher is to protect the front stage of classroom learning from incursions originating on the back stage. Students have an interest in expanding their back stage activities into the classroom. One must come to grips with this conflict.

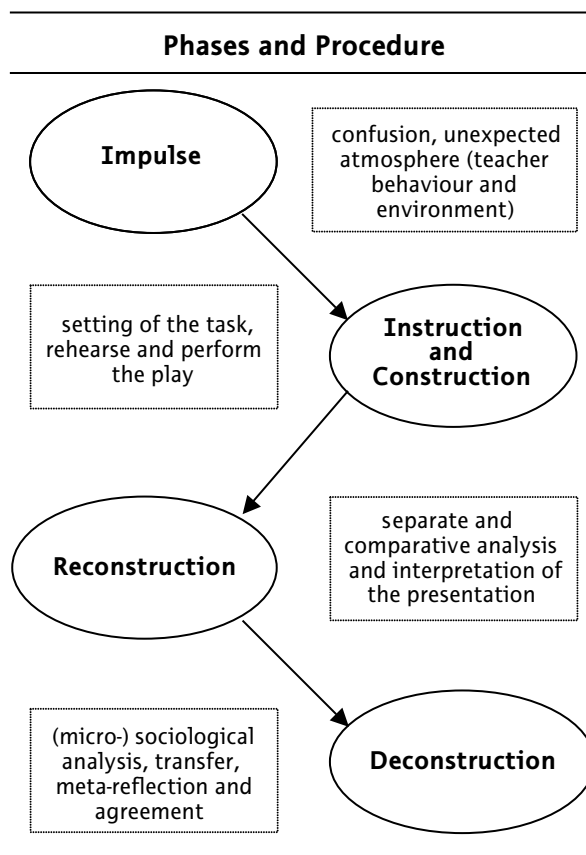
In his theory, Goffman ascribes dominant significance to the social situation. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship in the context of the school. In the following section, a proposed classroom lesson is delineated. With reference to Goffman's theories, students are encouraged to analyze the social space of the classroom based on a self-produced portrayal of classroom life.

#### 4. Planning, implementation, and analysis of student-organized instruction

An extremely open teaching-learning design is necessary for the planning and implementation of a performance produced by students. The duration of such a project depends on the learning group and can vary significantly; certainly six to eight hours should be anticipated. It might be best to reserve the first two days of school exclusively for this project. A theatrical performance of this nature helps to integrate the experiences and behavior of students. It facilitates an active and creative engagement with strongly interactive elements, in turn encouraging the development of self-agency, social skills, and methodological competencies (cf. Scholz 2007). The project is divided into four phases (see figure 1). The last phase is devoted to

an explicit analysis of the performance based on Goffman's sociological theories.

Figure 1: Chronological plan for the project



##### First Phase: „Impulse“

The students will be initially confused when they realize they will receive no formal instruction during their first day of school. The institutional “frame” of the classroom, so often explicitly rejected by “troublemakers,” is implicitly experienced as a point of reference for social behavior – including social behavior that presents a disturbance to the lesson. This unexpected situation will also encourage the “withdrawn ones” to depart from their usual passivity. The significance of the frame provided by a formalized lesson can be most precisely visualized at that moment when it is absent. Yet how can students be best encouraged to transcend their normal roles? A number of techniques can be imagined. For example, the teacher might not be dressed as expected. He could speak in an unexpected way to the students, and the appearance of the classroom itself could also challenge expectations. Teacher and students would thereby acquire the same status. This atypical approach could be expected to lead to atypical behavior on the part of the students – a desirable outcome in the context of this project. Ultimately, in such a new situation, students will be insecure and attentive. The goal is to then draw their attention to the task at hand.





### *Second Phase: „Instruction & Construction“*

In the second phase, students should be given the task of developing a situational context and determining how each individual is supposed to behave. In a sense their job is to write a script for the school. They must bring to life the roles of teacher and student. Once scripts have been developed, the next step is to perform them. The following guidelines for the performance should be used:

- Two groups should be chosen.
- Group A is instructed to model an interesting, unusually good and useful program of instruction from the perspective of the students.
- Group B is instructed to perform a boring hour of instruction that is of no use to the students.
- The subject of instruction in the mock lesson should be freely selected by the students (alternatively, several topics can be offered, from which the students select one);
- Instruction must take place in the school building.
- The theater performance is to be videotaped (2-3 students take responsibility for the videotaping).

The students should be given sufficient time to construct the lesson, and then to ask questions. If two days are devoted to this project, it makes sense to schedule the performances for the second day.

### *Third Phase: „Reconstruction“*

Group A might decide on a lesson consisting of short musical interludes, or a class with an entirely different seating plan. Group B, for its part, will be likely to adopt a conservative or even authoritarian teaching style in its presentation. During both performances, anyone who is not directly involved should quietly observe. In order to allow the “actors” to view their own performances, the entire event should be recorded on videotape. This will also help to boost the motivation of the students. Once both performances have been staged, the analysis of what has transpired can begin. Both of the video recordings should be played back for the students. The students should first analyze each performance individually. Questions can be raised and explored regarding the reasons for this particular type of lesson. Afterwards, an in-depth comparative analysis should follow to examine the differences between the two lesson styles as well as their similarities.

Particular stress should be placed upon the comparative analysis of the two performances. It is especially important that their resemblances be noted. The students will essentially conduct their first analysis of the “classroom” frame, yet without reference to Goffman’s terminology. These analyses will serve to demonstrate that nearly every student shares a com-

mon contextual understanding.<sup>5</sup> They will reveal that the two lesson performances are marked by large thematic and didactic differences, but that both lessons also demonstrate fundamental similarities. Ultimately, the teacher and the students will be in a position to confirm the following:

- Details can make a big difference. The students will recognize that a great deal depends upon the organization of the lesson, and thus upon the social situation.
- Everyone will understand what optimal student behavior should look like in *both* scenarios.
- Everyone is in the same boat. The teacher has a leadership position, but without the participation of the students, nothing will function.
- Last but not least, the students will come to recognize that good instruction places great responsibilities upon all participants.

Only after these insights have been achieved will it be possible to engage in a discussion of the students’ previous experiences with school. The students should be given the opportunity to speak openly about their personal experiences and to search for possible explanations as to why they frequently had not behaved in the ideal ways that they themselves demonstrated in their performances. Experience has shown that this discussion will encourage students to present personal difficulties as well as past experiences with teachers. In this open conversation, students should be encouraged to speak about past behavior that involved a lack of respect, deceitfulness, or violence, etc. Using this technique, it is possible to purge the past of its highly charged emotions and take a first step toward a potential new beginning. This discussion also lays a foundation for the subsequent analysis of the front and back stages as well as primary and secondary adjustment.

### *Fourth Phase: „Deconstruction“*

In the final phase of the project, a short text that presents Goffman’s interactional theory in an easily understood format should be presented in order to elevate the lesson to an abstract level. It would be expedient to begin with a discussion of the text, and to draw a diagram of the classroom situation on the blackboard. Figure 2 presents an example diagram for this purpose. After presenting the diagram, a discussion with the students can begin concerning the problems that stem from the obligation to behave appropriately in certain situations. A central goal of this discussion

5 It always must be assumed that students who engage in deviant behavior understand how authority operates and what one has to do to succeed in school, and, for this very reason, demonstrate their opposition (cf. Willis 1977). Heinz Bude comes to a similar conclusion when he describes the exasperation of teachers over “youths who are sick of learning” (cf. Bude 2008).



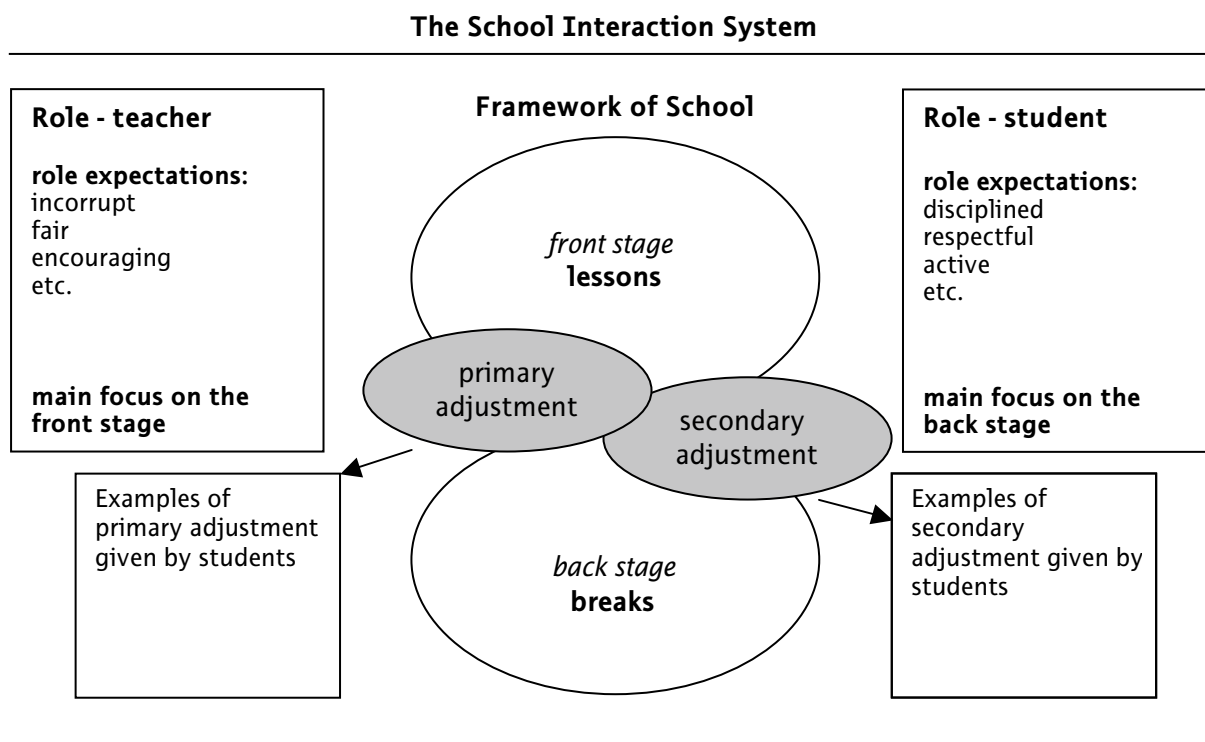
should be to communicate the insight that unofficial, implicit rules play an important role in understanding a situation. The fact that every person feels overwhelmed in certain situations can be brought into the conversation using examples presented by the teacher. Collective strategies can then be explored for coping with challenging situations both inside and outside of school. Putatively gender-specific and/or culture-specific behaviors can also be introduced into discussion at this point. Moreover, the groups of students labeled earlier as the “trouble-makers,” “withdrawn ones,” and “others” can be depicted and analyzed. In the course of deconstructing the stage performance, one should seek to actively use certain key concepts (e.g. role, situation, adaptation/adjustment, frame, rules, etc.).

come trapped. At the very least, if the students decide they want to make a change for the better, they will know that they can count on help in doing so.

### 5. Experience and goals

This project will help students who are disadvantaged or who exhibit behavioral problems to learn fundamentals of social interaction that are otherwise obvious to most persons their age. The realization that the roles of student and teacher are institutionally scripted while remaining open to individual construction will contribute to the establishment of a school atmosphere that facilitates learning. The classroom’s resemblance to the theater highlights the appropriateness of Goffman’s work as a theoretical foundation for the design of the lesson. The students are encouraged to reflect upon the class as a two-part stage, with instruction on the front stage, and the recess between classes on the back stage. The sociological founda-

**Figure 2: Goffman’s model applied to the school**



At the end of this classroom exercise, a meta-reflection should take place, during which the meaning of concepts such as rules, decorum, and respect are explored. Finally, the students themselves should be asked to present a handful of rules to be followed by both the students and teacher. It should be emphasized here that the project is not aimed at conditioning students for better school behavior – the students themselves should be aware of this fact. Rules can and will be broken in the future. The hope is that students will become more aware of their impact upon other people, and learn that it is possible for every person to break free of the roles in which they may have be-

tions of the project not only provide the point of departure for the lesson; they are also explicitly articulated, abstracted, and transferred into other contexts. The students are empowered to question why certain circumstances must be the way they are. They will come to recognize that people do not only engage in “social performances” on YouTube or MySpace, but everywhere and always. Most students already know this implicitly, but explicit self-analysis will facilitate deeper reflection on social roles.

Experience shows that this project is especially well suited for the beginning of a new class. With a change of emphasis, this concept can also be implemented

with more advanced students or teachers (cf. Atkinson et al. 2009; Preves/Stephenson 2009).

The described method was carried out for the first time in 2008 (no video recording was made, however). The innovative and challenging lesson format helped students to feel they are being taken seriously, and typically motivates them to be engaged. In addition, the project encouraged the students to reflect on themselves and their actions, to work and participate in discussions more cooperatively, and to bring their emotions and experiences to bear in the classroom setting. They themselves acted out the counter-culture of the "classroom trouble-maker". Fascinating and unexpected conversational situations arose that caused the students to laugh with and about each other. The "withdrawn ones" also profited from this exercise, in part because the self-assured and offensive behavior of the "trouble-makers" – which tends to intimidate quieter students – was deconstructed. At the same time, the current job market was discussed with a great deal of seriousness and concern. It was possible to set individual goals for each student, goals which the students subsequently pursued and reached over the course of the school year with a remarkable degree of consistency. After completing their education at the school, most of the students went on to perform a vocational traineeship or to another school in order to continue their education. It must be noted that it was not possible to reach all students with this method, however. Individual life circumstances, poor attendance, and a comparatively high dropout rate among these types of students will always remain potential hurdles preventing one from adjudging such methods as an unmitigated success.

## 6. Opportunities and risks

This way of beginning the new school year facilitates productive and mutually respectful learning. It also inspires the rapid formation of a unified class spirit.

The special strength of this project is the opportunity, within the first week of school, to get to know the students and to highlight and apply their experiences and their abilities in diverse areas. By enabling self-reflection on demanding issues, the project also allows future class lessons to proceed in an action-oriented way. At the same time, students receive help in identifying and formulating their needs and difficulties. A meta-situation is created from the outset in which "I and the others" and "The others and I" as well as "We and the situation" are transformed into consensually specified goals and rules. These rules prove far more stable than a standard roster of prohibitions (such as those posted on a bulletin board). Last but not least, reflections about school, education, and institutional

responsibilities and expectations are important aspects of civic education.

The project is about both implicit and explicit sociological learning. This linkage is guaranteed through the integration of a social pedagogical process with didactic and substantive elements. In the project, Goffman's sociology constitutes both the subject of study and a reflective foundation for a practice-oriented lesson. For the remainder of the school year, open methods of teaching will reap the benefits of the foundation established in this project in terms of student behavior, class atmosphere, and the basic attitude of students toward school. Instruction in the fields of politics, English, German and religion can be built thematically upon this foundation (for example, concerning topics such as "Violence in schools," "How to have a successful job interview," and "Prejudice/xenophobia"). Goffman's situational analysis also provides a fruitful starting point for students to develop an ability to interpret texts.

The advantages of the described project already suggest some of the risks associated with it. It places great demands on the teacher. On the one hand, the teacher must possess the abilities and readiness necessary for a project of open instruction that incorporates sociological elements. On the other hand, the teacher must possess and demonstrate a special attitude toward the students. The students must know without question that they are taken seriously and that a new "personal beginning" or "transformation" is possible and will be supported. This also means that the teacher must be willing to critically reexamine whether behaviors that they might define as "deviant" or "unwanted" actually deserve such a classification. Thus, the teacher cannot avoid including him/herself in the analysis of instruction, nor avoid reflecting on his/her own behavior in order to learn from it (cf. Eschelmüller 2007). The remaining class lessons must be aligned with this learning group. Thus, the ideal teacher personality would be characterized by openness, flexibility, and spontaneity, and would place the potentials offered by heterogeneity/diversity at the forefront rather than its shortcomings and difficulties (cf. El-Mafaalani 2009).

In closing, it is important to acknowledge a fundamental limitation of this project. Deviant or disruptive behavior is often based upon problems of socialization. To the extent this applies to a group of students, the described lesson offers great promise. However, behavioral disturbances may also be the product of complex life circumstances, severe physical or psychological suffering. When this is the case, one quickly reaches obstacles that cannot be overcome in the context of the school setting.

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Georgi Dimitrov, Elena Stoykova

## Why Sociology Has a Marginal Position in Civic Education in Bulgaria Nationally Specific and/or Universal Trends

*"A mood of crisis has pervaded the field of sociology over the past decade. It might be and indeed often has been argued that crisis is endemic to a field that has always lacked both a clearly bounded subject matter and a dominant theoretical and methodological focus. The present crisis, however, is institutional rather than intellectual, even if it is granted that a perennial state of intellectual crisis increases sociology's vulnerability to internal division and external threat."*  
(Dennis Wrong 1993, 183)

### Abstract

The authors claim that, to an extent, the marginalization is a by-product of relationship among sociology, citizenship education and school education in general. This relationship is pretty complex and problematic because each of the three constituents undergoes a phase of fundamental crisis of axiological and institutional character. The developments in American sociology that exemplifies the state of affairs in the field are taken as point of departure while the Bulgarian case is used just as a magnifying glass to see clearer the triple crises which bring us to the roots of the civilizational transformation experienced today.

The moral of the story is that sociology has been marginalized in last decades because its public and academic status won by the previous generation can not be taken for granted. It does not correspond to the pressing demands of the changing world for a different type of sociology. Thus sociology falls easy prey to the academic competitors who follow aggressive strategy and policy of public expansion even in civil education. The particular situation in other countries may be different but these are common general rules of construing sociology. At the end the paper offers some guidelines for transformation of the pattern in which contemporary sociology should be practiced in order to raise its public and civic relevance through refocusing it on sophisticated mediation of public policy and actions of citizens and through new forms of cultural communication.

### Keywords

crisis in sociology; crisis in school education; American sociology; Bulgarian sociology; fights over civic education

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### 1. Description of the task and work

Theoretically speaking, it seems normal for sociology to have a tangible presence in civic education (CE) as it seems normal CE to figure prominently in the school curriculum. Starting from such a premise it would be really surprising that in a comparatively democratic society, as the Bulgarian one is, CE has been officialized but is intangible. And the sociological input in it is void. How come? Is this a local misfortune or just a local manifestation of a larger societal process?

When we speak about the role of sociology in CE in school, we are inclined to consider each one of the three components, 'sociology', 'civic education', and 'the school', as taken for granted. It is as if we have before us a school that is successfully attaining its other educational objectives, so that we may safely entrust it with our hopes for effective CE as well, whereby to consolidate the potential of civil society in the country in question. We view sociology as capable of promoting CE, being a social science that, in itself, is a well functioning cognitive and educational tool. It seems equally natural that CE already exists, and the only task is to further perfect it. But as early as the 1960s Peter Berger, in his book *Invitation to Sociology*, instructed us in the first rule of sociology: things are not as they seem. And this holds true for each of the three above-mentioned components of the problem we want to understand – contemporary sociology, school and CE. The Bulgarian case will be used only as magnifying glass to see the problem clearer. Of course,





there could be no direct correspondence between any particular national case and the global trends of development. Yet without this dual point of reference the national situation may seem over eccentric or dismal on the one hand and, on the other – the notion of variability of the relationship among school, sociological and CE developments may seem too abstract and unreasonably problematic. Equipped by such a double vision the researcher could be spared both illusions and gross theoretical generalizations.

