**Origin, Meaning, and Scope of Sociology/Sociology of Education**

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**Learning Objectives:**

At the end of this chapter, readers will be able to:

1. Define the term sociology / sociology of education
2. Explain how sociology emerged and developed;
3. Explain the scope and basic concern of sociology / sociology of Education
4. Appreciate the personal and professional benefits derived from learning sociology of education
5. Differentiate between Educational Sociology and Sociology of Education
6. Describe the relationship of sociology with other fields of study.

**What is Sociology?**

Before attempting to define what sociology, it is important for us to look at what the popular conceptions of the discipline mean. As may be the case with other sciences, sociology is often misconceived among the populace. Though many may rightly and grossly surmise that sociology is about people, some think that it is all about “helping the unfortunate and doing welfare work, while others think that sociology is the same as socialism and is a means of bringing revolution to our schools and colleges” (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978).

The first social scientist to use the term ***sociology*** was a Frenchman by the name of Auguste Comte, who lived from 1798-1857. Sociology' which had once been treated as social philosophy, or the philosophy of the history, emerged as an independent social science in 19th century. Auguste Comte, a Frenchman, is traditionally considered to be the father of sociology. Comte is accredited with the coining of the term sociology. The word **Sociology** is derived from the combination of the Latin: ***socius,*** meaning companion or associate; and *'logos',* meaning science or study. The etymological meaning of "sociology" is thus the science of society.

John Stuart Mill, another social thinker and philosopher of the 19th century, proposed the word ***ethology*** for this new science. Herbert Spencer developed his systematic study of society and adopted the word "sociology" in his works. With the contributions of Spencer and others, it (sociology) became the permanent name of the new science. Sociology is therefore seen as the science or study of the origin, development, organization, and functioning of human society. It is the science of fundamental laws of social behavior, relations, institutions, etc. It is the systematic study of society. Sociology encompasses all the elements of society; that is, social relation, social stratification, social interaction, culture. That is why the scope of sociology is wide and it ranges from the analysis of interaction of two anonymous persons to the global social interaction in global institution. Like; UNESCO, UN etc. Sociology can perhaps be best regarded as an attempt to name that which secretly keeps society going (Indrani, 1998).

Although the term “sociology” was first used by the French social philosopher Auguste Comte, the discipline was more firmly established by such theorists like; Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978). Before going any further, let us note that the concepts “society and “culture” are central in sociology. However a more formal definition of sociology may be that it is a social science which studies the processes and patterns of human individual and group interaction, the forms of organization of social groups, the relationship among them, and group influences on individual behavior, and *vice versa, and* the interaction between one social group and the other (Oni, 2013).

Sociology can also be defined as the scientific study of society, which is interested in the study of social relationship between people in group context. (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998*)*. It deals with a factually observable subject matter, depends upon empirical research, and involves attempts to formulate theories and generalizations that will make sense of facts (Giddens, 1996). Similarly, Soroka (1992) stated that “Sociology is a debunking science; that is; it looks for levels of reality other than those presented in official interpretations of society and people’s common sense explanations of the social world. In other words, sociologists are interested in understanding what is and do not make value judgments.” It can therefore be summarized that sociology is ;

* The study of society and social life as forces that influence people and contribute to shaping their lives.
* “In the game of life, we may decide how to play our cards, but it is society that deals us the hand” (Macionis and Plummer, 2005)

Sociology is the study of society and social life as forces that influence people and help shape their lives. Sociologists believe and have demonstrated that what we do, how we act, the opportunities and challenges we face, the paths of our lives are not just determined by individual will or even individual effort. Society shapes what we do, how we do it, and how we understand what others do. It opens some doors and closes others on the basis of our gender, our age, our sexuality, our ethnicity, or our class background. (Macionis and Plummer, 2005)

Sociologists want to understand society and social life. They study the groups that make up society; be they composed of two individuals or two thousand; they are the means by which we experience life as social beings, not just as individuals. They want to know about the ties between people in these groups, the nature of their relationships. They want to know in particular how those relationships act to organize us and how they impact us. In what ways do they affect our lives? Do they affect distinct groups differently? Do they advantage some groups and disadvantage others? What does that say about how we relate to each other as human beings?