## 2. Sociology – general and country specific problems<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1. The general trend of crisis in sociology

Contemporary sociology undergoes a phase of profound crisis. If one goes back to the pages of “Footnotes”<sup>2</sup> from the early 1990s he will find abundant evidence of a sharpened crisis consciousness among sociologists of different ranks. The same would be the impression from the pages of American Sociologist, Social Forces, and Sociological Forum of the same period.<sup>3</sup> A brief enumeration of some telling titles of influential books would suffice:

- Turner and Turner had depicted sociology as *The Impossible Science* (Turner, Turner 1990).
- P. Berger issued his *Disinvitation to sociology* (Berger 1992).
- Horowitz composed his *Decomposition of Sociology* (Horowitz 1994).
- St. Cole solicited the debate on *What is Wrong with Sociology* in Sociological Forum, later to appear in a much extended volume under the same title (Cole 2001).
- Despite of the fact that Charles Lemert eagerly published *Sociology after the Crisis* as early as 1995 (Lemert 1995; 1996) in 1999 Lopreato and Crippen issued their vision of *Crisis in Sociology* (Lopreato, Crippen 1999).

The crisis concerns are to be found in the representative and influential collections edited by H. Gans (Gans 1990), Halliday and Janowitz (Halliday, Janowitz 1992)<sup>4</sup>, and Erikson (Erikson 1997).

Sociology in all those cases meant American sociology, of course, but important counterparts are to be found in Europe (Bryant, Becker 1990; Nedelmann, Sztompka 1993; Boudon 1981), too. A decade later, the very same crisis is, obviously, not over yet (Berger 2002) – and here we have a topic to think about. If we trust the testimony of A. Abbott, there are no more sociology sections in the big bookstores in USA and the editors of some major publishing houses most confidentially advise their authors to refrain from having the term “sociology” in the titles of new books.<sup>5</sup> It would be fair to say that the sociology crisis consists in:

- the lack of any conceptual core in addition to the “hollow frontier” (Homans) that engenders the inability for cumulative growth;
  - the lack of disciplinary distinctiveness and gradual osmosis with neighboring research fields;
  - the lack of public appeal and hindered reproduction.
- All these tendencies are real and their ensemble threatens the very prospect of the existence of sociology. It is easily recognizable that the second and the third factors – the dispersal of sociology and the loss of public attention – basically derive from a common root, that is, the inability of sociology to resemble the pattern of development typical for the so called “true/hard science.” And since it is justifiably assumed that sociology would never be a “normal science” (Boudon 1988), it seems quite logical that sociology is as if on the verge of disappearing. Should we all join Vera Sparschuh in her self-esteem as “belonging to a dying species” (Sparschuh 2006)? Of course, not for having our background in the former DDR, but for the sheer fact of being sociologists...

### 2.2. Explanatory pattern

We will not tackle all those interpretations that are circular in character – for example, a statement that sociology cannot develop because it cannot attract talented young people any more because it is seen as unattractive just on the ground that there are no more brilliant new works; or – sociology doesn’t

1 An earlier version of this part of the article has been made public by G. Dimitrov in his *The Crisis of Sociology at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Perspectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A Plea for a Mediating Sociology*. Public lecture at “Sozialwissenschaften neu denken. Sozialwissenschaften Fur das 21. Jahrhundert. Denkwerkstatt der Fakultat Fur Sozialwissenschaften an der Universitat Wien, Juni, 2005, Wien.

2 *Footnotes* is the official monthly periodical of the American Sociological Association.

3 Beyond any doubt, the American sociology has the most (if not the best) developed national sociological tradition in the world and that is why it is important for us to focus on it.

4 “It is time for a fresh look at the sociological enterprise. Although sociology appears to be comfortably ensconced in academic life, enjoying robust professional associations and an attentive public, the discipline faces troubling develop-

ments. Various essays in this book propose that the quality of sociology’s graduate student recruits has dropped radically since the late 60’s, that sociology lags well behind history, anthropology, and economics in its appeal to outstanding future scholars, and that the intellectual integrity of sociology is threatened by external financial and managerial pressures. Subspecialists in the discipline have become vulnerable to raids or even annexation by adjacent disciplines. Contributors also assert that the organization of sociology within university faces powerful centrifugal and sometimes disintegrative forces. They suggest that the substantive core of the discipline may have dissolved. The public voice has grown dimmer; its prestige in governmental circles has sunk. Whether these developments constitute a crisis is a matter of definition. At the very least, they warrant careful examination.” (Halliday 1992, 3).

5 Personal conversation with A. Abbott in 2003.



grow steadily because there is no sufficient funding and the latter has shrunk because sociology could not demonstrate substantial progress. A number of authors note the interconnection between different factors: the lack of a conceptual core leads to a lack of identity, which results in waste of research resources and impossibility of the emergence of a professional community and, therefore, impossibility of coherent socialization, which in turn leads to mutual discrediting and lower quality of work and, consequently, lower public investments and loss of public interest, because of which the quality of the new generations of sociologists is inferior and that only aggravates the crisis of sociological development, at the conceptual and methodological level including (Turner, Turner 1990; Baker, Rau 1990; Erikson 1997; Cole 2001). Thus the theoretical and methodological problems prove to be interconnected with the institutional, human and subject-related ones in a dialectic unity of contradictions and problems, which simply have no solution.

All this is unquestionably true. This bleak picture is so systematic and depressing that it seems to leave little room for any other question about the plight of sociology. The big problem here is that such explanations suffer from a common shortcoming – namely, the assumption that sociology is “self-evident”; that it is a sort of a-historical ideal from which current sociological practices (only) have deviated and to which “true sociology” must return.

If we are allowed to paraphrase a famous title, we shall note that sociology isn't an “impossible science” in itself; it *has become impossible today* because of the hundred-year-long history of its being professed as a promise. In order to understand the essence of the prolonged crisis we should turn to P. Berger's methodological imperative that we should look at sociology in a broader social perspective<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.3. Science as culture and the crisis of scientific culture. Tri-unity of Sociology and Its Understanding in a Broader Cultural Context

Through the perspective of the contemporary science studies and sociology of science it is clearly seen that science as such (and sociology in particular) is a specific cultural sub-system, which is a component of the large societal cultural system (Wolff 1946; Odum 1951; Friedrichs 1970; Coser 1978; Szacki 1982; Wrong 1990; Bershady 1991; Abbott 1999) and, hence, the structural parameters of the contemporary social life would not let sociology be the one it used to be in the past. The contemporary sociology crisis is much more profound and prolonged because it is much more fun-

damental. It concerns the very constitutive sources of the sociological endeavours and not only its theoretical form of being or public image.

In several versions of his statement N. Smelser (Smelser 1992, 1997) asserts that sociology is tri-fold by its very nature – it is simultaneously and intrinsically a science, an art and part of the humanities<sup>7</sup>. Yet, the thus understood inevitable tri-unity of sociology [so to say, “by nature”] can be sustained without problems only in an undeveloped form – in the popular sermonizing sociology of Auguste Comte, Lester Ward, Albion Small or Franklin Giddings, Robert Park or Robert Lind, or even Charles Wright-Mills (Small 1916, 1924; Ward 1920/1883; Becker 1971; Matthews 1977; Ross 1991). In sum, what seems “true sociology” has been in fact the “innocent sociology” from the age of the Great promise. The growing sophistication of sociology as a result of the acquisition of professional experience inevitably means concentration on each of the three components, which exposes their categorical incommensurability and incompatibility. The problem is not only that at present the three poles of the sociological essence cannot be upheld simultaneously because of their specific detailed articulation as modern specialized practices. The problem is that in their own development each one of the three goes through its own contemporary crisis:

The crisis of science is easiest to recognize. Here we don't have in mind only the traditional unsolvable conflict between positivistic and constructivistic methods of cognition, each one of whose warring camps has broken up into numerous value- and methodologically-biased factions (Abbott 2001). We have in mind the more general context of public delegitimation of science as a promising sphere of public activity. The MTV generations, educated by Internet based sources at that, cannot venerate formal reason, without which the entire architectonics of scientific activity crumbles to pieces. Contemporary science has lost public visibility and attractiveness – at least that kind of public mesmerization it had enjoyed 50 years ago during the Cold War age and the Conquest of Open Space.

The crisis of the meaning and purpose of human life is vividly illustrated by the poverty of philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. We have in mind the exposed tension between the meaning of human life and the reflexivity of ‘formal rationality’ (Weber) that contributes a lot to the desecularization of our world (Berger et al. 1999).

6 “In diagnosing the condition of sociology, one should not view it in isolation. Its symptoms tend to be those affecting the intellectual life in general.” (Berger 2001, 203).

7 “I will maintain that over the past century the major debates and dilemmas in our field – right up to the present – can be understood in terms of sociology's proximity to *three* intellectual outlooks that simultaneously constitute part of its environment and parts of itself. These may be referred to as the *scientific* orientation, the *humanistic* orientation, and the *artistic* orientation” (Smelser 1997, 18).



The crisis of public communication is also a fundamental problem of the contemporary life-world – and by that we don't mean the typically modern problem of alienation. Let's also leave aside for the moment the crisis of aesthetic communication itself, which is reproduced expressively by the so-called "conceptual art." The crisis of public communication, which concerns dramatically the possibility of existence of sociology today, derives from entirely different constituents and deserves special consideration. The sociological miscommunication (Cole 2001; Erikson 1997; Halliday, Janowitz 1992; Clemens, Powell, McIlwaine, Okamoto 1995; Sica 1992) – between sociological texts and their addressees – has at least three key dimensions:

### **Departmentalization of Sociology**

First and foremost, sociology today cannot have mass public appeal because it itself has broken up into "thousands of sociologies" (Abbott 2001; 1999). Even if we ignore for the moment the lethal effect of the mutual disdain between sociologists that is obvious in all their writings, the very history of the substantive and paradigmatic differentiation of sociologies makes addressing the audience from the positions of "sociology as a discipline" simply absurd – unjustifiable as an intent and ridiculous as performance. In sociology there is perhaps truly everything except discipline<sup>8</sup>.

More to that sociology after 1980s has been heavily preoccupied with various minorities' issues – ethnic and cultural minorities; gender minorities (lesbians and queers); political and religious minorities. No matter what their intellectual quality may be such sociologies could not claim general public recognition. This brings us to the next important factor.

### **Departmentalization of the Addressee**

Unfortunately for sociology, monstrous Balkanization is typical not only of its own camp but also of its public. In the mid-1960s, when sociology reached its zenith, the postwar societies were considerably more homogeneous in structural and cultural terms (Gans 1990a). In "the third wave" (Toffler) societies the homogeneous environment disappears – their stratification becomes increasingly complex and at the same time – polarized, whereas cultural diversity precludes a common plane of value commitments and, respec-

tively, – the very possibility for sending messages addressed to a mass audience (Gitlin 1990).

### **Cynicism as a Cultural Norm and "Value" Perspective of Sociological Practice**

The situation becomes even more complex if we consider that the present age is characterized not simply by value pluralism but by radical devaluation of human values, beyond any substantive definition of each and every one of them. Even if we don't agree with everything said by J. Goldfarb (Goldfarb 1991), there is hardly room for doubt that cynicism is a widely representative cultural norm in the contemporary world, far beyond the boundaries of American society. The problem is precisely in that the shared moral commitment of author and reader is the basis on which authentic sociological communication has been possible at all (Ross 1991; Bershady 1991). Cynicism as a public cultural norm destroys the very discursive field in which sociology can exist as such.

Apart from that, we must also recall that today's sociology students become cynics by virtue of the very turf which they get their education on. If one considers the numerous sociological studies of concrete academic settings (Martindale 1976; Abbott 1999, 2001), one will easily understand the role of the institutional practices of education in sociology precisely as the source of this professional cynicism. On the one hand, the mutual disavowals between the greatest sociologists (Levine 1985) leave little room for hopes to students that sociology could become dialogical if not integrated (Levine 1995). On the other hand, witnessing the notorious nasty clashes between figures like Parsons and Sorokin, Parsons and McIver at Harvard or Riesman and Hauser at Chicago (which just exemplify the universality of the feuds in sociology) future sociologists get used not to the multitude of paradigms but to the lack of shared values of any sort in their field.

In sum, the most serious challenge to the possibility for sociological communication today comes from the overlap between the heterogeneous internal fragmentations of both the communicators and their target audience, on one side, and from the absence of a shared value environment of communication, on the other. In its turn, all this occurs when the path passed by sociology has led to impossibility to sustain the fundamental constituents of sociology: art, science, humanities.

A science that is undergoing such a fundamental crisis cannot be taught conveniently and in school. Moreover, despite Weber's imperative of value neutrality, every piece of sociology not only belongs to one of the competing paradigms but is unavoidably tied to premises from which contrary political implications should follow.

Furthermore there cannot be a value-neutral view on citizenship, because it is practically impossible to achieve a perfect balance between rights, duties, and

8 "No one person or group can now claim to speak for the entire discipline. Fragmentation of the discipline has gone too far for that. Sociology now consists of a great variety in subject matters, political stance, theories, methods, and aspirations." (Becker, Rau 1990, 200). "There appear to be much less consensus in sociology than elsewhere in the social sciences about which theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches are best, about which scholars are most important in the field." (Lipset 2001, 262). A. Stinchcombe thinks of contemporary sociology as a "Disintegrated Discipline" (Stinchcombe 2001).



responsibilities, between critical thinking and partnership interaction: each concrete situation requires setting a priority on one of these attitudes, and this inevitable choice will always remain politically questionable in every particular social situation.<sup>9</sup> We must not forget that the golden age of sociology in the 1960s was part of the hopes for an ‘welfare society’ in Europe and the ‘Great society’ in the US, a society in which sociology was expected to be the reference point and instrument in the pursuit of scientifically grounded state policies. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such hopes would be a sign of political infantilism rather than of scientific achievement.

#### 2.4. National particularities

Knowing the state of art in the field brings us some comfort when we discuss a particular case. Within this general crisis of contemporary sociology, Bulgarian sociology has its own particular causes of professional discomfort. The plight of sociology in Bulgaria is a topic that has been discussed with escalating concerns in recent years by native sociologists of different generations (Nikolov 1992; Koev 1992; Boyadjieva 2009; Dimitrov 1995, 1995a, 2002; Koleva 2005; Slavova 2009; Danchev 2008). The tendencies are disturbing, indeed.

To give just one example, in his report in 2008<sup>10</sup>, the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University pointed out a trend: in the last 4 years the eight specialties in the Faculty have undergone a loss of about 40 per cent in the number of candidates applying (the candidates that indicate the respective specialty as their first choice or indicate that specialty as desired by them at all). Most drastic of all is the decreased interest in sociology: about 60 per cent fewer candidates indicate sociology as their first choice and 55 per cent fewer chose it in a lower rank of desired specialties.

Year/ Specialty	Candidates	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change 2004-2008%
Philosophical Faculty	Total	10782	10900	11200	9020	6281	-41.75
	First place	3468	3716	3755	2640	2052	-40.85
Philosophy	Total	8472	8177	7967	5431	3865	-54.38
	First place	402	328	307	219	373	-7.21
Psychology	Total	6318	6357	6242	4851	3481	-46.23
	First place	849	838	833	759	591	-30.39
Sociology	Total	7640	7673	7857	5240	3397	-55.56
	First place	215	213	216	140	85	-60.47
Political science	Total	6666	6998	6633	4875	3508	-43.00
	First place	429	587	484	332	244	-43.12
Public administration	Total	7720	7682	8095	5585	3802	-50.75
	First place	1308	1420	1645	992	594	-54.59
Culture studies	Total	7005	7272	7020	5226	3347	-52.22
	First place	92	131	114	106	61	-33.70
Library-information Studies	Total	5407	5440	5195	3545	2004	-68.49
	First place	45	32	32	16	30	-33.33
European studies	Total	1504	1224	1188	867	1005	-33.18
	First place	129	167	124	76	84	-34.88

9 Cf, for instance, the sharp criticism by Stefan Theil in Foreign Policy regarding the anticapitalist bias in the way social science is taught in the French and German schools (Theil 2008).

10 <http://www.phls.uni-sofia.bg/downloads/OTCHET08.pdf> visited on 22.06.2009.





This concrete example is significant, because the education in sociology in Sofia University is considered the best that Bulgarian universities have to offer. So the question asked by S. Cole in 2001 – *What's Wrong with Sociology?* – is important far beyond the framework of US sociology at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our local sociological community holds a marginal place in public attention, and the reasons for this are very significant. The present-day status of sociology is the direct result of its past, both its more distant past in the years of communism, and of the trends in the last two decades.

Although sociology in Bulgaria acquired the position of a separate discipline in the 1960s, which this science did not have in USSR (Koleva 2005; Michailov 2003). Yet it was not a genuine social science in Bulgaria, unlike in Poland (Boyadjieva 2009; Koleva 2002). Bulgarian communist sociology was mostly connected to the personal position of key figures in the Party apparatus, rather than to academic position based on personal research achievements. Science, art and humanities were practically indiscernible in the highly ideological discourse of the official sociology. Under these conditions academic sociology had some liberty for development, because of the greenhouse conditions provided for it by the Party functionaries, but it had no public visibility, and no relevance, other than for the Party. Nevertheless during the 1970s and 80s sociology in Bulgaria enjoyed a measure of prestige inasmuch as statesmen styled themselves sociologists. P. Boyadjieva aptly named it “the Party-blessed public prestige of sociology”<sup>11</sup>.

The change after 1989 abruptly transformed the positioning of sociologists in public life, but not the nature of sociological research. For instance, during the years of communism, as a form of paradigm alternative to the party usage of sociology, the sociology of everyday life was developed in academic circles, and it succeeded in being ideologically neutral (Nikolov 1992; Koev 1992). But in the course of the very intense historical changes that ensued after 1989, the most capable among Bulgarian sociologists continued to occupy themselves with problems of the everyday experiences; and this was all too convenient for the ‘criminal transition’ to a ‘controlled economy’. Academic sociology proved to be exotic in its thematic

and methodological orientation, and not committed to diagnosing and explicating current life (Dimitrov 1995). In the last 20 years no sociological study has attracted wide and lasting public attention. Thus Bulgarian sociology lost its battle for intellectual prestige (Boyadjieva 2009; Danchev 2008).

What greatly contributed to this intellectual defeat was the new situation of differentiation and competition between the expertise holders in the social sciences. In the previous decades, in the framework of Marxist ideological monopoly, the social sciences were extremely underdeveloped and sociology was a common home for all those interested in politics, culture, anthropology, public administration, social work, etc. After the start of the transition, each of these traditional disciplines became differentiated, and, understandably, the most innovative representatives among the general ‘tribe’ of sociologists joined the separating ranks of the disciplines. Academic sociologists proved the most inert scholars of all, and in the context of abrupt politicization of public life, it was political scientists, rather than sociologists, who moved into the priority focus of public attention.

It is highly indicative that the separation of scholarly communities into distinct fields took place following a strictly defined logic. Most threatened in the new situation were, naturally enough, the most ideologically charged specialties: philosophy, which trained ‘ideological workers’, and early school pedagogy, which trained leaders for the communist children and youth organizations, the ‘pioneers’ and ‘komsomol’. Well aware of the menace to their professional groups, these two communities sought new forms of professional fulfillment. Pedagogues practically monopolized university education in social work. Philosophers joined on a mass scale in invading the field of general secondary education; at present in Bulgarian schools 7 philosophical disciplines are taught (5 of which are mandatory – *Ethics, Logic, Law*<sup>12</sup>, *Philosophy* and *World and Personality*). A very telling fact is that philosophers undertook a strategy for sustained presence in school life, in a way that engaged the efforts of some key figures, who busily introduced ‘philosophy for children’, organizing ‘national philosophy Olympiads’, and entering the field of... civic education. This was the guild’s strategy and policy for survival through adaptation to the new conditions.