To make the definition of sociology more clear, it is wise on our part to discuss some of the definitions given by famous sociologists. Unfortunately, there is no short-cut definition of Sociology so far. It has been defined in a number of ways by different sociologists, but no single definition of Sociology has yet been accepted as completely satisfactory.

**Auguste Comte,** the founding father of Sociology, defines Sociology "as the science of social phenomena subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation."

**Kingsley Davis** defines Sociology as a "general science of society."

**Park** regards sociology as "the science of collective behavior".

**Small** defines sociology as "the science of social relationships".

**Marshal Jones** defines sociology as "the study of man-in-relationship-to-men".

**Ogburn and Nimkoff** : "Sociology is the scientific study of social life".

**Franklin Henry** Giddings defines sociology as "the science of social phenomena".

**Henry Fairchild**: "Sociology is the study of man and his human environment in their relations to each other".

**Max Weber** defines sociology as “the science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects".

**Alex Inkeles** says, "Sociology is the study of systems of social action and of their inter-relations".

**Kimball Young and Raymond W. Mack** say, "Sociology is the scientific study of social aspects of human life".

**Durkheim** defines Sociology as the "science of social institution".

**Harry M. Jonson** opines that "Sociology is the science that deals with social groups." Of the various definitions given by sociologists, the definition of Ginsberg seems to be more satisfactory.

**Moris Ginsberg** defines Sociology "as the study of human interactions and interrelations, their condition and consequences. (Oni, 2013:4)

The foregoing can be summarized that Sociologists study race and ethnicity, social stratification, social mobility, policy processes, education, poverty, organizations and bureaucracies, crime and social problems, family and religion; amongst a range of other social processes. It can also be defined as the study of human behavior.

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| **Sociology enables us** to understand the structure and dynamics of society, and their intricate connections to patterns of human behavior and individual life changes. It examines the ways in which the forms of social structure -- groups, organizations, communities, social categories (such as class, sex, age, or race), and various social institutions (such as kinship, economic, political, or religious) affect human attitudes, actions, and opportunities. |

Sociologists study people in society. The subject matter of sociology includes; groups like the immediate family, larger ones like a school or factory, very large institutions like the whole education system or the political system, and even whole societies like Nigeria or Britain. Sociologists also study language and other means of communication and understanding between people, as well as the production of cultural and scientific knowledge.

Put simply, sociology is the attempt to understand how society works. It provides description and analysis of the patterns and structures in human relationships, and it encourages us to see the world through the eyes of other people. The need to understand the society in which we live is a pressing one. We all have a personal stake in this as we try to make sense of our own lives, as well as a wider responsibility to contribute to public debates about the way our society is organized and how it relates to other societies. Sociology helps us to do all these.

**Scope of Sociology**

Scope means the subject matter or the areas of study. Every science has its own field of investigation. It becomes difficult to study a science analytically unless its boundary or scope is determined precisely. Sociology as a social science has its own scope or boundaries. But there is no one opinion about the scope of Sociology. However, according to Soroka (1992) there are two main schools of thought regarding the scope of Sociology:

1. *The Specialist or Formalistic School*
2. *The Synthetic School*.

There is a good deal of controversy about the scope of Sociology between the two schools. The supporters of first school believe that Sociology is a specific science and the scope should be limited whereas others believe that it is a general science and its scope is very vast.

**(1)** **Specialist School:** The supporters of this school of thought are George Simmel, Vierkandt, Max Weber, Vonwise, and F. Tonnies**.** The main views of the school regarding the scope of Sociology are -

1. Sociology is a specific, pure and independent social science.
2. Sociology studies the various forms of social relationships.
3. Scope of Sociology is very narrow and limited.
4. Sociology deals with specific form of human relationship.`
5. Sociology need not study all the events connected with social science.
6. Simmel believes that it is a specific social science and it should deal with social relationships from different angles.