But sociology, carried along inertly by the prestige and comfort it had enjoyed as a discipline in previous decades, made no attempts whatsoever at an organized and institutionally supported expansion towards social policies or to a presence in schools. To a considerable degree this attitude of inertia among the guild of sociologists was supported by the expectation that

11 “The close links of leading sociologists with government authorities virtually acted as a political umbrella over sociology, ensuring to a great extent the authorities’ favor and creating peculiar ‘hothouse’ conditions for its development. This ‘political umbrella’ had decisive significance for the institutionalization of sociology” [...] The political umbrella over sociology also created an artificially privileged status for the sociologist – his/her position was publicly visible, party promoted, and prestigious, and thus attractive to many people. The artificiality of this mass attraction to the profession of the sociologist became immediately visible upon the collapse of communist party rule.” (Boyadjieva 2009, 3-4).

12 It is worth mentioning that the textbook is written by a philosopher.





the pluralization of public life would entail a sharp rise in the demand for sociological diagnosis and expertise. It is true that within the space of a decade a dozen or so local marketing firms of sociologists were created, but due to the pseudo market conditions, most of them were directly engaged with party politics and in most cases functioned as PR agencies rather than as analytic centers. Hence there is a permanent tendency for sociology in Bulgaria to be associated by society at large with polls and rankings of public attitudes toward public figures and institutions, a research activity which generally meets with public mistrust (Dimitrov 1995; Boyadjieva 2009).

Besides we have to mind another crucial fact. Not coincidentally, sociology is defined as a form of self-reflection of modern societies. It can exist as a science only in societies that have attained a considerable degree of formal rationalization of public life, but where public institutions function in a transparent manner and reliable statistics are available for almost all public sectors, so that the connections between quantitatively expressed social processes can be studied. In reverse, the crime and party osmosis of the Bulgarian transition (Tchalakov et al : 2008) signifies that the basic social processes are occurring in the grey and black economy in the form of non-public practices, for which information is not and cannot be collected by sociological means – at the very least because the very technique of empirical surveys rests on the assumption of trust between respondent and interviewer, while in Bulgarian society there is a fundamental attitude of mistrust towards strangers, and a disposition to refuse anonymous interaction (Dimitrov 2009). In such a quasi-modern society, classical sociology simply cannot be adequate in its methods to the actual research tasks. There is no way that such sociology can be socially relevant and socially prestigious. More important, however, the lack of civil society has proven a key precondition for the marginality of Bulgarian sociology. This lack is a double handicap for sociology: on the one hand it represents a structural deficiency in the object of study; on the other hand there is a flaw in the addressee of sociological information (Dimitrov 2002; Boyadjieva 2009). Sociology can be civically important only under conditions of an authentically functioning “critical publicity”, as Habermas calls it. Having said this, we are prepared to understand the hardship of CE in Bulgaria.

### **3. Civic education: universal and national characteristics**

CE is equally ambiguous a subject, both viewed internationally and locally.

#### **3.1. Universal scale: social demand and problematic results**

It may be said that as a general rule, CE throughout the world develops as a result of a deliberate policy

for its dissemination and encouragement. It is considered a key instrument for stabilization of democracy in countries that have chosen this form of government as their path of national development. But the general rule does not exclude countries like Great Britain, the cradle of modern democracy, in which CE is looked upon as a tool for resolving the acute problem of the integration of young people into the traditions and practice of representative democratic government (Edirisingha, Holford 2000). Studies have shown that the results of dissemination of CE vary greatly according to specific national traditions regarding democratic culture (Holford, Edirisingha 2000). But, as Sir B. Crick points out, even in the best of cases, for instance the United Kingdom, success is attained more in the implementation of new practices than in educational results (Crick 2007).

These general reference points should be had in mind when we turn our attention to a case in which there is a double lack – of social demand and of democratic cultural traditions.

#### **3.2. Specific particularities in one particular post-communist society**

This is a rather specific issue, the solution to which cannot be found on the basis of the personal experience of any single insider. That is why, before proposing our own interpretation, we looked for the viewpoints of key experts in the field of CE. The preparatory phase of our work included three components: interviews with experts<sup>13</sup>; focus groups<sup>14</sup>; desk research on previous studies<sup>15</sup>.

#### **How it all began**

The story is brief but rich in lessons. The first attempts at introducing CE began in the early 1990s and are still continuing, but without significant results. For this

13 In-depth interviews were conducted with the former deputy ministers of school education (M. A., R. V., Y. N., who were respectively part of left-wing, right-wing, and centrist governments); with key experts who had elaborated state requirements and syllabuses for civic education (. A. A., G. K.); M. Gr., head of the team of authors who produced the only textbook, so far, on the mandatory school subject “*World and Person*”, which comes closest to civic education in high schools; I. K., author of the methodological handbook for teachers of “*World and Person*”; I. T., dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Sofia University; chief experts on civic education at the Ministry of Education and Science (K. K., Y. N.), D.K., head of an influential NGO that report on CE on behalf of MES.

14 Three focus group discussions were conducted with teachers (in the capital Sofia, in a large city, and in a small city), as well as three focus groups with parents (in the capital Sofia, in a large city, and in a small city)

15 All publications on Bulgarian sociology by sociologists were studied (Boyadjieva 2009; Danchev 2008, 2005; Deyanova 2001; Dimitrov 2002, 1995, 1995a; Genov 2001; Koev 1992; Koleva 2005, 2002; Discussion 2004; Michailov 2003; Mitev 1995; Nikolov 1992; Slavova 2009, 2006).



reason, despite the requirement in the Law of general education that every high school student must pass a maturity exam in CE, this provision of the law has not been applied in years. There is no way there can be an exam testing the results of a process that never took place. How did things come to such a situation?

After the changes in 1989, entirely under pressure from external institutions such as the UN, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the European Union, and particularly through the financial tools of the Open Society Foundation, the Bulgarian government and the Ministry of Education recognized the need for introducing CE in school. We stress the role of the Open Society Foundation, because its money paid for the state educational requirement, programmes, and methodic handbooks accepted by the Ministry of Education and Science. It was precisely the cadres of this NGO that gradually became officials in the Ministry, and the advances in CE are mostly due to them, an education that even now is basically realized through activities of the non-governmental sector<sup>16</sup>.

The fight for CE in school<sup>17</sup> that broke out at the turn of the century, was very peculiar as described by some of the main participants in it<sup>18</sup>. On the one hand the confrontation ran along the debate as to whether CE should be a separate school subject or diffused in the contents of many subjects, connected with inter-subject links related to values, contents, and educational methods. The second idea triumphed, but at the cost of remaining unfulfilled. The major cause for this was that the introduction of a separate subject would entail decreasing the number of classes in other school subjects: this eventuality united experts in literature, history, geography (and of the publishing houses behind them) against the idea of a separate subject and in support of 'inter-subject links'. Apart from that, educationalists (students of pedagogy) that would have an important share in teaching the new subject rejected this innovation from the start. They had grasped that the subject was of an interdisciplinary kind, not just pedagogical, and hence the training of future teachers of this subject would not be their work alone<sup>19</sup>.

A common front was thus formed between teachers in Bulgarian, geography, history, against the philosophers; as for other participants (sociologists) in the debate behind the closed doors of the Ministry of Education and Science – there were none. Sociologists were acknowledged not as stake-holders and expertise-holders on issues of CE but as hostile guild

contestants. Philosophers have had their small compensation – the introduction of the subject called "World and Person" in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade within the range of philosophical disciplines<sup>20</sup>.

On the other hand, a battle is waged within the ranks of philosophers themselves. On one side of the line is the chairman of the work group, a former professor in dialectical materialism, who at the very start of the 1990s, drifted toward "philosophy for children". He was the one who insisted on CE as a separate subject that should run through all the years of education, but also on the pragmatic orientation of the contents of this discipline, which should build skills in project activity and other civic competencies. He lost the battle to the other side, which held that project culture is an instrumental skill that acquires importance only in a democratic environment, and this environment should be introduced in the form of a narrative about it, for the actual social environment gives no perceptual example of democratic participation<sup>21</sup>.

This is how a compromise was reached that practically excluded the possibility for authentic CE to be realized in Bulgarian schools. On the one hand the explanation about democratic values, mechanisms, and practices appears only in the last class of high school, and until that time pupils have practiced precisely the lack of democratic culture. On the other hand, even then CE is reduced to just talking about citizenship, rather than providing orientation and tools for acting in a civic environment.

### General trends behind the local misfortunes

The social logic in the story is even more instructive.

In a society where citizenship is missing, political parties cannot function as representatives of interests. The very existence of parties in such a society is directly dependent on clientelism and connections with the shadow economy, and even with organized crime. No such party would acknowledge the values and mechanisms of democratic citizenship as its cause, for authentic citizens would act as opponents

16 Interviews with K.K., D. K., R. V. and group discussions with teachers.

17 The concept of CE as a battlefield has been theoretically elaborated recently in more details by Dimitrov and Boyadjieva in an article in *Citizenship Studies* (Dimitrov, Boyadjieva 2009).

18 Interviews with A. A, G. K, R. V., U. N., Iv. K.

19 Interview with I. T.

20 "Many times after 1990 philosophy would become part of, and then move away from, civic education – it would encompass it, then cross through it, then do something quite different. It depended on the directives of the respective minister. Ultimately, things never came to a clear consensus variant. I've taken part in many meetings and in several text variants, but with no definite result. Against this background and in the midst of these changes, we (philosophers) introduced 3 subjects related to civic education: Ethics and Law in the 1990s, and World and Person in 2001." [...] "When I meet teachers I first explain my understanding of *World and Personality*: I recall the Russian proverb 'let's sit before departing'. In the 12 grade a person is at the beginning of one's life journey and this subject is a form of recollection of one's thoughts before departing". (interview with Iv. K.)

21 Interview with G. K., a historian who is known to be the author of the concept of *World and Personality*.



of party clientelism and of corruption under party patronage (and these phenomena are basic problems of Bulgaria and Rumania according to the periodic monitoring reports of the European Commission).

Due to the lack of political ownership over CE, and under powerful external pressure, the Ministry of Education and Science understandably does not obstruct foreign intervention through the educational projects of the Council of Europe, the PHARE programmes, UN projects, or the direct intervention of the Open Society Foundation, but neither does it invest resources in the implementation of CE as a national priority in school education.

Thus CE finds itself a battlefield of corporative interests: its contents and form of realization are determined by the absence of sociologist and educationalists, and by the active confrontation between philosophers (who are aware of their guild interest to expand within high school education) and teachers of literature, history, and geography and the respective publishing houses producing textbooks. And it is rendered as field of action to NGOs, maintaining foreign donor programs mainly.<sup>22</sup> State educational standards and syllabuses for CE are a result of the compromise between two opposing cliques, each protecting its private group interests. But no one is in charge of implementing them.

On the one hand CE is dissolved within 'inter-subject links', which ultimately fail to materialize, because the programmes in literature, history, and geography contain no civic contents. On the other hand the perspective of geographers and historians proves prevalent in the way civic syllabus emphases are placed: for instance, a central thematic interest is "the connection between nature and man", and, respectively, the category of labour, but society itself, citizenship, civic interests, are lacking. Yet, knowledge about the state and its institutions is vastly presented there before students learn anything about society. (Dimitrov 2008).

In still another aspect, the means of teaching turns out to be subordinated to traditional practices for these subjects, which, in Bulgaria, all go under the heading of "narrative subjects". The task foreseen in the regulations for the subject World and Personality to be only an "integrative subject ... that will build bridges among the already acquired civil knowledge in other subjects" is institutionally and culturally doomed to failure. No bridges could be built without banks.

That is why empirical facts confront us with yet another paradox: due to the coterie-based way in which work is done in the Ministry of Education, the writing of a textbook on "World and Person" proved to

22 Interviews with G. K., R. V., U. N., D. K.

be finally assigned, on the basis of personal ties of friendship, to a team of sociologists. In a spirit of emancipated thinking and pluralism of paradigms, the authors attempted to produce a 'non-standard textbook'<sup>23</sup>, that would provide no more than a general guideline for the independent work of teachers.<sup>24</sup> This textbook ultimately won no support among the teachers that had to work with it: it was hard for them, because the book contained no lessons to be learned by heart. And that is what a textbook is expected to supply in the view of the local teachers in literature, history, geography, and even philosophy. For such is the socialization paradigm of school education in general, inherited from the previous decades. In brief, instead of being a school for the civic culture of the new generations, CE in Bulgaria finds itself engulfed and reformatted by the standards of the local social environment, for which civic participation is 'pure theory'.

Moreover, such a textbook would require active, creative individual work from every teacher.<sup>25</sup> But just at this point, the crisis of Bulgarian schools is growing to a culmination point, manifested in the 3-month long national teachers' strike in 2007. In other words, the kind of teacher that would be competent to teach CE is not the usual teacher now remaining in Bulgarian schools. But this is far from being a purely Bulgarian problem.

#### **4. School education at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: universal and national characteristics**

##### **4.1. General crisis of school education**

The school in its classical form, which implements "universal and mandatory education", is an educational institution of modern societies that is undergoing a crisis everywhere in the world. All contemporary societies are conducting practically constant educational reforms in order to adapt the educational system to the fundamental changes that have taken place in the mind and personal development of modern humankind, changes brought about by open access to electronic information sources, the changes in the status of science in contemporary society, and above all the changes in society itself, in which school cannot have a monopoly on knowledge when learning is

23 Interview with M. Gr., head of the authors' team.

24 But there are no supplementing teaching materials through which the teacher could develop their own understanding of CE. Thus the alternative textbook that has these turns out to be used as 'teacher's manual'.

25 Whilst the majority of teachers are discontented with the textbook because it cannot be learned by heart, others reject it because it remains at the level of a *discussion* between different viewpoints, and never reaches the point of forming competencies (teachers' statement from the group discussions). The second complaint is justified since it is evident in M. Gr.'s interview that her educational ideal is "a real live discussion".



a life-long process. Bulgaria is the country with the largest decrease in the level of educational results as registered by the PISA survey. But immediately before it, though with a significantly better result, is a country like Sweden. The problems of Swedish school education are certainly not due to a social crisis of the national society itself. The point is that, today, sociologists would be the last to view the school institution as a natural unproblematic environment providing a natural ground for CE. As we have indicated elsewhere (Danchev, Dimitrov, Tacheva 2008; Dimitrov, Boyadjieva 2009), the situation is exactly the opposite: it is precisely the resource of CE, focused on the formation of skills for life and civic competencies for young persons, which can be the tool for overcoming the contemporary school crisis.

#### **4.2. Crisis of the school in a country in transition**

In Bulgarian conditions however, the situation is additionally complicated, as in most post-communist countries, by the wider crisis of the transition (Danchev, Dimitrov, Tacheva 2008; Vulchev 2004). We know that communist society may be compared to a universal panopticum, in the framework of which the strict disciplinary functions of the school have unquestionable legitimacy. What is more, in such a society education leads to privileged biographical trajectories in the intensely bureaucratic, state-controlled public life. In such a system teachers are prestige-bearers, being live embodiments of knowledge, which has a high value status.

The two decades of transition destroyed these preconditions of school life. Firstly, the disciplinary apparatus was delegitimized. Secondly, knowledge ceased to represent a guaranteed path to biographical advancement. Thirdly, teachers lost the tools with which they could hold disciplinary sway, and at the same time lost their social prestige.

Despite all this, and despite certain changes in the contents, education remains unchanged in its principle: it is oriented to knowledge, not to personal development; it implies passive learning, not personal participation; it is based on instruction coming from teacher to pupil, not on partnership between teacher and pupil and between the pupils themselves.

The unchanged nature of school life, amidst the changing situation at large, led to a profound crisis in everyday school practices. School can no longer hold either the attention or the trust of pupils. The dropout rate and school violence are also growing intensely, while educational results for all subjects are decreasing with each year.

On top of all this, state investments in education were drastically decreased, and the teacher's profession became one of the worst paid. It lost its value prestige and its social prestige. The teachers remain-

ing in schools are those who have not been able to find any other work, and such people are hardly the fittest to assume the responsibilities of teaching, much less the exceptional challenges of CE.

In brief, such teachers, in such a school, cannot and will not teach CE proper. For, if it were authentic, CE would be in contradiction with the entire spirit of school life and with all practices daily recurring in other subjects. And then, as often happens, even the most ambitious and devoted teacher is perfectly helpless when confronted with the pupil's question, "Why is it that what you teach me has nothing to do with my life, with what is going on around us?"<sup>26</sup>. A CE subject would not give an answer to this question, even if the syllabus were prepared by sociologists, even if the textbook were perfect in its sociological content, and the teaching process were led by sociologically competent teachers.

In a country without civil society, CE is not a separate educational problem but an issue of policy and fundamental educational reform. In this case external political pressure proves decisive – that is why pressure should be uncompromising, systematic, and thorough-going in order not to repeat the failure of the donors' programs. Membership in the EU implies it. In such a society sociology's task could not be primarily to change the spirit and the contents of CE. Before that or in parallel with it sociology must promote and facilitate the modernization (reform) of school life. Sociology should mediate the cooperation among stakeholders in this reform in order to make it sustainable and effective.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The basic moral of this story is quite clear. *Sociology has been marginalized in the last decades because of the inertia of its public and academic standing, both intellectual and institutional. It takes for granted the status won by the previous generation and does not respond to the pressing demands of the changing world for a different type of sociology. Thus it falls easy prey to the competitors who follow an aggressive strategy and policy of public expansion.* The particular situation in other countries may be different but these are the general settings and rules of our play. There is nothing specifically Bulgarian in them.

Obviously, there are two most probable scenarios for the future development of sociology.

First, if we do nothing but simply follow the inertia of the sociological tradition, the sociologists will continue to be engaged in topic-oriented research longing for the utopia of a powerful sociological theory. (Till this very day it is "taken for granted" that "advancement of sociology" is almost synonymous to

<sup>26</sup> This is a standard opinion among teachers, registered in all focus group discussions.



“theoretical development”<sup>27</sup>.) This would mean only further marginalization of sociology, an increase in its critical stance and leftist political affiliation compensating its public irrelevance.

Second, contemporary sociology can begin a fundamental re-orientation. This must include a switch from “topic research” to “problem research”. In sociology, we are still victims of the legacy of the Enlightenment – we presume that if our research is duly sophisticated and methodologically correct and our research findings are right, then the public will absorb our sociological truths automatically and enthusiastically. This does not happen at all and it is the urgent task of the sociologists to tackle the miscommunication. The task consists of two basic components and they both concern fundamental restructuring of education in sociology:

First, instead of being tailored after the pattern of “theoretical prominence” education in sociology must provide at least an access to social policy research. This is, broadly speaking, the very large field from needs assessment, through monitoring and evaluation, to impact assessment, mediation of public interaction and so forth. This kind of research is done at present mainly by laymen and it is of very poor quality and, subsequently, of very low effectiveness. It is exactly the sociological competence that can substantially raise the public benefit from policy research and active citizenship. More to that, public policies are going to encompass more and more spheres of social life in the future. The entire arsenal of the sociological knowledge acquired in the 20th century must be put in work in mediating public policies and civil action. We certainly understand that if one minds the addressees of sociological information in advance, this will change substantially the way social problems are seen, articulated and treated.

Second, in the past the intensive dialogue between sociologists and their audience has been possible on the grounds of shared values and mental patterns. These premises for productive communication are not valid any more. Nowadays, it is the job of the sociologist to make their findings communicable to the public. Students of sociology must learn the art of persuasive presentation that will culminate in common public action. The 20th century sociology successfully accomplished the task of interdisciplinary integration intermingling with anthropology, history, economy, cultural, and political studies. Today the task is to further the interdisciplinary synthesis in the field of professionalized humanities and even visual arts. Thus,

sociologists will become better equipped to counteract indifference or misunderstanding by the public.

From now on sociology, as a fulfilled promise, cannot be professed – it has to be publicly practiced. Only then it will contribute to the needed contemporary civility and, hence, to the CE needed today. Actually there is nothing country specific in this task-frame no matter how specific the particular sociological decisions may be.