**(2) Synthetic School:** The supporters of synthetic school are the sociologists like; Ginsberg, Durkheim, Comte, Sorokin, Spencer, F. Ward, and L.T. Hobhouse. According to this school of thoughts -

1. Sociology is a general and systematic social science.
2. Scope of Sociology is very vast.
3. Sociology needs help from other social sciences.
4. It is a synthesis of social science.
5. Sociology is closely related with other social sciences

**Historical Origin of Sociology**

Sociology and other social sciences originated from a common tradition of reflection of social phenomena; interest in the nature of human social behavior and society has probably always existed; however, most people in most past societies saw their culture as a fixed and god-given entity. This view gradually was replaced by more rational explanations beginning from the 17th century especially in Western Europe (Rosenberg, 1987). The sociological issues, questions and problems had been raised and discussed by the forerunners starting from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers’ and Hebrew prophets’ times. Sociology as an academic science was thus born in 19th century (its formal establishment year being 1837) in Great Britain and Western Europe, especially in France and Germany, and it greatly advanced throughout 19th and 20th centuries. The development of sociology and its current contexts have to be grasped in the contexts of the major changes that have created the modern world (Giddens, 1996).

Furthermore, sociology originated in 18th century philosophy, political economy and cultural history (Swingwood, 1991). The major conditions, societal changes, upheavals and social ferments that gave rise to the emergence and development of sociology as an academic science include the Industrial Revolution which began in Great Britain, the French Political Revolution of 1789, the enlightenmentand advances in natural sciences and technology. These revolutions had brought about significant societal changes and disorders in the way society lived in the aforementioned countries. Since sociology was born amidst the great socio-political and economic and technological changes of the western world, it is said to be the science of modern society. With these developments, the pioneering sociologists were very much concerned about the great changes that were taking place and they felt that the exciting sciences could not help understand, explain, analyze and interpret the fundamental laws that govern the social phenomena. Thus, sociology according to Henslin and Nelson, (1995); Giddens, (1996); and Macionis, (1997) was born out of these revolutionary contexts. The founders or the pioneering sociologists are as follows;

**Auguste Comte, French Social Philosopher (1798- 1857)**

Comte was the first social philosopher to coin and use the term sociology (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978). He was also the first to regard himself as a sociologist. He defined sociology as the scientific study of ***social dynamics*** and ***social static***. He argued that sociology can and should study society and social phenomena following the pattern and procedures of the natural science. Comte believed that a theoretical science of society and the systematic investigation of human behavior were needed to improve society. He argued that the new science of society could and should make a critical contribution towards a new and improved human society. Comte defined sociology as the study of ***social******dynamic*** and ***social static***, the former signifying the changing, progressing and developmental dimensions of society, while the latter refers to the social order and those elements of society and social phenomena which tend to persist and relatively permanent, defying change.

**Karl Marx (German, 1818-1883)**

Marx was a world-renowned social philosopher,sociologist and economic historian. He maderemarkable contributions to the development of varioussocial sciences including sociology. He contributedgreatly to sociological ideas. He introduced key concepts in sociology like; ***social class, social class conflict, social oppression, alienation***, etc. Marx, likeComte, argued that people should make active efforts tobring about societal reforms. According to Marx,economic forces are the keys to underestimating societyand social change. He believed that the history ofhuman society has been that of **class conflict**. Hedreamed of, and worked hard towards realizing, aclassless society, one in which there will be noexploitation and oppression of one class by another, andwherein all individuals will work according to theirabilities and receive according to their needs. Marxintroduced one of the major perspectives in sociology,called ***social conflict theory*** (Macionis, 1997).

**Harriet Martineau, British Sociologist (1802-1876)**

At a time when women were greatly stereotyped and denied access to influential socio-political and academic arena, it is interesting to have a female academic to be numbered among the pioneering sociologists. Harriet was interested in social issues and studied both in the United States and England. She came across with the writings of Comte and read them. She was an active advocate of the abolition of slavery and she wrote on many crosscutting issues such as; racial and gender relations, and she traveled widely. She helped popularize the ideas and writings of Comte by translating them into English (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

**Herbert Spencer, British Social Philosopher, (1820-1903)**

Spencer was a prominent social philosopher of the 19th century. He was famous for the organic analogy of human society. He viewed society as an organic system, having its own structure and functioning in ways analogous to the biological system. Spencer's ideas of the evolution of human society from the lowest *("barbarism")* to highest form *("civilized")* according to fixed laws were famous. It was called "**Social** **Darwinism**", which is analogous to the biological evolutionary model. Social Darwinism is the attempt to apply by analogy the evolutionary theories of plant and animal development to the explanation of human society and social phenomena (Team of Experts, 2000).