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27 The highly representative collection *Sociology in Europe* (1993) is an ample proof of the traditional equating between sociology and theory – the optimism about sociology’s future derives from the expectation for new theories. See in Nedelmann and Sztompka (Nedelmann, Sztompka. 1993a).





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Elisabeth Chatel

## Sociology in French High Schools: The Challenge of Teaching Social Issues

### Abstract

The aim of the article is to answer the question of what kind of sociology teaching is provided in French lycées. It describes and characterises a state of affairs that has resulted from a process of evolution. The article engages with the wider question of curriculum change, using the tools of sociology to tackle the issue. It illustrates the power of 'school subjects' as institutional forms, just as it reveals their composite and socially constituted nature. It highlights the role of teachers in shaping the changes in the content of this subject, including at the level of the formal curriculum.

### Résumé

Cet article cherche à caractériser la sociologie qui est enseignée dans les lycées français. Il décrit un état de choses en évolution. Ce faisant il aborde, avec les outils de la sociologie du curriculum, la vaste question des changements des curricula. Il montre la prégnance de la forme sociale « discipline scolaire » et le caractère à la fois socialement construit et composite des savoirs qu'elle peut contenir. Il éclaire le rôle, souvent méconnu, des professeurs dans la détermination des contenus enseignés y compris ceux qui sont prescrits.

### Contents

1. Introduction
  2. A troubled history with a happy end: real sociological content being taught
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    - 2.3 Curriculum content
  3. Teaching sociology: successes and difficulties in the classroom
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    - 3.2 Difficulties and debate
  4. Concluding remarks
- Bibliography

### Keywords

teaching sociology, curriculum change, french lycées, sociology of the school curriculum

### 1. Introduction

Sociology appeared relatively late in French secondary education. The subject was introduced in the 1960s, when secondary education in France underwent thorough change. This was a period of economic growth and the French economy was opening up to other countries; firms needed more highly qualified workers. The purpose of this educational reform was to extend access to upper secondary education and to modernize teaching and the curriculum, and in particular to put in place new coherent courses of study. As part of this process, a new school subject was introduced under the name of "Economic and social sciences", a discipline focused on the study of social realities; it included some elements of sociology. Perhaps unexpectedly, the sociological part of the subject has been expanding noticeably over the last ten years.

This article will give an insight into the way this subject matter is taught in French secondary schools. It synthesizes previous research by the present author (Chatel 1990; 2002; 2009) and others (Beitone, Decugis-Martini, Legardez 1995, Legardez 2001).

The aim of the article is to answer the question of what kind of sociology teaching is provided in French lycées. It describes and characterises a state of affairs that has resulted from a process of evolution. Nevertheless, in formulating the research question in this way, a certain point of view is being implied, one that involves investigating curriculum content in terms of academic disciplines. We will see that the teaching of sociology in French lycées does not strictly lie within the framework of academic sociology, and any attempt to give an account of it requires a shift of focus away from sociology to social problems, or a toing-and-froing between the two. In attempting to characterise the current situation in the context of the development of the economic and social sciences curriculum, the article engages with the wider question of curriculum change, using the tools of sociology to tackle the issue. The sociology of the curriculum, which was pioneered by Durkheim at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, developed particularly in the UK in the 1970s. The new sociology of education (Forquin 2008) champions the notion that the curriculum is socially constructed. The account we give of the introduction of sociology into French lycées illustrates the way in which the policy of modernising curriculum content that got under way in France with the Fouchet reform of 1966 was to come up against the interests and values of various social groups, which were to attempt to shift the emphasis of the modernisation policy. The political issues associated with these subjects probably have to be taken into account. After all, the



teaching of sociology did give rise to some fairly major controversies involving actors inside as well as outside the education system. Teachers themselves have been important actors in the conflicts that have surrounded the subject. André Chervel (Chervel 1988) approached academic disciplines as institutional forms which, in the case of the French system, form the basis of the education system's cultural creativity. A 'school subject' is not entirely congruent with the academic discipline that it may take as a point of reference. True, it is characterised by its knowledge content, but the development of certain modes of teaching and the existence of a specific body of teachers are also distinctive features of a school subject. As early as the late 1960s, Musgrove (Musgrove 1968) was already analysing a subject's teaching personnel as a social community influencing the content of the subject they taught. Our work on economic and social sciences, the broad subject area within which sociology is taught in French *lycées*, illustrates the power of 'school subjects' as institutional forms, just as it reveals their composite and socially constituted nature. It highlights the role of teachers in shaping the changes in the content of this subject, including at the level of the formal curriculum.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, we outline the institutional position of this course and trace the contradictory history of its evolution. The role played by lycée teachers in the subject's development is also outlined here. In the second part, we focus on the teaching of sociology, and in particular on the successes and difficulties inside the classroom. Our concern here is with lesson content, teaching methods and student outcomes. The composite nature of the subject is also highlighted. In the third part, we endeavour to draw general conclusions from this experience of introducing a new subject into the secondary school curriculum with the ultimate aim of developing a theoretical perspective on curriculum change.

## 2. A troubled history with a happy end: real sociological content being taught

Let us begin with the happy end. Compared with other countries, sociology today occupies a fairly healthy institutional position in the French school system. We will first present some figures on the extent of teaching in this subject in French secondary schools, before going on to tell the story of the introduction of economic and social Sciences into the French secondary school curriculum. Finally, we will outline the content of sociological teaching in French secondary schools today.

### 2.1 The scale of sociology teaching in French secondary schools

French secondary education includes three differentiated types of studies: vocational, technological and general.

Economic and social studies (ESS) is part of the general education curriculum.

**Table 1: Number of students passing each type of baccalaureate:**

% of all those passing the baccalaureate in a given year	1995	2007
General baccalaureate	58	54
Technological baccalaureate	28	26
Vocational baccalaureate	14	20
Total number passing all types of baccalaureate	480,654	524,313

Source: French Ministry of Education, "Repères et références statistiques", 2009

General education in upper secondary school involves three different courses of study: literary, scientific, and economic and social studies. At the end of upper secondary education, students take an examination, the baccalaureate. For instance, in 2007, 524,313 young people passed this examination, about 63 % of the year group; Table 1 presents data on the share of the year group taking each type of baccalaureate. Apart from a 2½ hour option in what is known in France as '*la classe de seconde*', or just '*seconde*' (the first year of upper secondary education in France), sociology is taught only in the economics and social stream of the general course of study<sup>1</sup>.

How many students are in the ESS course of study? Table 2 shows the relative shares of students taking each course of study in 2007. In national statistics, general and technological courses of study are bracketed together because they are often taught in the same schools and begin after the end of lower secondary education, at around age 16. *Seconde* is less differentiated than the following two years of upper secondary education, known as '*première*' and '*terminale*'.

**Table 2: General and technological courses of study in 2007; percentage of students in *classe terminale* (final year)**

	General		Technological	
	Literary	Economic and social	Services	Industrial specialities
Scientific	33.4	11.7	20.6	23.9
				9.9

Source: French Ministry of Education, "Repères et références statistiques", 2009

However, economics and social studies is taught during the final three years of secondary education, i.e. in *seconde*, *première* and *terminale*. It begins as an op-

1 Optional courses existed in the literary and scientific streams between 1982 and 1993, but they were abolished.





tion in *seconde*. In 2007, 42.8% of students chose this option, a total of 513,344 students in *seconde*, 98,470 in *première* and 98,035 in *terminale*.

Little time is devoted to the subject in *seconde*, just 8% of total teaching time, or 2½ hours a week. This is not much, considering that the course is offered to a large number of pupils and lasts just one year.

In *première* and *terminale*, students spend much more time studying ESS, as can be seen from Table 3. The actual time devoted to the subject varies depending on whether students restrict themselves to the core modules or whether they take further ESS options instead of advanced options in foreign languages or mathematics applied to social sciences.

**Table 3: Time devoted to ESS as percentage of total teaching time in ES general course of study**

<i>Première</i>		<i>Terminale</i>	
All students (ES)	If taking advanced options	All students (ES)	If taking advanced options
17	24	22	30

Source: French Ministry of education, calculation by the author. Total school time calculated excluding optional courses

In the ES course of study, economic and social studies (ESS) is a major subject in which sociology plays an important role. The increase in the time devoted to the subject has gone hand in hand with a restriction of teaching provision to pupils in the ES stream.

## 2.2 A troubled history

As noted above, the introduction of economics and sociology into the upper secondary school curriculum has a troubled history.

It began in 1966 with the creation of the ES course of study in which a new discipline was introduced, then called "Introduction to economic and social facts". Guy Palmade and Marcel Roncayollo, one a historian, the other a geographer, were put in charge of the development of this part of the new curriculum. Both had worked for a long time with Fernand Braudel, leader of the second generation of scholars associated with the Annales School (Ecole des Annales) of historiography. In designing the course, they adopted the approach developed by the Annalists. They brought together the most famous social scientists of the time in France to discuss their proposals. Economists, sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Raymond Boudon, political scientists such as Maurice Duverger and psychologists were asked for advice. Guy Palmade and Marcel Roncayollo wrote courses and notes for teachers. Teachers were then recruited from other disciplines such as history, philosophy and management to

take a special competitive examination that was used to select teachers for the new courses. To help these new teachers, Guy Palmade, who was chief inspector of schools, organized a sort of workshop every September from 1967 to 1980, at which participants shared their experiences of teaching the courses and worked together on the preparation of teaching resources. The new teachers were full of enthusiasm, they felt like pioneers. They tried new ways of teaching, opening up the class room in a climate of confidence and reform. Pupils were active participants in lessons and in debating the economic and social problems of the moment. It seems that students enjoyed this way of school learning, as those surveyed for their opinions declared.

When trouble started in 1973 to 1975, it had its origins in the upper echelons of the national education system. New reforms were proposed that would have abolished the new discipline; historians and geographers were to teach economic and social subjects rather than ESS specialists. ESS teachers organised themselves to fight the proposals. They established a professional association and they petitioned with pupils and their families. They won the battle and the proposed reforms were not implemented.

However, this was by no means the end of the matter. In 1980, a new reform was prepared; an official report commissioned from an economist, Joël Bourdin, criticised the teaching of economics with other social sciences in *lycées*. The author of the report was also critical of interdisciplinary and active teaching methods. He proposed that ESS should be abolished and replaced by a more academic way of teaching economics alone, without any sociological component. ESS teachers rallied themselves; they asked teachers' trade unions, students and families for their support. With these allies, they organised petitions, went on strike and held demonstrations in their fight against the loss of their course and of their pedagogic community. This battle too was successfully fought. The main issue at stake was to maintain the two major teacher recruitment examinations in economics and sociology, rather than reducing the entrance examination to economics alone, as had been proposed. This marked a major turning point in the evolution of the ESS curriculum; new courses were written with less historical and more economic content. They involved less interdisciplinary work and stronger distinctions between the individual academic disciplines that had been combined to create ESS. However, the social dimension of economic phenomena continued to form part of the curriculum. Some active teaching methods were retained and the habit of working with small groups of pupils reading texts, visiting factories, analysing statistics and other practical tasks was also retained.

Trouble resurfaced in 1984 and 1985, when new proposals for the abolition of the ESS course and the division of its content between economics and sociology



were discussed in the French Ministry of Education. ESS teachers manned the barricades once more, but opinion went against these reforms for other reasons. Once again, the proposals for reform were withdrawn.

Strengthened by these conflicts and by the political support ESS teachers had built up, the APSES professional association (Association des professeurs de sciences économiques et sociales) played an active role during the pedagogical reform of the *lycées* that took place in the early 1990s. The reforms introduced some advanced options and changes in curriculum content, and APSES members ensured that the influence of sociologist Henry Mendras was felt in the curriculum design commission as a counterbalance to the influence of economists alone. The year 1995 marked another important turning point in the evolution of the ESS curriculum. New courses were written that adopted a genuine sociological approach and teachers took advantage of a political opportunity to advance their ideas about social science education. They received support from Pierre Bourdieu, who had always been in favour of this teaching (Bourdieu 1997). It must be emphasised that, on this occasion, in contrast to others when they simply reacted to proposals that would have had what they saw as an adverse impact on their profession, teachers on the ground took the initiative. They seized a political opportunity to advance their own ideas on the social science curriculum.

Last but not least, at the beginning of 2000, a new wave of criticism emerged in economic journals. The criticism focused on the teaching of economic subjects and especially the firm; it came from business associations. They ignored sociology, which is why this wave of criticism will not be discussed further in the present paper.

### 2.3 Curriculum content

Before looking at curriculum content, some words about the various prescriptive programmes published by the National Ministry of Education would be appropriate.

These programmes specify what must be taught in each school subject and in each school year across the whole of France. Teachers are obliged to follow the programmes. The programmes also stipulate the knowledge required for the upper secondary school leaving examination, the baccalaureate, which qualifies successful candidates for entry to university. Nevertheless, the programmes do not set out exactly what must be taught and how every day or every hour during school time is to be used. Rather, they need interpretation. They are rather like prescriptions that need 'dispensing' or 'translating' in order for actual teaching to take place. Teachers are free to interpret them as they see fit and they have pedagogical responsibilities. As a guide for possible interpretations, an introductory text specifies the aims of each

programme. Since 1988, the ESS programmes have been contained in two or three columns. In the first column, the content of the programme is outlined item by item, while the second column lists the notions, concepts, vocabulary associated with each item that must be known at the end of the school year. The third contains less important supplementary vocabulary. For instance, in the programme for the *classe de seconde*, the family as an evolving social institution must be studied (first column), and the contents in the second column are: diversity of family forms, kin relations and the household as defined in national accounts. This example also shows how the interdisciplinary approach works in ESS. The first two notions (diversity of family forms and kin relations) belong to sociology, while the third (household as defined in national accounts) comes from economics. Thus in order to investigate one phenomenon, in this case the family, economic and sociological approaches have to be used sequentially in order to obtain a more rounded view of the institution of the family.

The sociological topics studied have not changed since 1966: the family in *seconde*, social groups, culture and society and socialisation in *première* and social change in *terminale*. The course begins with a topic close to young students' experience, such as the family; in subsequent years, the topics widen out in both space and time. Nevertheless, the aims of the course remain unchanged over the three years: it is designed to impart knowledge of economics and social realities, to foster a reflective attitude towards society, to educate citizens and to cultivate critical awareness about social problems. However, the way of achieving these aims has evolved. We will describe this change and characterize it as a controversial evolution towards more academic sociology and higher intellectual demands.

Three phases in this evolution can be identified.

In the first phase, from 1966 to around 1988, the main aim of curricula and teaching methods was to impart an understanding of social realities. There was considerable suspicion of dogma and ideologies and a mistrust of teaching theory to young people. The hope was that, by making students aware of differences in space and time, they could attain some sort of analytical insight. Teachers had to teach about societies in different times and in different places. For instance, the family in Arrapesh society as described by Margaret Mead was a standard topic in *seconde*. And students usually read extracts from Philippe Aries' writings about the family system in pre-revolutionary France.

The academic reference points for this part of the course were derived from history and anthropology.

As already noted, course content was changed after the initial proposals for reform brought forward in the early 1980s were defeated. Teachers of ESS, supported



by some economics experts such as J.C. Milleron<sup>2</sup>, adopted a higher profile and began to exert more influence. They pushed for less historical perspective and more statistics. Most of them had studied economics and had acquired their knowledge of sociology only through teaching it. They thought that economic structures and the level of technology were decisive in social problems. They also wanted a clear distinction to be made between socialist and capitalist economic systems. In their view, economic structures were more important than any other variables for an understanding of social problems. This was the period that saw the end of strong economic growth, the beginning of mass unemployment and the growth of poverty in rich countries. Globalisation was often seen as the ultimate cause of many social problems.

Things changed again with the programmes written between 1993 and 1995. The economic and sociological components of the curricula were more clearly separated for the final two years of the course. The distinction between socialist and capitalist economic systems disappeared as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The focus of courses shifted away from growth and development or the differences between capitalism and socialism towards globalisation, economic crisis and new social questions such as migration and integration. The introductory texts to the new programmes explained the overall purpose of this subject matter in new terms. How is society possible? How can conflict be avoided? How can social cohesion be maintained in a changing society? The new conceptual framework marked a move away from structuralism in favour of a dynamic approach and an increase in the intellectual demands the new curriculum content made on students.

This reform also introduced two advanced options (see Table 3): one in *première* ES offers political sciences and civic education, while the other in *terminale* ES is based on the reading of texts by eminent economists and sociologists with the aim of giving students a better understanding of certain items in the curriculum. The sociologists studied are Tocqueville, Weber, Marx and Durkheim.

Clearly sociologists were influential in determining the content of these options. However, the ESS course as a whole remains mixed. Teachers are recommended to use economic and sociological approaches in turn as often as possible in studying, for instance, enterprise, unemployment, consumption, poverty and so on. Sometimes, however, lessons remain strictly within the field of either economics or of sociology. For example, in the most recent courses for pupils in *terminale*<sup>3</sup>, the topic of social change is approached almost

exclusively from a sociological perspective under the heading of: 'Inequalities, conflicts and social cohesion: the social dynamic'. It is clearly separate from the economic part of the course and it has grown in size compared with the 1982 programme<sup>4</sup> since it now accounts for about 40% of teaching time over the year.

In this first part, we have offered an overview of the state of sociology teaching in French upper secondary schools since the 1960s from an institutional point of view. In the next part, we will see how sociology is actually taught in the classroom.

### 3. Teaching sociology: successes and difficulties in the classroom

To teach something requires close attention from students, it needs their collaboration. The objective, in other words, is to set them to work. In order to understand how teaching takes place investigation is necessary.

Our data on the teaching and learning of sociology come from two sources: an actual survey on the study of sociology in upper secondary schools carried out in 1998 (see box below) and detailed study of professional journal publications from 1966 to 2007<sup>5</sup>. In these publications we found teachers' accounts of everyday experiences and of their success and failures written in order to be shared with colleagues. They also provide teaching resources and comment on them. These journals also contain observations by sociologists on high school programmes and examinations.

#### "Learning sociology in high school" survey 1998<sup>6</sup>

The data relate to a sample of 700 students in *première* enrolled in 27 lycées located in all parts of France. The aim of the research was to investigate the differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Half of the sample was taught by teachers with less than five years' experience. We tried to analyse student outcomes two weeks after having lessons on the subject of socialisation.

We knew the age, sex, social origin, educational level and status of the 27 teachers. We also knew the age, sex and social origin of the 700 students, as well as their marks at school. They answered a questionnaire about studying sociology and were tested on their knowledge of socialisation. To this end, they were asked to write 50 lines explaining what socialisation is to a young person with no knowledge of sociology. Other questions assessed their vocabulary and ability to understand documents (texts, pictures or statistics). These tasks are

2 He was the head of INSEE, the French national statistical organisation.

3 Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation nationale, Hors série n°7, 3 October 2002

4 Bulletin officiel n°4 spécial, 29 April 1982.

5 There are two major publications, one from the French education ministry (DEES then iDEES) and the other from the teachers' professional association (APSEInfo).

6 Chatel et alii, « Apprendre la sociologie au lycée », INRP, 2002.



standard exercises in this course. With the aid of the research team, which was made up of experienced teachers, we converted the students' texts into answers to a closed questionnaire. It was analysed by means of statistical methodologies (inference).

The data thus obtained were supplemented by semi-directed interviews with teachers and some students.

We will seek to identify in what follows which teaching methods are successful, what content is easy to learn and what does not work or gives rise to debate among teachers.

### 3.1 Success

Two sorts of success must be underlined, namely student motivation and outcomes.

The majority of pupils who answered our questions said they were interested in sociological questions, with a higher share of girls than boys declaring such an interest. They enjoy these lessons because they make them aware of new phenomena in their own lives. One girl said that she had become aware of the educational advantages she enjoyed after reading Pierre Bourdieu's writings on social *habitus*. Their favourite topics for study were the family, cultural differences, gender differences and social mobility. They disliked theory and abstract lessons, which they found too difficult.