**Emile Durkheim, French Sociologist, (1858-1917)**

Durkheim was the most influential scholar in the academic and theoretical development of sociology. He laid down some of the fundamental principles, methods, concepts and theories of sociology; he defined sociology as the study of **social facts**. According to him, there are social facts, which are distinct from biological and psychological facts. By social facts, he meant the patterns of behavior that characterize a social group in a given society. They should be studied objectively. The job of a sociologist according to him, therefore, is to uncover social facts and then to explain them using other social facts. Durkheim was the first sociologist to apply statistical methods to the study of social phenomena (Macionis, 1997; Calhoun, *et al,* 1994*)*.

**Max Weber, German Sociologist (1864-1920)**

Weber was another prominent social scientist. According to him, sociology is the scientific study of human **social action**. Social action refers to any “action oriented to influence or influenced by another person or persons. (Team of Experts, 2000). It is concerned with the interpretive understanding of human social action and the meaning people attach to their own actions and behaviors and those of others. Weber was a renowned scholar who like Marx, wrote in several academic fields. He agreed with much Marxian theses, but did not accept his idea that economic forces are central to social change. Weber argues that we cannot understand human behaviour by just looking at statistics. Every activity and behaviour of people needs to be interpreted. He argued that a sociologist must aim at what is called **subjective meanings**, the ways in which people interpret their own behavior or the meanings people attach their own behavior (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Rosneberg, 1987).

**Scope and Concerns of Sociology**

The scope of sociology is extremely wide. The discipline covers an extremely broad range that includes every aspect of human social conditions; all types of human relationships and forms of social behaviour (Indrani, 1998).

Sociologists are primarily interested in human beings as they appear in social interaction and the effects of this interaction on human behavior. Such interaction can range from the first physical contacts of the new born baby with its mother to a philosophical discussion at an international conference, from a casual passing on the street to the most intimate of human relationships Sociologists are interested to know what processes lead to these interactions, what exactly occurs when they take place, and what their short run and long run consequences are. (Giddens, 1996)

The major systems or units of interaction that interest sociologists are social groups such as; the family or peer groups; social relationships, such as; social roles and dyadic relationships, and social organizations such as; governments, corporations and school systems to such territorial organizations as communities and schools (Broom and Selzinki, 1973). Sociologists are also keen to understand, explain, and analyze the effect of social world, social environment and social interaction on our behavior, worldviews, lifestyle, personality, attitudes, decisions, etc., as creative, rational, intelligent members of society; and how we as such create the social reality.

**Levels of Sociological Analysis and Fields of Specializations in Sociology**

There are generally two levels of analysis in sociology, which may also be regarded as branches of sociology: ***micro-sociology*** and ***macro- sociology*** (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

**Micro-sociology** is interested in small scale level of the structure and functioning of human social groups; whereas macro-sociology studies the large-scale aspects of society.

**Macro-sociology** focuses on the broad features of society. The goal of macro-sociology is to examine the large-scale social phenomena that determine how **social groups** are organized and positioned within the **social structure**. Micro-sociological level of analysis focuses on **social interaction.** It analyzes interpersonal relationships, and on what people do and how they behave when they interact. This level of analysis is usually employed by **symbolic interactionist** **perspective.**

Some sociologists also add a third level of analysis called ***meso-level*** analysis, which analyzes human social phenomena in between the micro- and macro-levels.

Reflecting their particular academic interest, sociologists may prefer one form of analysis to the other; but all levels of analysis are useful and necessary for a fuller understanding of social life in society. Within these general frameworks, sociology may be divided into specific sub-fields on the basis of certain criteria. The most important fields of sociology can be grouped into six areas (*World Book Encyclopedia, 1994:* Vol. 18; Pp. 564-568).