These results were consistent with the statements teachers made during the interviews.

In short, we can say that about 90% of students were familiar with the notions listed in the second columns of the programme: norms, roles, values, socialization, nature vs. nurture etc. They were able to define them, use the terms appropriately and understand their meaning. In addition they were able to read texts and statistical tables, understand information contained in documents linked to the topics studied and digest these elements. They had a mastery of the intellectual skills ordinarily used in this school discipline at this level.

In their writing, they often adopted a deterministic understanding of "socialisation" in which individuals have to comply with social rules and society's commands and everyone is subject to social constraints. Individual freedom is restricted. Education is regarded as conditioning. They focused primarily on socialisation and social reproduction. They were scarcely capable of dialectic reasoning and most of them had not reached the stage of being able to put forward a balanced and dialectical argument.

Just one third had a reflective attitude towards social phenomena and 9% were able to develop a sociological argument; they were also the best pupils, as was reflected in their marks. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 8% of the sample were unable to complete the test, leaving exercises unfinished, misunderstanding documents and so on.

The best students were able to fulfil the objectives of this curriculum; however, the majority just mastered a new vocabulary without acquiring the ability to think critically about social issues. They might have been on the way to achieving it, but it is difficult to know for certain.

To summarise, we can say that these students enjoyed studying sociology or social problems in high school and that some of them succeeded in achieving critical awareness of social problems and acquired the ability to engage in sociological reasoning. The programme objectives had been partially attained.

### 3.2 Difficulties and debates

The purpose of the teaching of ESS is to encourage pupils to develop a reflective attitude towards social phenomena. The method adopted in the ESS curriculum is to observe these social phenomena, to achieve some degree of distance by studying other societies and other periods in history and to seek greater through measurement. But doing so is only half of the task. How can young students be introduced to social concepts and theories?

Some teachers take the view that high school students are too young to understand theory and that it is sufficient to make them aware of the diversity of social phenomena. Ideologies must be avoided; models are risky because they can inhibit flexibility of thought. Other teachers take the opposite view. They want to introduce theories and research methodologies at the beginning of the course. They argue that objects of study are defined by researchers and that there is no social reality *per se*. In their view, teachers must explain the methodological foundations of their assertions.

The debate has turned into a dispute between experienced teachers about pedagogical methods. The first stream favours active and inductive methods, while the second criticises any form of inductive reasoning. In any event, the dispute is confined to a small number of professionals.

Most teachers seemed to be uninterested in this debate, which they regard as largely irrelevant to their pedagogical issues. Few of them have degrees in sociology. In our sample, 70% have degrees in economics and only 8% in sociology. Nevertheless, they acquired some knowledge of sociology in the IUFM<sup>7</sup> in order to take the competitive examination they have to pass before becoming ESS teachers. It is a selective exam that requires at least one year's preparation. They demand more training in sociology for themselves.

7 IUFM = Institut universitaire de formation des maîtres, a special institute established in 1990 to prepare prospective teachers for the competitive examination and to provide teacher training after the examination.





Our observations and analysis of textbooks<sup>8</sup> reveal that teachers tend to approach a new topic by first examining a concrete example (case study, newspaper extracts focusing on current social problems etc.). They then seek to initiate discussion of the topic by drawing on students' own experiences. Afterwards, statistics are presented and questioned; then concepts or theories are propounded in order to explain the social problem or to render it understandable. Teachers are very fond of this pedagogical approach. They see it as a way to make sociology accessible by investigating social problems that are significant to students.

Certain social issues can be easily accommodated within this pedagogical framework, others not, as Nicole Pinet<sup>9</sup>, assistant professor at the University de Lille, has demonstrated in respect to social mobility. Social mobility is always present in political and social debates; it is regarded as equal in importance to social justice and for that reason remains an interesting question for young people. Moreover, it is associated with theoretical issues and debates in the academic community, more particularly about the role of the school system in social reproduction. The relevant statistics are always being updated (intergenerational mobility tables) because of the issue's political significance and they can therefore be used as topical resources in the classroom. As a result, it is possible to undertake a significant amount of meaningful methodological work with students.

Other sociological questions that are easy to teach using these pedagogical methods include: the role of education, the working class and its decline and the middle class and its new social influence. They have some features in common which make them relatively easy to teach: they are social problems that have both political implications and a theoretical dimension and there is plenty of relevant available data.

Michaël DeCesare (2002, 2005a, 2005b) describes the state of sociology teaching in US high schools. The subject matter has been taught for the past century as part of a discipline called "social studies". He reports criticisms of this teaching made by members of the American Sociologist Association (ASA), who believe there is too much emphasis on social problems and not enough on concepts and theories; these remarks echo the French debate among ESS teachers; DeCesare also notes that the ASA has been ineffective in helping secondary teachers because ASA-members are not close enough to teachers and do not collaborate with them.

8 In Chatel 2002, p. 64-71.

9 Nicole Pinet, "De la sociologie aux sciences économiques et sociales", intervention at the round table debate organised by the Société française de Sociologie, DEES, n°115, mars 1999. She was for many years one of the co-authors of the standard ESS textbooks.

These remarks point to a similarity in pedagogical methods on both sides of the Atlantic: introducing sociology by examining social problems that have significance for young people. This method seems to work. However, the question of how to go further in the teaching of concepts and theory remains.

French sociologists, when consulted (Chapoulie 2002; Merle, Dubet, Pinet 2000), do not disagree with the strategy of introducing students to sociology through the investigation of topical social problems; above all they fear that formal lessons will discourage students from thinking for themselves and are concerned that certain discourses convey false distinctions between sociological theorists. These concerns parallel Michel Verret's argument about the teaching of sociology at university level. Verret (1974) demonstrated the difficulty of using any formal discourse in subjects characterised by vigorous debates and contradictory approaches linked to political issues. The proposals for countering these dangers put forward by academic sociologists are different from those favoured by teachers; they include genuine inquiries, investigation, collection of social data and so on (Baudelot 1999). It is an interesting mode of teaching that must be experienced. The question is whether it is feasible to adopt genuine scientific methods with young pupils, during school time, in school context? As we have seen, teachers would rather simulate scientific methods, not having to collect true data.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

As has been shown, there is effective teaching of sociology in French lycées. In these concluding remarks, we will summarise the main features of this teaching and offer some thoughts on its difficult introduction into the French upper secondary school curriculum.

It must be noted that the success of this teaching is due in part to students' support. In 1998, the Ministry of Education launched a major survey among pupils; some subjects found unconditional favour among students and ESS was one of them. As our own inquiry shows, they are interested in social issues and they enjoy studying ESS because it makes their own world more understandable and provides ideas for making it fairer and easier to live in.

However, there is real intellectual content in the course – it is not merely descriptive. Students are trained to read texts and statistics, they learn the academic vocabulary of social sciences and they acquire an analytical perspective on social problems. These results characterize a social science education that aims to develop citizenship rather than preparing students for academic study. Such a programme can, nevertheless, serve as a first step in that direction. Civic and academic goals are not necessarily in conflict.

Thus the criticisms of ESS that have in the past served as a basis for attempts by the Ministry of Edu-





cation to abolish the subject do not suggest that there has been pedagogic or didactic failure. They fail to take account of the successes that have been achieved with students. Rather, they are politically motivated and reflect management concerns to reduce the number of categories of teachers and of specialities, to introduce greater flexibility into services and to simplify organisation. As a consequence, disputes have developed among the various professional interest groups involved. In this case, the conflict has been between the various groups of teachers of social studies (historians and geographers against economists and sociologists). The proposals for abolition have also been supported by business lobbies concerned by young people's growing social awareness. They are afraid that the teaching of ESS encourages criticism of society and its problems and may increase awareness of the social responsibilities of entrepreneurs or politicians. These arguments relate much more to the economic dimension of the ESS programme than to sociological themes.

In the difficult process that has led to the establishment of ESS in the upper secondary curriculum and the incorporation of a sociological dimension into the subject, teachers' action has had a significant influence. Teachers have been helped by their professional association, by trade unions and by some academic sociologists and economists. It may be considered rather surprising that they were motivated to take such action, since they are trained more in economics than in sociology. They supported sociology not so much for its own sake but because in doing so they were helping to give social science teaching a certain political and pedagogic slant. Teachers enjoy teaching ESS because its political orientation matches their own; it is a progressive ideology, critical of neo-liberalism and in favour of state intervention and public policies. They were also strongly motivated by the support they obtained from their students; this achievement gave them the energy and the reason to defend a mode of teaching and a type of content. Now pupil interest has a bearing on current problems; they want to understand and they are encouraged to put some effort into their school work. This is why teachers promote this way of teaching, which begins with concrete examples of social problems. As a consequence they agree with introducing new themes into their teaching programmes. However, in doing so, they are pursuing a particular pedagogical purpose and, at the same time, adopting an academic and political stance. A way of successfully teaching students about social issues with political implications has been found.

As we have seen, the courses have changed as economy and society have evolved. Even if political intentions are decisive, they can be frustrated. Social studies courses are subject to many influences, including

political intentions, expert advice and teachers' action. It is not uncommon for teachers themselves to influence the curriculum. This has been demonstrated, for instance, by Barry Cooper in respect to mathematics teaching in English secondary schools in the 1950s (Cooper 1983). And secondary school teachers and academics also played a part in the development of geography as an academic subject (Goodson 1981). However, the history of ESS in French high schools does not lead down the same path that Goodson describes. Sociology is taught as part of ESS, as is economics. The two subjects have not been wholly separated and the principle of the unity of the social sciences is still applied in this course. Each component is not solely an academic discipline but incorporates descriptive elements as well as explanatory components. The course remains a compromise, as Chervel has also shown. Its development is unconnected with the notion of 'competences', which has played no part in the debates on this subject. Nor can it be said, as Vergnolle has of geography (VergnolleMainar 2008), that the share of non-academic knowledge has tended to increase. Many authors explain the curriculum debate as a conflict between two different views: discipline-centred versus student-centred (Franklin and Johnson 2008). Supporters of discipline-centred reforms would be on the side of maintaining high standards of knowledge, while supporters of student-centred reforms would be more concerned by students' self-improvement. Sometimes this divide coincides with the political distinction between conservatism and progressive ideas, sometimes it does not. As we have shown above, the conflicts surrounding the introduction of sociology into French high schools cannot be understood in terms of the acceptance or rejection of academic disciplines. Rather, it reflects a controversial stance in an internal debate within the social sciences: unity of social sciences as historical sciences against boundaries. This stance is in agreement with an efficient pedagogical strategy and has an ideological dimension.

Does this teaching strategy, which has been characterized as a compromise – sociology combined with economics, descriptive combined with explanatory approaches – constitute an original approach? To answer the question would require systematic international comparisons.

What elements of this history of the teaching of ESS in French lycées can be attributed to the fact that it is a subject concerned with society, with all the consequent political implications? It would be interesting to launch international comparative research projects specifically devoted to subjects with political implications because of their controversial contents. International comparisons could help to identify the common features of these specific curricula and their successes and failures.



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Marianne Papke

## „...ich konnte viel über mein Leben lernen“ Soziologieunterricht an der Gymnasialen Oberstufe in Bremen – Eine „Parallelwelt“?

### Abstract

Largely unnoticed by both sociology and the German educational institutions and their discourse, Bremen has been offering both Advanced Placement and standard level sociology classes in its schools in grades 11 through 13 for the last 30 years. This paper deals mainly with the relevance of the school subject of sociology as seen by about 100 students recruited from five different classes. The students discuss the difference between the school subject sociology and other social sciences related subjects taught in school. Against this background, the emergence, development and formation of the new Bremen curriculum for sociology will be presented, concluding with a tentative inquiry into the “lack of interrelation” between school and university.

### Abstract

In der deutschen Bildungslandschaft und in der Soziologie nahezu nicht wahrgenommen gibt es in Bremen seit 30 Jahren Soziologieleistungs- und -grundkurse in der Gymnasialen Oberstufe. Dieser Aufsatz beschäftigt sich schwerpunktmäßig mit der Bedeutung des Unterrichtsfaches Soziologie aus der Sicht von ca. 100 Schülerinnen und Schülern aus fünf Oberstufenkursen. Die Jugendlichen setzen sich mit dem Unterschied zwischen dem Fach Soziologie und anderen sozialwissenschaftlichen Fächern in der Schule auseinander. Vor diesem Hintergrund werden kurz die Entstehung und die Erarbeitung des neuen Bremer Bildungsplanes Soziologie dargestellt, um am Ende fragend auf die „Beziehungslosigkeit“ zwischen Universität und Schule hinzuweisen.

### Keywords

Schülerorientierung, Schulentwicklung, Gesellschaftskritik, Bildungsplan

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*„Soziologie gehört gar nicht in die Schule.“*  
*„Soziologie verliert in der Schule an Wissenschaftlichkeit.“*  
*„Soziologie wird in der Schule oberflächlich und nichtsagend“.*

Kommentare – eher Zurufe – wie diese – hörten wir Soziologielehrerinnen und -lehrer des öfteren von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern auf Diskussionsveranstaltungen diverser Soziologentage oder Fachfortbildungen. Sie waren nie so ganz ernst gemeint als inhaltliche Kommentare, die eine Auseinandersetzung forderten, sondern eher Bemerkungen in lockerer Form, laut hineingedacht in die Runde, Ausdruck eines allgemeinen Fachkonsenses und im vermeintlichen Wissen, dass Soziologieunterricht ja sowieso nicht an deutschen Schulen existiere. Wie konnte auch jemand ahnen, dass in der Zuhörerschaft SoziologInnen anwesend waren, die im kleinsten Bundesland Bremen schon länger als drei Jahrzehnte, nämlich seit 1976 genau dies professionell tun: Soziologie in der Gymnasialen Oberstufe bis hin zur allgemeinen

Hochschulreife als Leistungs- und als Grundkurs an mindestens drei Schulen zu unterrichten

Mehr noch: Wir trafen eine wichtige bildungspolitische Entscheidung, indem wir gemeinsam dazu beitrugen, dieses Fach ab 1976 in den Oberstufenfächerkanon der so genannten „Neuen gymnasialen Oberstufe“ zu etablieren. Dies alles mit Unterstützung des damaligen SPD-Bildungssenators H.-W. Franke, zu der Zeit Vorsitzender der KMK, und der uns den Auftrag anbot, Lehrplan und Abiturrichtlinien für das Fach Soziologie zu entwerfen. Eingebettet in die Diskussionen um die neue Oberstufenreform in den 80er Jahren, gewerkschaftlich engagiert im Versuch, die Bremer Neustrukturierung der verstaubten und konservativen Gymnasien zu unterstützen, setzten wir uns in kontinuierlichen Diskussionsrunden immer wieder zusammen und entwickelten die inhaltlichen Fundamente und Rahmenbedingungen unserer eigenen Arbeit.

Selbstverständlich nahmen wir anlässlich vielfältiger und umfangreicher Fortbildungen in all den Jahren Notiz von der Entwicklung der Soziologie in Forschung und Lehre, waren wir doch häufig – auch in unseren anderen Fächern – selbst mit Lehraufträgen, Praxislehrerstellen, Dozenturen oder als Lehrkraft für besondere Aufgaben an der Universität Bremen tätig.

Wir richteten uns auf dieses eher einseitige Verhältnis dank der Aufmerksamkeit der Bremer Oberstufen, der Bremer Bildungsbehörde, der Elternschaft und besonders der interessierten wählenden Schülerschaft gut und erfolgreich darin ein.

In reger Auseinandersetzung mit den jeweils aktuellen sozialen Problemen, mit Wissenschaft und For-



schung sowie mit den jeweiligen altersspezifischen Interessen der Jugendlichen entwickelten wir die Kriterien für die sozialwissenschaftliche Tiefe und Breite, also für die didaktische Auswahl als auch für die Fachmethodik.

Nun, heute bestimmt Pisa die Schulentwicklung nachhaltig und, ohne hier genauer auf Details eingehen zu können, verändern sich die Oberstufen und Gymnasien im Zuge von reduzierten Staatsausgaben und bildungspolitischem Konservatismus wieder zurück durch Kernfachregelungen, Zentralabitur und permanente kostspielige oft sinnlose Evaluationen. In dieser Zeit standen und stehen wir als SoziologInnen immer wieder mit dem Rücken an der „Bildungswand“ und müssen aufpassen, dass uns nicht das ganze Fach abhanden kommt. Bis jetzt ist es uns allerdings durch eine vorsichtige, aber hartnäckige bildungspolitische Strategie gelungen, das Schulfach Soziologie an drei Standorten in Bremen zu halten.

## I.

Wie sehen Jugendliche ihren Soziologieunterricht, was bedeutet er ihnen bezogen auf ihr Lernen, Verstehen, Nachdenken, Fühlen, Argumentieren, Streiten, Verändern und Handeln? Welche Auswirkungen hat er möglicherweise, und wodurch unterscheidet er sich von anderen sozialwissenschaftlichen Fächern? Ich habe ca. 100 Schülerinnen und Schüler aus fünf Oberstufenkursen im Bremer Gymnasium Obervieland der Jahrgangsstufen 11 bis 13 ganz offen und schriftlich befragt:

Im 11. Jahrgang stellen Jugendliche schon nach einem halben Jahr fast übereinstimmend fest, dass Soziologieunterricht sie zum Nachdenken veranlasst hat und dass sich dieses Nachdenken auf sie selbst, ihre Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und ihr soziales Umfeld im Alltag bezieht:

„Ich habe Vieles gelernt, über andere Menschen, über mich und mein eigenes Verhalten...Ich lernte Vieles über Gesellschaft und gesellschaftliches Zusammenleben, über Regeln und Forderungen. Ich habe über bestimmte Themen zuhause ernsthaft nachgedacht und mir meine Gedanken gemacht.“ (Eicke, 17 Jahre)

„Ich habe sehr viel Interessantes über das menschliche Verhalten gelernt und so viel über mich selbst nachgedacht und verstehe mich und andere Menschen besser.“ (Daniela, 17 Jahre)

„...ich konnte viel über mein Leben lernen.“ (Tim, 17 Jahre)

„Das Fach Soziologie ist ein Fach, das einen auch im Alltagsleben zum Nachdenken anregt.“ (Steven, 17 Jahre)

„Die Gesellschaft um einen herum wird verständlich gemacht...man fängt die Welt an mit anderen Augen zu sehen.“ (Ivan, 19 Jahre)

„ das, was ich im Unterricht gelernt habe, hat sich eher unbewusst eingeprägt. Z.B. in Konfliktsituationen versucht man dann konstruktive Kritik auszuüben und rücksichtvoller zu sein.“ (Nuriye, 17 Jahre)

„Von diesem Fach habe ich gelernt, andere Menschen besser zu verstehen. Warum reagieren wir in verschiedenen Situationen verschieden? Ich habe viel über mich nachgedacht, über meine Erziehung, mein Verhalten und meine Denkweise und ich bin auf interessante Ergebnisse gekommen.“ (Anna, 18 Jahre)

„Ich habe das Gefühl, ich kann mich besser in andere Menschen hineinversetzen. Außerdem kann ich mich besser mit Texten auseinandersetzen.“ (Larissa, 17 Jahre)

Im 12. Jahrgang formulieren Jugendliche diesen Zusammenhang von Fach und Alltagsleben etwas sorgfältiger und nachdenklicher:

„Das Fach Soziologie hat mich dazu gebracht, in vielerlei Hinsicht umzudenken. Es hat mich weltoffener gemacht, mich dazu gebracht Vorurteile loszulassen und verständnisvoller auf andere Menschen zuzugehen.“ (Thomas, 18 Jahre)

„Soziologie hat mich als Menschen tatsächlich etwas geprägt und verändert. Ich bin mir meiner politischen Einstellung bewusster und etwas nachdenklicher geworden. Im Privatleben gerate ich häufig in Situationen, in denen ich an im Soziologieunterricht Gelerntes zurückdenke und ich mache mir Gedanken über Dinge, die mir früher egal waren.“ (Dennis, 19 Jahre)

„...ich empfinde es nicht als zu übertrieben ausgesagt, wenn ich den Unterrichtsstoff als eine Bereicherung für mein Leben empfinde. Durch viele Projekte habe ich mich mit Freude mehr sozial engagieren und helfen können. Mittlerweile fallen mir im Privatleben immer mehr Dinge auf, die ich mit dem Soziologieunterricht verbinde.“ (Yalda, 18 Jahre)

„Durch den Soziologieunterricht habe ich gelernt, viele Dinge, die uns als selbstverständlich vorkommen, zu hinterfragen und hinter die Fassade zu schauen.“ (Anita, 19 Jahre)

„...oft lohnt es sich hinter die Oberfläche zu schauen und nicht alles hinzunehmen, wie es ist.“ (Dina, 18 Jahre)

„Für mich ist Soziologie eins der wenigen Fächer, bei dem ich das Gefühl habe, dass ich das, was ich lerne, auch später im Leben noch gebrauchen kann. Ich lerne hier nicht einfach nur für die Schule und Noten, sondern für mich. Viele Themen geben mir auch zuhause noch zu denken...In Soziologie habe ich sozusagen Hintergrundwissen für das bekommen, womit ich im alltäglichen Leben konfrontiert werde. Natürlich verändern sich dabei auch ein Stück weit die Ansichten und auch die Persönlichkeit. Bei mir ist ein wichtiger Punkt, den ich gelernt habe, kritischer zu sein und nicht alles hinzunehmen, wie es auf den ersten Blick vielleicht scheinen mag.“ (Ricarda, 18 Jahre)

„Das Wichtigste aber war es, den Tunnelblick, den ich für manche Bereiche entwickelt habe, zu vermeiden und einen weiträumigen Blick zu entwickeln.“ (Elvan, 18 Jahre)

„Das Fach hat mich auch etwas (nicht viel) verändert. Ich habe zu manchen Dingen Einsichten gewonnen und urteile sozusagen nicht mehr so prompt. Ich denke erst





einmal über mein evtl. kommendes Handeln nach.“ (Madeline, 18 Jahre)

„...ich habe gelernt, die Gesellschaft in manchen Punkten kritischer zu sehen, aber auch ihr Handeln besser zu verstehen.“ (Nadja, 18 Jahre)

„Ich habe durch dieses Fach einen neuen Blick bekommen. Es wäre für mich etwas, worauf ich vielleicht nie gekommen wäre, der Genderblick. (das Problem nur ist, dass man sich nur einmal davon anzustecken lassen braucht, dann wird man es nicht mehr los)...auf dem Weg nach Hause denkt man nach, wie die praktische Anwendung von all dem ist, was wir gelernt haben...die Soziologie verändert meine Perspektive zu anderen Menschen.“ (Ömer, 20 Jahre)

„...Wir haben viel Ursachenforschung durchgenommen, sind ziemlich ins Detail gegangen und haben so ziemlich alles hinterfragt.“ (Jana, 18 Jahre)

„...Soziologie hat mich gelehrt, Dinge kritischer zu beobachten...außerdem habe ich gelernt, über Dinge zu diskutieren und argumentieren.“ (Hannah, 18 Jahre)

„...sogar zu Hause wird weiterdiskutiert.“ (Elif, 18 Jahre)

Kurz vor dem Abitur im 13ten Jahrgang orientieren sich die Jugendlichen deutlicher an zukunftsweisen den Perspektiven:

„Wir hatten das Thema „Globalisierung“, dieses Thema hat mich zum Nachdenken gebracht, da eines der Hauptprobleme der Treibhaus-Effekt war. Nun denkt man, ob man mit dem Flugzeug öfter fliegen oder auch für kurze Strecken das Auto nehmen sollte.“ (Erkut, 19 Jahre)

„...Zum ersten Mal habe ich über die Armut in relativer Form konkret nachgedacht und mir vorgestellt, wie es mir gehen würde, wenn ich und meine Familie aus finanziellen Gründen nicht in der Lage wären, den Sportverein zu bezahlen, mal ins Kino zu gehen oder kaum Geld für Nahrung hätten.“ (Jana, 19 Jahre)

„Ich habe viel über unsere Gesellschaft gelernt. Außerdem auch über die Zukunft, im Zusammenhang mit dem Klimawandel und der Globalisation. Das hat mich zum Nachdenken gebracht, wie unsere Zukunft aussehen wird.“ (Merle, 19 Jahre)

„Ich schätze mein Leben um Einiges mehr als zuvor, nicht nur materiell sondern durch Erfahrungen, die ich beispielsweise in meinen Praktika erhalten konnte...das bewegt mich darauf (auf Leid) zu achten, um nicht noch mehr Schaden als es schon gibt, anzurichten.“ (Ali, 20 Jahre)

Nach dem Hauptunterschied zu anderen Schulfächern befragt, kreisen auch hier die Antworten im 11. Jahrgang zunächst um die Begriffe Lebensbezug, Familie und Freunde, aber auch Methoden.

„Die Sachen, die man im Unterricht lernt, kann man fast immer auf sich selbst beziehen, man hat das meistens auch durchgemacht.“ (Ivan, 19 Jahre)

„Dieses Fach ist nicht nur für den Beruf wie viele andere bedeutsam, sondern für das ganze Leben und den eigenen Charakter.“ (Tim, 17 Jahre)

„Für mich ist der Hauptunterschied, dass ich in Soziologie viel mehr über soziale, alltägliche Dinge nachdenke. Ich verstehe Dinge, die auf mich bezogen sind.“ (Aylin, 18 Jahre)

„Es wird viel diskutiert und argumentiert...es gibt viel Kommunikation und Projektarbeit...man geht Themen auf den Grund...man muss keine Vokabeln lernen sondern nachdenken...für Arbeiten hat man mehr Material zum Lernen...man kann durch Projekte anderen helfen...es gibt die unterschiedlichsten Dinge zu recherchieren...es ist tiefgründig...(Steven, Nuriye, Thorben, Daniela, Melanie, Lara, Eicke, Janis, Julian, 16-17 Jahre)

Eine Erweiterung der sozialen, politischen und individuellen Kompetenzen wird in den 12. und 13. Jahrgängen festgestellt, verbunden mit methodischen Kenntnissen:

„Wir lernen den Menschen als Individuum besser kennen, da wir die Gesellschaft versuchen besser zu verstehen, indem wir uns selber Gedanken machen.“ (Betül, 20 Jahre)

„Spontan fällt mir ein, dass wir in Soziologie gefördert werden. Wir können uns mit unseren Fähigkeiten ganz gut einbringen.“ (Jana, 19 Jahre)

„Man könnte sagen, Soziologie hilft einem zu verstehen, warum jeder Mensch sich anders entwickelt und zu dem wird, wie er letztendlich ist. Außerdem entsteht durch das dort erlernte Hintergrundwissen die Möglichkeit, bewusst Einfluss auf die eigene Entwicklung zu nehmen.“ (Ricarda, 18 Jahre)

„Es fordert einen geradezu heraus, kritisch zu sein und sich seine Meinung zu bilden.“ (Dina, 18 Jahre)

„Soziologie lehrt etwas, was kein anderes Fach in der Schule lehrt. Nämlich soziale Kompetenz, die jeder für sein Leben gebrauchen kann und meiner Meinung auch erlernen sollte! Es würde den Umgang mancher Leute verbessern, politische Interessen bei jungen Leuten wecken, weil diese unser System besser verstehen und auch etwas daran verändern möchten und auch berufliche Entscheidungen beeinflussen.“ (Thomas, 18 Jahre)

„Der Soziologieunterricht beweist seine Stärke dadurch, dass ich überwiegend Dinge/Themen lerne, die mich in meinem jetzigen Lebensabschnitt direkt betreffen, z. B. Normen, Werte, Menschenrechte.“ (Arthur, 19 Jahre)

„Der Hauptunterschied ist, dass die Soziologie sozial ist, wie der Name schon sagt...was die Soziologie auch von anderen Fächern unterscheidet ist die Perspektive der Soziologie.“ (Ömer, 19 Jahre)

„Soziologie ist einem stetigen Wandel unterzogen, da sich die Gesellschaft ständig weiterentwickelt, bzw. sich gesellschaftliche Strukturen verändern.“ (Julia, 19 Jahre)

„...in der Soziologie wandelt sich mit der Welt auch der Unterricht.“ (Kristina, 19 Jahre)

„...nicht nur stumpfer Frontalunterricht, sondern eigenes Mitdenken und Diskutieren...vor allem gefällt mir, dass wir außerhalb auch tätig werden...wir bekommen Themen und sollen mit Experten reden...wir können zum



*Teil selbst bestimmen, was wir im Unterricht durchnehmen wollen...mir fällt ein, dass wir in keinem anderen Fach einen Grund haben, einen Stuhlkreis zu machen... wir reden mehr miteinander und sind uns näher als in anderen Fächern.“* (Hauke, Miriam, Jana, Dennis, 18 bis 19 Jahre)

## II.

Nachdem nun einige unserer Jugendlichen mit ihren Einschätzungen zu Wort gekommen sind, und zwar nicht beliebig und für uns ganz überraschend formuliert, ist es an dieser Stelle sinnvoll, knapp zu beschreiben, was wir Lehrenden aus meiner Perspektive in all den letzten Jahren an Lehrinhalten und Methoden formuliert haben, auf welchen Voraussetzungen diese beruhen und warum sie sich in etlichen Schüleräußerungen widerspiegeln.

Mein pädagogisches Grundverständnis möchte ich in drei Aspekte gliedern:

1. Bildung ist eingebunden in sozialräumliche und regionale Lebensbedingungen. D.h. in der Kombination von formalem und informellem Lernen in Familie, Schule, Nachbarschaft, Vereinen, Einrichtungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe und in öffentlichen, privaten und kommerziellen Angeboten mit Gleichaltrigen und anderen Menschen. Bildung ist ein Prozess, „mit dem die Lernenden in die Lage versetzt werden, sich aktiv und selbstverantwortlich in einer komplexen Gesellschaft je nach ihren persönlichen Fähigkeiten und dem Stand ihrer Entwicklung individuell, gleichberechtigt, kulturell, sozial und beruflich zu verwirklichen.“ (Internationale Bauausstellung Hamburg.2009,3)
2. Bildung öffnet sich für die globalen Zusammenhänge, wie das Weltklima, die komplexen gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge für die weltweite Bewahrung der Umwelt und für die Bedeutung und den Wert kultureller Diversität – sie erfordert eine Balance zwischen Lokalität und Globalität. (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung.2007,15f)
3. Bildung im schulischen Kontext muss ein Regulativ zur erlebten Machtlosigkeit und fehlendem gesellschaftlichem Grundwissen bilden und ordnet Soziologie inhaltlich als Gesellschaftskritik ein: „Unter Gesellschaftskritik wird eine sozialwissenschaftliche Aktivität verstanden, bestehende gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse, Institutionen und symbolische Ordnungen grundsätzlich zu problematisieren oder explizit in Frage zu stellen, den Herrschaftscharakter gesellschaftlicher Prozesse und Strukturen erkennbar zu machen und Möglichkeiten ihrer praktischen Veränderung mittelbar oder unmittelbar zu thematisieren.“ (Moebius;Schäfer.2006,8)

Im Zusammenhang mit diesen drei genannten Bildungszielen erhält also eine Schule im Stadtteil ihren

jeweils auf das Schülerklientel bezogenen spezifischen Auftrag, und Lehrer und Lehrerinnen sind jeweils immer gleichzeitig Unterrichtende, Moderatoren, Lernende und auch „Schulentwickler“. Für den Soziologieunterricht bedeutet dies aus meiner Sicht konkret einerseits Fokussierung auf spezielles theoretisches Wissen, Handlungsorientierung, Politische Bildung – erweitert durch Umweltbildung – Partizipation der Jugendlichen an den Entscheidungen über Inhalte, Projekte und Methoden, schul- und fachübergreifende Strukturen, Vernetzung mit Institutionen außerhalb der Schule und bewusster Umgang mit digitalen Medien.

Andererseits bedeutet dies die Beteiligung an der Schulentwicklung, denn heruntergewirtschaftete Schulen in konservativer Gymnasialstruktur tun sich schwer, neue innovative Schritte zu gehen und sich zum Stadtteil zu öffnen. Ohne diese lässt sich ein fortschrittlicher, offener Soziologieunterricht kaum praktizieren. Schulentwicklung bedeutet von daher auch für Lehrer und Lehrerinnen, die Umgestaltung der eigenen Schule in den Stadtteil als Lebenswelt der Jugendlichen hinein und den Alltagskontakt zwischen Schule und außerschulischem Leben aktiv mitzugestalten. Es ist wichtig, dass wir als Unterrichtende, als Lehrerpersönlichkeiten selbst aktiv teilnehmen an gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen, dass wir ein Risikobewusstsein im Hinblick auf nicht nachhaltige Trends entfalten und neugierig auf neue Erkenntnisse in immer wieder aktuellen Zusammenhängen sind. Ohne zu glauben, dass eine Lehrerpersönlichkeit Vorbild sein muss und kann, ist sie doch überzeugender in ihrer inneren Integrität bezüglich dessen, was sie vermittelt und bei jungen Menschen fördern möchte. Professionelle Distanz ist als Kunst der Abgrenzung zu Jüngeren und KollegInnen genauso wertvoll wie der punktuelle Zusammenschluss bezüglich einer selbst gestellten gemeinsamen Aufgabe. In dieser dialektischen Dynamik zwischen SchülerInnen, Schulen und Lehrpersonen ordnet sich auch der Soziologieunterricht ein.

## III.

Ende des Jahres 2008 war es Wunsch der Bremer Bildungsbehörde, die bisher gültigen Lehrpläne aller Oberstufenfächer in eine ganz neue Form zu bringen: Sie beauftragte deshalb Ende des Jahres 2008 einige Lehrer und Lehrerinnen der nicht im Zentralabitur vertretenen Fächer, und damit auch uns für das Fach Soziologie, neue Kompetenz-Richtlinien als Bildungspläne zu entwerfen, die sich an zu entwickelnden Standards orientieren und in denen die erwarteten Lernergebnisse als verbildliche Anforderungen formuliert sind. Mit diesen Bildungsplänen sollen durch die Standards die Voraussetzungen geschaffen werden, klare Anspruchsniveaus an den Bremer Schulen zu schaffen. Bei aller Unterschiedlichkeit in den städtischen Regionen und



in den schulischen Ausstattungen und zwischen allen Stühlen bildungspolitischer Parteienquerelen sitzend – ein wirklich widersprüchlicher Auftrag! Widersprüchlich auch deswegen, weil sich nicht klären lässt, in wie weit sich Begriffe wie Standards, Kompetenzen und Anforderungsebenen präzise voneinander abgrenzen und weil sich ihre Kategorisierung als eher formal erweist. Die Abtrennung von realen gesellschaftlich-politischen Inhalten macht diese dann fast beliebig, sie werden somit gewissermaßen für unwichtig erklärt und Kriterien für die Messung erfolgreicher Standards haben wir nicht zur Verfügung. Unserem Verständnis einer eher politisierenden sozialwissenschaftlichen Bildung entsprechend formulierten wir minimalistisch inhaltliche Ziele quasi als Grundgerüst des Soziologieunterrichts.

Wir bezogen uns bei dieser Aufgabe einerseits auf die kontinuierlich revidierten von uns selbst entworfenen Lehrpläne für das Fach Soziologie in Bremen und bemühten uns andererseits, neue fachliche Rahmenbedingungen zu finden, die der Vielfältigkeit und Verschränkung von Wissensvermittlung, Handlungs- und Berufsorientierung, Projektarbeit und Teilhabe am gesellschaftlichen Leben nahe kommen und sich in ihrer Struktur, Offenheit und ihren Themenvorgaben daran orientieren. Auf diesen Bildungsplan möchte ich im Folgenden kurz eingehen:

Der von uns entworfene Bremer Bildungsplan Soziologie 2009 stellt zunächst fest: „Im Unterricht ist Soziologie darauf gerichtet, Alltagserfahrung als gesellschaftlich vermittelte Erfahrung zu beschreiben, zu analysieren und versuchsweise vorherzusagen.

Die Alltagserfahrung findet statt:

- im Mikrobereich, insbesondere von Familie und peer-group sowie
- im Makrobereich der Gesellschaft, u.a. in den Bereichen Arbeit, Bildung, soziale Schicht, Informationstechnologie und Umwelt“ (Senatorin für Bildung in Bremen. 2009, 5).

Von Alltagserfahrungen sind die Schülerinnen und Schüler unmittelbar und mittelbar betroffen. Sie sollen im Soziologie-Unterricht ihre Aufgaben als Bürger unserer Demokratie nicht nur erkennen. Sie sollen auch dazu befähigt werden, sich im praktischen Gemeinschaftsleben sowie später in der gesellschaftlichen, politischen und wirtschaftlichen Welt zu beteiligen und verantwortlich zu handeln.

„Ziel des Faches Soziologie ist es, Schülerinnen und Schüler zu befähigen, ihre Position in der Gesellschaft kritisch zu reflektieren.

Im Soziologieunterricht wird die Fähigkeit und Bereitschaft von Schülerinnen und Schülern gestärkt, sich in komplexen gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhängen zu orientieren, diese auf ihren Sinn, auf ihre Zwänge und Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten hin zu befragen, zu analysieren und sie reflektiert unter Sach- und Wertaspekten zu beurteilen.

Der Soziologieunterricht stärkt ebenso die Fähigkeit und Bereitschaft von Schülerinnen und Schülern, eigene Möglichkeiten der verantwortlichen Teilhabe am gesellschaftlichen Leben im Sinne zivilgesellschaftlicher Partizipation zu nutzen.

Die Beschäftigung mit den jeweiligen Themenbereichen dient dem systematischen Erwerb von Grundlagenkenntnissen im Sinne von Deutungswissen über Kernkonzepte des sozialen Lebens und deren theoretische Begründungen. Ziel ist es, gesamtgesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge und Prozesse analysieren und beurteilen zu können.

Der Soziologieunterricht befähigt zum Verständnis und zur Gestaltung gesellschaftlicher und individueller Handlungsräume, indem er diese Leitziele verfolgt:

- Erwerb grundlegender Kenntnisse über den Aufbau und den Wandel der Gesellschaft,
- Fähigkeit zur Interpretation und kritischen Hinterfragung von Gesellschaftstheorien,
- Befähigung zum Treffen sozial verantwortlicher Entscheidungen.

Wichtige Basis für das Verständnis gesamtgesellschaftlicher Zusammenhänge sind die Ebene der Persönlichkeit, die Ebene des sozialen Systems und die Vermittlung zwischen den beiden.“ (Senatorin für Bildung in Bremen.2009,5)

Den letzten Satz haben wir folgendermaßen verstanden:

Drei Ebenen werden als strukturierend und sich gleichzeitig vermittelnd Gegenstand der Betrachtung und Analyse:

- die Ebene der Persönlichkeit mit ihrer gesellschaftlichen Prägung und Identitätsfindung, ihren Qualifikationen, Handlungsweisen, Bewusstseinsformen, sozialen Beziehungen und Konflikten,
- die Ebene des sozialen Systems mit seinen Strukturen, Normen, Institutionen, Organisationen und Interaktionsweisen,
- die Ebene der Vermittlung zwischen Persönlichkeit und sozialem System, also: Sozialisation, Lernen, Partizipation, soziales Handeln, Gruppen und Organisationen.

Auf allen drei Ebenen soll das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Stabilität und sozialem Wandel einbezogen werden.

In einem nicht veröffentlichten Vorentwurf entschieden wir:

Das Schulfach Soziologie kann und darf nicht im Sinne einer Abbilddidaktik wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse, Theorien und Methoden einfach auf den Unterricht übertragen. Schule ist nur zum Teil Reproduktion von Wissenschaft. Soziologie der Gymnasialen Oberstufe vermittelt deshalb:

- Allgemeinbildung und damit persönliches soziales Orientierungs- und Handlungswissen,
- Fertigkeiten für berufliche Tätigkeiten sowie Orientierungswissen für Berufsentscheidungen und

- führt in Anfänge wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens ein und vermittelt dadurch Studierfähigkeit sowie Grundlagen für die individuelle Orientierung auf ein Studienfach.

Von daher werden die inhaltlichen Rahmenthemen folgenden Leitzielen untergeordnet:

Gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge heute und in der Vergangenheit verstehen, demokratische Werte beeinflussen und dafür eintreten, Verständnis für ökonomische und ökologische Zusammenhänge und verschiedene Wege, Ressourcen zu verteilen und anzuwenden, entwickeln; das Gemeinsame und das Unterscheidbare in verschiedenen Kulturen sehen und verschiedene Lebensmuster kennen.

So konzentrieren sich im aktuellen Bildungsplan Soziologie schwerpunktmäßig 4 Themenbereiche auf die zur Verfügung stehenden 4 Halbjahre der Qualifikationsphase in der verkürzten Oberstufe:

**1. Arbeit und Individuum** mit den möglichen Inhalten wie Sozialisation, Arbeit und Geschlecht, Berufsorientierung, Zukunft der Arbeit, Arbeitslosigkeit, Risikogesellschaft, Technikfolgenkritik, wirtschaftliche Eliten.

**2. Integration und Desintegration** mit den möglichen Inhalten wie gesellschaftliche Desintegrationsprozesse, Diversity, Macht und Ohnmacht, Leistungsprinzip und Zugehörigkeit zu sozialen Kreisen, Mediensozialisation und Medienkritik, Macht, Politik und Recht.

**3. Soziale Ungleichheit in Deutschland** mit den möglichen Inhalten wie Krise des Sozialstaats, Armutsrisiken und Eliterekrutierung in modernen Gesellschaften, gesellschaftliche Segregationsprozesse, Ideologie und Ideologiekritik, Theorien zur sozialen Ungleichheit.

**4. Soziale Ungleichheit national und international** mit den möglichen Inhalten wie Weltgesellschaft im Spannungsfeld von Umwelt und Entwicklung, Soziale Ungleichheit im Spannungsfeld von Nord und Süd, Globalisierung und internationale Finanzmärkte, soziale Ungleichheit in Europa (siehe: Senatorin für Bildung in Bremen.2009, 6).

#### IV.

Vielleicht stellt sich an dieser Stelle die Frage nach dem Unterschied zwischen Soziologie und anderen Schulfächern, wie Politik, Wirtschaft, Pädagogik, Psychologie oder Gemeinschaftskunde – auch danach habe ich zunächst die Jugendlichen gefragt. Für fast alle von ihnen ist die Soziologie entweder eine „Brücke“, vielleicht ein „Dach“ über alle anderen Fächer, weil sie die Gesamtgesellschaft zum Thema hat und andere Fächer nur Ausschnitte, oder sie ist ein „Korb“, in dem sie das Sammelbecken aller Fächer zu sein scheint:

Soziologie als „Brücke“:

„...Soziologie überdeckt viele andere Fächer...“ (Dennis, 18 Jahre)

„...Soziologie thematisiert alle diese Fächer und verbindet sie miteinander.“ (Juana, 18 Jahre)

„...jedoch empfinde ich das Fach Soziologie als wichtig, da es eben alle Themen miteinander verbindet.“ (Jessica, 18 Jahre)

„...Soziologie überdeckt viele andere Fächer...“ (Dennis, 18 Jahre)

„Ein Soziologe wird nicht automatisch Experte in Wirtschaft sein, aber er wird ein umfangreiches Grundwissen haben, da die Soziologie alle Fächer einbindet.“ (Nico, 18 Jahre)

„Durch Soziologie kann man versuchen, bestimmte Ereignisse zu verstehen, die in der Politik, Geschichte oder in der Wirtschaft geschehen.“ (Kevin, 18 Jahre)

„...Man kann einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen den Fächern finden, denn die Soziologie ist eigentlich für diese Fächer eine Brücke....Soziologie hat eine eigene Perspektive, die sich mit den Brücken zu den anderen Fächern kritisch auseinandersetzt, analysiert, aber trotzdem ihre eigene Perspektive nicht verliert, denn es geht immer noch um die gesamte Menschheit.“ (Ömer, 18 Jahre)

Soziologie als „Korb“:

„...die ganzen Fächer geben zusammen das eine Fach Soziologie.“ (Cansu, 18 Jahre)

„...Soziologie beinhaltet fast all diese Fächer...“ (Betül, 19 Jahre)

„Das Fach Soziologie beinhaltet nämlich eine Kombination aus allen Fächern.“ (Anita, 18 Jahre)

„Die Soziologie befasst sich mit unterschiedlichen Themen und beinhaltet sie. Vieles in eins.“ (Kristin, 18 Jahre)

„Soziologie ist ein einzigartiges Fach, es enthält von jedem Fach ein bisschen, deswegen könnte man es nur durch alle anderen ersetzen.“ (Jenny, 18 Jahre)

Andere Begründungen:

„Das Fach Soziologie...fordert einen geradezu heraus kritisch zu sein und sich seine Meinung zu bilden. Außerdem lernt man viel über die Gesellschaft und ihre Strukturen und Mechanismen. Dies lernt man in anderen Fächern nicht.“ (Dina, 18 Jahre)

„Im Vergleich zu anderen Fächern hat das Fach Soziologie einen tieferen Sinn und ist für die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung von starker Bedeutung.“ (Yalda, 18 Jahre)

„...wenn man Soziologie durch eines dieser Fächer ersetzen würde, könnte sich die Lehre der Soziologie nicht mehr so entfalten und wäre zu versteift auf ein Thema und eine Sicht der Dinge.“ (Hannah, 18 Jahre)

Meine Position, in Kenntnis der Lerninhalte der oben genannten anderen gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Schulfächer, ist, dass die Soziologie einerseits ebenfalls in einer Brückenfunktion und doch andererseits in ihrer Eigenständigkeit als Grundlagenwissenschaft



zur Analyse gesellschaftlicher Strukturen und Tatbestände beiträgt: „Soziologie hat als Wissenschaft den Anspruch im Kontext der Geisteswissenschaften als Grundlagenwissenschaft gesellschaftlicher Strukturen zu gelten. Sie ist aufgerufen, soziale Tatbestände und Phänomene durch Soziales zu erklären. (nach E. Durkheim)...Soziologie als Schulfach ist ein aufklärendes Schulfach. Durch das Verständnis der grundlegenden Muster alles Gesellschaftlichen, erwerben Schüler basale soziale Kompetenzen (Interaktionskompetenzen, Konfliktlösungskompetenzen, Reflexionskompetenzen, Verantwortungsübernahme).“<sup>1</sup>

In meinem Verständnis von Soziologie als Gesellschaftskritik ist sie grundsätzlich politisch und orientiert sich an der Perspektive, dass sie vielfältige Widersprüche analysiert, „ zu einer Verschiebung von Diskursen und Handlungspraxen“ (Winkler, Gabriele.2006, 203)) und zu einer Orientierung in dem Spagat zwischen wissenschaftlichen Ansprüchen, politischer Selbstreflexion und handlungsorientierter Verantwortlichkeit“ (a.a.O.,203) beiträgt. Das bedeutet, dass die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit gesellschaftlichen Problemen im weitesten Sinne eine Neuorientierung ermöglicht – einerseits in differenzierteren theoretischen Einsichten und dadurch bedingtem veränderten politischen Selbstverständnis und andererseits im veränderten politischen Handeln.

Damit ist der Soziologieunterricht natürlich auch politische Bildung im weitesten Sinne, aber nicht Politik-, Wirtschaftskunde-, Psychologie-, Pädagogik-, Geschichts- oder Gemeinschaftskundeunterricht.

Als Schulfach schafft die Soziologie also die sozialwissenschaftlichen – auch methodischen – Grundkenntnisse, hilft auf diese Weise, die Lebens- und künftige Berufswelt aller Schülerinnen und Schüler zu erfassen, damit sie sich in ihnen selbstbewusst und politisch bewegen können.

Nicht näher gehe ich an dieser Stelle darauf ein, weil es selbstverständlich ist, dass diese Grundkenntnisse auf einem sich entwickelndem Fundament soziologischer Theorien und aktueller Forschungsdiskussionen beruhen, und dass – bezogen auf Projektthemen – uns oft Fachwissenschaftler und Fachwissenschaftlerinnen zur Seite stehen.

Ganz deutlich stelle ich heraus, dass sich eine sozialwissenschaftliche, fachdidaktische Entscheidung bezüglich der Unterrichtsinhalte immer im Kontext von gesellschaftlich-politischer, schülerbezogener und fachwissenschaftlicher Relevanz bewegen sollte. Die Schülerbezogenheit und somit die notwendige

Mitbestimmung von Jugendlichen an Inhalten und Methoden liegen im Zentrum einer demokratischen und innovativen Schule. Die fachwissenschaftlichen Grundlagen und weiterführenden Theorien sind das tragende und stabilisierende Gerüst als auch durchaus längerfristiges eigenes Lernziel über konkrete Projekte hinaus. In Oberstufen und Gymnasien mit einengenden so genannten Kernfachschwerpunkten ( siehe auch die neuen KMK- Bestimmungen hinsichtlich des Abiturs), in verkürzter Schulzeit, bei gleichbleibendem Lernstoff in zu vielen Stunden sowie Entdemokratisierungstendenzen in den Bildungsstrukturen bleiben Schülermitbestimmung und das Üben von Kritik und politischem Handeln in der eigenen Schule und im Stadtteil auf der Strecke. Deshalb ist in unserem Bremer Bildungsplan vorgesehen, bei verbindlichen Themenbereichen, die Inhalte als optional zu verstehen und die Schulen zu veranlassen, zu ihnen und ihren bildungspolitischen Profilierungen entsprechende schuleigene Curricula zu entwickeln.

Das Schulfach Soziologie schafft selbstverständlich auch sehr gute Voraussetzungen, um direkt ein Soziologiestudium später anzuschließen:

“It is imperative that we equip our young people with the skills and knowledge to become responsible, conscientious adults, who are reflective and critical of their surroundings whether that means their workplace, home life, neighbourhood, country or global community. The study of sociology provides a wonderful toolbox for systematically understanding the world around us, helping us to appreciate our social relations and society at large. It is not only a respected social scientific discipline, but an invaluable guide for dealing with the pressures and challenges of everyday life.”<sup>2</sup>

## V.

Ein Spaziergang durch unseren Oberstufenflur in einer reichlich heruntergekommenen Schule mit dem Charme eines Betonbunkers und der kargen lieblosen Ausstattung der 60er Jahre zeigt uns große Bilderrahmen mit Foto- und Textkollagen über Klassenfahrten, aber auch etliche Soziologieprojekte der letzten Jahre. In unzähligen Wettbewerben erfolgreich, zeigen sie etwas von der Bandbreite ausgesuchter Projekte und stellen einen vagen Zusammenhang zu unserem Schulprofil: „Schule gegen Rassismus“ in einem der ärmeren Wohngebiete Bremens mit einer besonders hohen Migrationsquote dar: (vgl. Übersicht):

1 Jörg Meyhöfer. 2009. Unveröffentlichter Text, Bremen, Februar, S.1.

2 Lorraine Frisina. 2009. Collaborative Research Center 597, ‘Transformations of the State,’ at the University of Bremen, Januar 2009





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## Übersicht: Soziologieprojekte an einer Bremer Gymnasialen Oberstufe

- „Kinderrecht ist Menschenrecht“<sup>3</sup>
  - „Nur ein Mädchen – bloß eine Frau“<sup>4</sup>
  - „Die da – draußen vor der Tür“<sup>5</sup>
  - „Kann denn Mode Sünde sein?“ und „Kleider machen Leute“<sup>6</sup>
  - „Menschenrechte im Zeitalter der Bioethik“ und „Geniale Zeiten“<sup>7</sup>
  - „Mädchen und Frauen in der Dritten Welt“<sup>8</sup>
  - „Rechtsextrem – Nein Danke!“<sup>9</sup>
  - Machbarkeit von Wunschmenschen“ und „Der Körper nur eine Hülle?“<sup>10</sup>
  - „Fernweh und Reiselust“ und „Ist jede Reise eine gute Reise?“<sup>11</sup>
  - „Öl: Schwarzes Gold, Schwarze Pest – zu den sozialen und ökologischen Folgen von Tankerunglücken“<sup>12</sup>
  - „Die vermeidbare Katastrophe – New Orleans“<sup>13</sup>
  - „Hast Du Krebs oder hat der Krebs Dich?“<sup>14</sup>
  - „Atomkraft – der Tod inkognito“<sup>15</sup>
  - „Wissen gegen Willkür – mit Fantasie für die Menschenrechte“<sup>16</sup>
  - „Kinderrechte in Bremen“<sup>17</sup>
  - „Una vida in Nicaragua“ und Benefizkonzert für Nicaragua: „For the Children“<sup>18</sup>
  - „Selbsterfahrungsprojekt: Armut in unserer Stadt – ein Prozess der Annäherung“<sup>19</sup>
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- 3 Zwei Soziologiekurse haben im Jahr 1994 die sozialen Lebensverhältnisse von Straßenkindern, Kinderarbeitern und Kindern, als Opfer von Gewalt, untersucht
- 4 Beitrag für den „Schülerwettbewerb zur politischen Bildung“ über die Situation von Mädchen und Frauen in Indien und China im Jahre 1995, (<http://schule.bremen.de/schulen/gyober/webinhalte/nureinmaedchen/nureinmaedchen.htm>)
- 5 Kooperationsprojekt mit dem Weserkurier in Bremen im Jahre 2000
- 6 Vorbereitung und Durchführung zweier Großveranstaltung über die globalen ökonomischen, ökologischen und sozialen Auswirkungen der Textilproduktion unter Einbeziehung der Agenda 21 mit zwei Leistungskursen: Soziologie und Biologie (Titel: Kann denn Mode Sünde sein? 1999 und Kleider machen Leute 2003)
- 7 Reproduktionstechnologie und Gentechnologie (Titel: Menschenrechte im Zeitalter der Bioethik 2000 und GENiale Zeiten 2001). Vorbereitung und Durchführung einer Großveranstaltung in der bremischen Bürgerschaft mit zwei Leistungskursen: Soziologie und Biologie und dem Fachbereich Philosophie der Bremer Universität. Beteiligung am Bremer Schülerparlament. Zusammenarbeit mit der Schule am Rhododendronpark mit schwerst-mehrfach behinderten Jugendlichen als mehrjähriges Kooperationsprojekt. Hier zeigte sich, dass es möglich ist integrativ in Projektform zu arbeiten bei größtmöglicher Differenzierung.
- 8 Ein Hörspiel als Beitrag für den „Schülerwettbewerb zur politischen Bildung“ 2001, (<http://www.schule.bremen.de/schulen/gyober/webinhalte/Indien/indien.htm>)
- 9 Beitrag für den „Schülerwettbewerb zur politischen Bildung“, entstanden im Rahmen der Anerkennung als „Schule ohne Rassismus – Schule mit Courage“ im Jahre 2002, (<http://www.schule.bremen.de/schulen/gyober/webinhalte/rechtsextrem/rechtsextrem.htm>)
- 10 Körperinszenierungen: Filmprojekte und gemeinsame Großveranstaltung mit Schülerinnen und Schülern aus zwei verschiedenen Schulen: Soziologie- und Biologieleistungskursen (Titel: Zur Machbarkeit von Wunschmenschen 2003 und Der Körper nur eine Hülle? 2004)
- 11 Vorbereitung und Durchführung einer Großveranstaltung über den globalen Tourismus und dessen ökonomische, ökologische und sozialen Auswirkungen unter Einbeziehung der Agenda 21; zwei Leistungskurse: Soziologie und Biologie. Wieder ein Kooperationsprojekt mit schwerst-mehrfach behinderten Jugendlichen (Titel: „Fernweh und Reiselust“ und „Ist jede Reise eine gute Reise?“ 2005)
- 12 Ein Hörspiel als Beitrag für den „Schülerwettbewerb zur politischen Bildung“ 2005, mit Radio Bremen ([http://www.schule.bremen.de/schulen/gyober/webinhalte/soz/schwarzes\\_gold/schwarzes\\_gold.htm](http://www.schule.bremen.de/schulen/gyober/webinhalte/soz/schwarzes_gold/schwarzes_gold.htm))
- 13 Film und Buch (Titel: Die vermeidbare Katastrophe – Aus der Analyse der Überschwemmungskatastrophe in New Orleans für Bremen lernen! 2005-2006) den Opfern von Katrina gewidmet über die Zeitung : „Times Picayune“. Besuch des Herausgebers Jim Amoss in Bremen 2006)
- 14 Erstellung einer Broschüre für Jugendliche und ältere Kinder, die an Krebs erkrankt sind, und über das Netz diverse Informationen über Kontaktadressen, Beratungseinrichtungen und CDs erhalten können. In der Broschüre sind Artikel zur Aufklärung (medizinisch und biologisch) enthalten, sowie Hinweise in Form von recherchierten Fallgeschichten.(Titel: Hast Du Krebs oder hat der Krebs Dich? 2006)
- 15 Film und Buch (Titel: Atomkraft: Der Tod inkognito? 2006 – 2007) Vom Archiv Gorleben angefordert für den Unterricht dort vor Ort
- 16 Ein Beitrag für den Kreativwettbewerb von Amnesty International 2008 – mit Kontakt zum Bremer Guantanamo-Inhaftierten Murat Kurnaz und Analyse seines Falles
- 17 Analyse der sozialen Lage der Kinder in Bremen anlässlich der Initiative des Bremer Senats, Kinderrechte in das Grundgesetz zu integrieren (Titel: Kinderrechte in Bremen 2008 – unter zusätzlicher Berücksichtigung des Kevin-Falles)
- 18 Zwei Dritte-Welt-Projekte zur Unterstützung eines Kinderkrankenhauses in Managua im Rahmen unserer „Schule ohne Rassismus“: Entwicklung eines Hörspiels (Titel: Una Vida in Nicaragua 2008)und Organisation eines großen Benefizkonzertes mit Jazz- Musikern und einem Chor (2009) aus Bremen zur Beschaffung eines speziellen Operationsgerätes für verbrannte Haut ([www.forthethechildren.info](http://www.forthethechildren.info))
- 19 Projekte aller Soziologie-Leistungskurse Jg.13 in Obervieland in Bremen: Eigenerfahrung als Obdachlose (r) oder Praktikum in einer Hilfsorganisation. Über viele Jahre Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Weihnachtsgeschenkaktionen an Bremer Obdachlose in der Bremer „Tasse“ mit ca. 100 Jugendlichen (Titel: Selbsterfahrungsprojekt: Armut in unserer Stadt – ein Prozess der Annäherung 2000 – 2009)





Obige Projektthemen sind meistens verbunden mit anderen Fächern im Rahmen sog. Profile, Schulen, Künstlern, Politikern und Experten von Universitäten, Institutionen, Organisationen und Verbänden. Was hier wie eine eher zusammenhangslose Auswahl an Themen wirkt, fügt sich, wie oben schon begründet, in einen Rahmen allgemeiner soziologischer Forschungs- und Methodenfragen ein, deren Grundlagen oft erst im üblichen Unterricht erarbeitet werden müssen. Dies alles im Bemühen, auch hier durch abwechslungsreiche Situationen in den Gruppen, Gespräche, Diskussionen und Medien Verständnis zu erleichtern. Kommunikative und kooperative sowie instrumentelle Fähigkeiten müssen also immer wieder als Voraussetzungen des Lehrens und Lernens verstanden werden.

## VI.

Das Ende dieses Aufsatzes möchte ich mit einigen Fragen abschließen:

- Ist es nicht so, dass unsere intensiven bildungspolitisch kritischen unterrichtlichen Bemühungen durch die mehrgliedrige Struktur deutscher Schulen sowie die benachteiligenden Folgen sozialer Selektionsmechanismen quasi ad absurdum geführt werden?
  - Ist es nicht so, dass die Lehre an den Universitäten in den neuen Bachelor- und Masterstrukturen fachlich inhaltliche Zusammenhänge in Module trennt und es künftigen Lehrerinnen und Lehrern dadurch schwer gemacht wird, sowohl einen wirklichen politischen und sozialen Überblick zu erhalten, als auch zusammenhängende pädagogische Einsichten zu entwickeln, um sich später mit Jugendlichen gemeinsam auf den Weg zu machen, um Kriterien für eine Gestaltung des „gemeinsamen“ Lebens – auch in Zukunft – zu finden?
  - Ist es nicht so, dass gesellschaftskritisches Denken in der Soziologie in den Hintergrund getreten ist und dass mit den Individualisierungstheorien und Zeitgeistforschungen, zum Teil verbunden mit Personenkulten und Institutskulturen, reale soziale Entwicklungen mit sich zuspitzenden Ungleichheiten eher als irrelevant oder als nicht beeinflussbar erscheinen?
  - Ist es nicht so, dass die sich daraus entwickelte leichte universitäre Arroganz und Abgehobenheit ein 30-jähriges unverbundenes soziologisches Parallelleben von Universität und Schule möglich machten?
- Vielleicht schafft dieser Artikel ja ein wenig Annäherung...

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Maria Olson

## Democratic Citizenship – A Conditioned Apprenticeship. A Call for Destabilisation of Democracy in Education

### Abstract

We live in times when the search for a citizenship education that can transcend national, ethnical and cultural borders is an important part of educational policy. In times of increased pressure by the European Union on its nation states to provide for nation-transcending democracy, this question becomes crucial for national policy-making in Europe. In this text, Swedish education policy will be taken as a case in point in order to shed light on how this question is being handled in this particular national policy setting. It is argued that the policy's citizen fostering agenda tends to be counterproductive in the sense that it is still situated in national notions of the relationship between democracy and education, which tend to exclude certain individuals and groups of people on an age-related and (ethno) cultural basis. It is further argued that these excluding features can be related to educational ideas about socialisation. The aim of this text is underlined by suggesting a different way of framing democracy and democratic citizenship education: to increase the potential of education as regards the renewal of democracy and democratic citizenship.

### Content

- 1 Two modes of citizenship education in Swedish education policy
- 2 The two modes of citizenship education and the endorsement of democratic life
- 3 Is democratic citizenship education democratic?
- 4 Democratic citizenship education as something other than socialisation?

### Keywords

Citizenship education, democracy, society-centred, consumer-centred, voicing, newcomers

A central task for education in many western liberal democracies in Europe is to foster democratic citizens. One core question in the present societal and educational situation is how this task, regulated by law, is handled in times of pluralism and globalisation. Recent discussions about the future of education and global democratic citizenship have been fuelled by a worry about the 'seemingly pervasive' erosion of the social, political, economic and moral fabric of society in the face of rapid economic and social change (Biesta, 2006). As regards the Swedish context, which is taken as a case in point in this text, Swedish education policy on citizenship seems to handle this worry in ways that can be considered as counterproductive these days. Such counterproductivity is framed as unsatisfactory when it comes to the task of fostering democratic citizens.

First, I briefly present some characteristic features of two modes of citizenship education in current Swedish education policy. Secondly, one shortcoming as regards the democratic viability of these ideals is highlighted and, thirdly, this lack is discussed in terms of what might be seen as an unsatisfactory notion of democratic life and of the relationship between democracy and education in relation to national educational arenas in Europe.

### Two modes of citizenship education in Swedish education policy

In current Swedish education policy, two different modes of citizenship education dominate when it comes to the Swedish schools' commissioned role of fostering democratic citizens: a *society-centred* citizenship education and a *consumer-centred* citizenship education (Olson, 2008b).<sup>1</sup> Here, I will give a brief account of these modes of citizenship education as regards the educational task that is offered by them when it comes to providing for a democratic citizenry.

Beginning with the *society-centred* citizenship education, its 'democratic task' may be described as a question of empowering children and young people as well as other adults in education with skills and qualities that are assumed to be democratic. Hence, the educational assignment related to this empowerment tends to centre on democratic citizen fostering as something that can be provided for through a 'proper' democratic education in Swedish schools. This education appears, interestingly enough, to entail substantial qualities that are alleged to be inherent in an exclusive culture, i.e. the Swedish culture, so that adequate democratic citizen fostering is provided by means of a correct acculturation of values and skills that are assumed to belong to this culture. Within the *society-centred* mode of citizenship education, democracy thus seems to be intimately connected to a presumed Swedish national culture: "democracy forms the basis of the national school system" (Swed-

1 These two modes of citizenship education in current Swedish education policy are scrutinized and elaborated in previous policy research (Olson, 2008b). In this text, I sketch some feasible features of these nationally embedded educational policy modes of citizenship education without any intention of doing justice to either empirical stances of illustrations and exemplifications or to the contextual complexities involved in the analysis.



ish National Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-school class and the Leisure-time centre Lpo94, 2009, p. 3).

Society-centred citizenship education thus encompasses a moral cultivation that involves concepts such as solidarity, respect for others, sympathy and mutual understanding, where democracy is incorporated by working on the individuals' bodies and minds (Olson, 2008b; Sigurdson, 2002). This task serves the higher aim of strengthening a collectively undertaken "national moral character" presumed to be democratic. In sum, society-centred citizenship education in current Swedish education policy can be described as a political way of providing for an educated individual who believes that "what is good for me is good for the nation, which is good for the world", which entails a fixed set of nationally encompassing moral skills and values whose application is considered to serve as the appropriate way for the individual to fulfil her democratic life (Englund 1996, Olson, 2008b, 2009a).

As regards the second mode of citizenship education that is emphasised in Swedish education policy, *consumer-centred* citizenship education, its educational task can be described differently. Less stress is here placed on the acquisition of substantial cultural qualities by children and young people, as well as adults in education than is the case in society-centred citizenship education. Instead, certain 'attitudes' towards life and politics are assigned a more central role in the educational task of fostering democratic citizens. More precisely, the role of democracy that is embedded in this political-democratic educational task is related to the principle of freedom of choice. Put briefly, where the society-centred mode of citizenship education incorporates a specific set of moral values and predispositions for the individual to embody by means of a proper democratic education, the democratic endeavour of consumer-centred citizenship education instead requires a certain attitude towards life: the readiness to choose – politically, culturally and economically.<sup>2</sup>

Fostering democratic citizens in this mode of citizenship education tends to become a question of preparing children and young people for a life with satisfactory alternatives for them to choose between in order to achieve their objectives, which, in turn, serves the higher purpose of expressing a democratic lifestyle (Boman, 2002; Englund, 1999a, 1999b; Olson, 2008a). The role of education may thus be pictured as a question of refining their sensibility to their own needs, desires and objectives so as to prepare them for a life in and a societal spirit of 'freedom of choice',

which is considered to be democratic in itself.<sup>3</sup> What stands out as a nation-transcending extension of the citizen fostering involved in this mode of citizenship education is the hope that personal freedom, framed as a matter of navigating among possible choices, may serve as a trajectory for democratic life beyond the nation state.

### **The two modes of citizenship education and the endorsement of democratic life**

Although in different ways, the two modes of citizenship education in Swedish education policy both entail a political vision where education is assigned special and exclusive importance for democracy and for democratic citizenship. The relationship between education and democracy seems to be depicted as external, which means that Swedish education is considered to be part of a democratic culture per se (Biesta, 2009). Such a relationship frames a democratic citizenship that is located in the existence of a properly educated citizenry so that once all citizens have received their education, democracy will simply follow. In the face of such a 'democratic' objective, a democratic citizenry should be provided for by means of appropriate learning processes in formal education. The relationship between education and democracy thus involves an educational vision where the desired result of educational efforts is a person who possesses democratic knowledge, values, dispositions and life forms that are to be applied to life in particular ways and under certain circumstances.

Such policy references to education and democracy support the assertion that education is capable of serving as a societal warranty for democracy and for democratic citizenship beyond national and cultural entities. Hence, Swedish schools not only constitute one proper and adequate training arena for the outcome of a desired democratic life, but *the* proper and adequate training arena for this life. This somewhat awkward policy response to the issue of educating people for democratic life, which to some extent tends to transcend national and cultural borders, is far from new or spectacular. Yet I think this awkwardness calls for further exploration.

### **Two civic 'knowabilities'**

If we focus on the democratic core that is stressed in the society-centred and consumer-centred citizenship education in Swedish education policy, this core is marked out by an emphasis on two different civic democratic 'knowabilities' for the individual to em-

2 The consumer-centred mode of citizenship education in contemporary Swedish education policy corresponds to a certain degree with Zygmunt Bauman's (2000, 2007) concept of consumerism.

3 This educational task is thought to be supplied by means of schooling that stresses 'factual' knowledge, i.e. through the empowerment of the individual with knowledge of formal democratic structures and systems, and of human and customers' rights (Hwang, 2002; Olson, 2008a).



brace through education: a command of certain cultural moral codes that are being universalised (a common values education that is embedded in cultural registers) or, as in consumer-centred citizenship education, a certain attitude towards life that is directed towards prevailing principles of the market where delicate choosing within logics of demand and enquiry is a desirable feature for the individual to cling to.

As mentioned earlier, these two civic knowabilities both frame the role of education so as to ensure democracy by means of appropriate training of people for a life in a supposedly democratic educational culture, the Swedish culture. Nevertheless, the desired outcome of this educational policy not only frames children and young people, as well as adults in education, as persons who possess democratic knowledge, values and attitudes towards life that are to be applied in life. It also frames them as rooted, acculturated and performed as members or at least disciples of a specific national setting. That is, the democratic promise that emerges in the two modes of citizenship education in Swedish education policy seems to be embedded in nation-bound references; regardless of whether these references centre on the achievement of substantial cultural qualities of children and young, or on their enculturation into a specific 'democratic' choosing attitude towards life and themselves. This promise could be problematic, since it seems to fail to be democratic in itself.

### **Is democratic citizenship education democratic?**

One problem concerning what becomes visible in the two civic knowabilities in the two different modes of citizenship education in Sweden is that some individuals and groups have a propensity to be excluded from the notion of having been 'properly educated' and, further, from valid democratic citizenship. What is at stake, it seems, is that the educational agendas emerging in these modes block the possibility of educational practices functioning as democratic arenas fostering citizens, as these agendas tend to break down vital and necessary all-encompassing ways for people to live a democratic life. Seemingly, they point to the contrary: for a narrow understanding of democracy that nurtures exclusion between people that is related to inquiries about whether one is sufficiently (well) educated or not.

One question that touches on these worrying limits of the Swedish citizen fostering agenda on policy level, as well as the educational policies in many other western (neo) liberal democracies both within and outside Europe (Biesta, 2006; Telhaug, 1990), is what implications their citizen fostering agendas may have for certain individuals and groups. Who may be situated as an insider – as an ascribed 'democrat' according to these agendas – and who runs the risk of being

situated as an outsider, as a 'not-yet-(ascribed) democrat'? And on what grounds may these ascriptions be based? What appears as a crucial notion in respect to these questions is the idea of democracy and democratic citizenship as something that is 'resided'. One can either be inside or outside this supposedly democratic life form depending on one's relationship to it and this seems to determine whether one is acknowledged as a (properly educated) democratic citizen or not.

Individuals and groups whose experiences, values and (choosing) attitudes are not found to be compatible with this 'resided' democracy thus tend to be excluded from a decent, recognisable democratic citizenship, or for some reason are considered to be not-yets in respect to such democratic existence.<sup>4</sup> We can ask ourselves the question: who may these individuals and groups be, in a concrete sense? Children and young people are people who distinctly score as not-yets as regards democratic citizenship, as they have not undergone any citizenship education in school. Other people who run the risk of being categorised as democratic not-yets are immigrants and national or international minority groups. These people would need to be (re-)educated in terms of a constant refinement of knowabilities familiar in a supposedly Swedish democratic life form so as to fulfil the criteria for democratic citizenship, even though they might have undergone a citizen education other than the Swedish elsewhere in the world.<sup>5</sup>

The delimiting divides between the imagined 'outsiders' in the two policy modes of citizenship education in Sweden shed light on an imbalance that is unbearable for democracy: it seems to be based on a geographically and, supposedly culturally delimited foundation. Certain people tend to be excluded from a valid democratic citizenship. This, I believe, situates democracy and the educational assignment of fostering democratic citizens in a *discriminatory* frame. Establishing democratic citizenship becomes a question of whether the person next to me is, or can be, properly educated in the sense that she or he has a sufficient command of moral skills and dispositions that are acknowledged in a supposedly Swedish democratic life form makes it hard to nurture a hope for democracy. Instead, such a democratic conviction that is founded

4 The dilemma of the delimiting foundation of democracy in Swedish education policy and teaching practice is recognized and discussed as an educational problem in a central Swedish official report on democracy (Prime Minister's office, 2000).

5 Of special interest in this context would be to consider the situation of adult students who can be seen as 'ethnic Swedes'. These individuals have often undergone a citizenship education in the Swedish educational system earlier in their lives, but have not been subjected to the current, contemporary Swedish citizen fostering agenda. For further reading on related issues concerning adult students, see Merrill, 2009.



on ethnocultural divides presents an intolerable fate for democracy, as well as for education as a promoter of democracy within and beyond the nation state.

Hence, the proposal for democratic citizenship, which has emerged in earlier research on current Swedish educational policymaking, seems to be counterproductive. Rather, it illuminates a somewhat awkward situation: it creates closure for the 'fact' that the person in front of me is *beyond* my comprehension of democracy and democratic existence. Such democratic conviction is a hazard that we cannot afford these days. What we need is a democratic belief and citizen fostering agenda that can resist current forces of national or any other universalised embrace of certain life forms that nourish distance between people on ethnocultural or any other categorical basis. What we need, I suggest, are altered ways of thinking about the relationship between democracy, democratic life and education.

### **Democratic citizenship education as something other than socialisation?**

How, then, can we approach the urgent question of educating democratic citizens in a pluralistic world? Far from presenting any solution to this question I will reconsider some aspects of the relationship between democracy and education. What is required, I suggest, is an educational policy on citizenship education that *rejects* socialisation as an educational paradigm and guarantee of democracy. In line with Biesta (2009) and Säfström (2005), it is the very idea of socialisation that has to be reconsidered in order to come to terms with the question of educating democratic citizens.

This suggestion stems from a need to liberate the relationship between democracy and education from the standardised view of a question of integration of not-yets, i.e. children and young people and ethnocultural 'others', in the present societal situation.<sup>6</sup> This liberation may serve a specific and important aim: to support *change* in this situation and in societal conditions present in current conceptualisations of democracy and of democratic life, which can be seen as a central democratic and educational task. Accordingly, this liberation may serve as a way to transcend social, geographical and psychological boundaries that seem so hard to overcome in citizenship education on the policy level in Sweden. What is at stake is not to take away the responsibility of schools and teachers to

function as 'guides' of children and young and ethnocultural others in an existing world. The main motive for rejecting socialisation as dominating educational idea for democratic citizenship education is, rather, to make a case for a democracy that is directed towards what is new, what is *not yet* seen as democratic for a democracy still-to-come (Peters and Biesta, 2009).<sup>7</sup>

Seen from this viewpoint, to support the outsider's ways of speaking and acting democratic established democratic educational designs like the Swedish is to shore up the opportunity for societies to *renew* themselves and their ways of living and acting democracy through education. In this respect, the outsider's position might be seen as that of the newcomer, as she or he is apt to bring something new into the existing ways of speaking and acting democracy. What, then, does educating for democratic citizenship mean, i.e. taking newcomers' ways of speaking, thinking and experiencing democracy into account? And what would the policy approach to such an endeavour be like? This question does not lend itself easily to levels of practical implementation, but may serve as a critical questioning of democratic 'certainty' within the realm of education. It may invite us to consider educating for democracy differently compared with the two modes of citizen education in Swedish education policy. It may frame such education as a matter of encouragement, as the teacher's encouraging of the newcomers' 'voicing' of different meanings and understandings of democracy and of democratic life (Olson, 2009a).

Such voicing requires that these children, young people and other subjects for education not be treated as democratic not-yets, whose task is to refine their ways of speaking and acting democracy into a reified 'inside' of democracy that consists of specific skills and values and attitudes compatible with an established life form. Instead, it requires an openness and sensitivity to the ways in which these people possess the potential for creating something new and different from the known in terms of democracy. This voicing should not be confused with closure of the common educational assumption that children, young people and adults in education, i.e. the newcomers, should train for a democratic life and culture by engaging in democratic processes and educational practices that are intended to generate a democratic person. Rather, it should be considered as an educational task as important as these educational training practices. It

6 As mentioned earlier, there are indeed several differences between children and young people and ethnocultural others and in relation to the issues of democratic citizenship education. Nevertheless, they share one thing that makes them compatible with each other in relation to this context: they embody the outsider's position in relation to the two modes of citizenship education in Swedish education policy, which is dealt with in this part of the text.

7 A rejection of the idea of socialization in education requires a rethinking of psychological perspectives of education for democracy, such as socially and psychologically established categories and polarizations such as immigrant – emigrant, child – adult and so forth. Such 'developmentalistic' concepts must be rethought in relation to education as they, according to Biesta (2009), tend to make it hard for schools and teachers to think differently about education, school and the people who are subjects of education.





is also worth stressing the notion that the rejection of socialisation as a hegemonic idea in democratic citizenship education is not to consider children and young and ethnocultural 'others' as superior beings in relation to the openness to a renewal of democracy. Instead, they should be considered as a valuable offer in the efforts to break with the tyranny of preconditioned orientatedness concerning democracy and democratic life in education.

To put it differently, what I suggest is that the newcomers' voicing of democracy and democratic life in education may be regarded as a way of learning *from* and *through* democracy, which should be perceived as important as learning for and about democracy. Any citizenship education that takes the former two modes of learning democracy into account should be seen as part of an ongoing, friction-filled route without guarantees of outcomes measurable in any educational quality test. This voicing is by no means free of cultural, political or economical aspects but is, rather, part of these aspects, as they are part of the public space in which education is involved (Mouffe, 2005).

Instead of presenting a proposal for how to implement this offer in educational practices, I would claim that the offer of the voicing of children, young people and other subjects for education gives us the opportu-

nity to *destabilise* current political educational conceptualisations of democracy and democratic citizenship. Destabilising democracy in this sense can be seen as a way of nurturing the hope of a redirecting of the relationship between democracy and education in a way that can 'open up' the political and societal framing of citizen education through education. This hope stresses the notion of the rejection of socialisation as an educational paradigm for democracy. In addition, it carries with it the promise of democratic existence *beyond* national and ethnocultural divides, which may contribute to a redirection of Swedish as well as other nation-bound educational systems in Western democracies in Europe towards a breakdown of pre-established notions of democracy and democratic life.

In summary, rethinking education for democracy as a rejection of socialisation can be seen as a generous offer to policymaking for, and educational practices of, citizenship education. This offer suggests a deepening of the prospect of the *potential of education* as a public space where the search for a renewal of democracy is at the core of the educational practices. This offer, I suggest, is intimately connected with a visionary aspect of democracy and democratic citizenship as something that should involve, and be defined by, children, young people and cultural others.

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