1. **The Field of Social Organization and Theory of Social Order**: focus on institutions andgroups, their formation and change, manner offunctioning, relation to individuals and to eachother.
2. **Social Control**: Focus on the ways in which members of a society influence one another so as to maintain social order.
3. **Social Change**: Focus on the way society and institutions change over time through technical inventions, cultural diffusion and cultural conflict, and social movements, among others.
4. **Social Processes**: Focus on the pattern in which social change takes place, and the modes of such processes.
5. **Social Groups**: Focuses on how social groupsare formed, structured, and how they functionand change.
6. **Social Problems**: Focuses on the socialconditions which cause difficulties for a largenumber of persons and which the society isseeking to eliminate. Some of the problems mayinclude: juvenile delinquency, crime, chronicalcoholism, suicide, narcotics addiction, racialprejudice, ethnic conflict, war, industrial conflict,slum, areas, urban poverty, prostitution, childabuse, problem of older persons, maritalconflicts, etc.

Currently, sociology has got quite several specific subdivisions or fields of specialization in it: some of these include the following: criminology; demography; human ecology; political sociology; medical sociology; sociology of the family; sociology of sports; sociology of development; social psychology; socio- linguistics; sociology of education; sociology of religion; sociology of knowledge; sociology of art; sociology of science etc.

**The Relationship between Sociology and Disciplines**

Sociology occupies an important position among the disciplines, usually called the social sciences. These include sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, history and human geography. These disciplines are sometimes also referred to as behavioural sciences, as they study the principles governing human social behavior. How is sociology related to other sciences? (Oni, 2013) What are the similarities and differences? These are important questions.

Sociology is similar with all other sciences in that it employs the scientific methods and its major aim is production of scientific knowledge. Sociology is related to other social and behavioral sciences in that all of them have more or less similar subject matter; they all in one way or another study society, human culture, social phenomena; and aim at discovering the laws that govern the social universe (Ezewu, 1983; Oni, 2013). However, sociology differs from other social sciences in terms of its *focus of study*, *approach of study*, and the *method of study*. The closest discipline to sociology is social anthropology. The two share concepts, theories and methods, and have similar historical background. However, they are different in that sociology is primarily interested in the problems of modern society, whereas anthropology is primarily interested in the problem of traditional, non-western society. (It should be noted here that this conventional distinction between the two is now disappearing.)

Furthermore, sociology focuses mainly on quantitative techniques, whereas anthropology focuses on qualitative research techniques. Perhaps, the methods of research are more important in differentiating the two. Anthropology's heavy focus on qualitative method and sociology's on quantification are still persistent natures of the two disciplines (Ajuzie, 1999).

It is extremely difficult to say in a few words what distinguishes sociology from its neighbouring discipline. It is difficult or impossible, to say what is or is not economics, psychology or political science. It is both easier and more useful to list some of the interests and concerns which at least so sociologists share with at least some members of other disciplines.

1. *Philosophy*. To a considerable extent sociology has developed out of philosophy and still shares some that discipline’s concerns.
2. *History.* Since its own earlier days sociology has been concerned with the systematic study of history-and present day sociology shares many interests with social historians.
3. *Psychology*. Sociology is especially interested in social psychology, and shares the concerns of social psychology in such areas as socialization and small group interaction.
4. *Political science*. Sociology and political science both draw upon the same broad corpus of social theory. Present- day sociology overlaps with, and has strongly influenced the empirical study of political behavior.
5. *Economics*. Although sociologists have mainly been interested in the connection between religion, for instance, and the economy-in some areas of present-day economics (such as analysis of the large commercial company) it is impossible to say where sociology ends and economics begins.
6. *Geography*. Sociology also shares many concerns with geography-notably, of course with social geography.

If sociology then shares so many concerns with so many other social sciences, what distinguishes sociology from a broad general social science approach, but the single most important characteristics of sociology is its concerns with whole societies as social systems- social systems which are more than the sum of the individuals who live in them at any one point in time. Sociologists are interested in the economic, the political, the psychological and spatial aspects of overall societies-but their prime concern is with overall societies or other large social system.

One point of difference worth mentioning is that sociology is narrower in scope than anthropology, which has four sub fields; and anthropologists tend to stay in the field for long period (several months to few years), while sociologists prefer brief stay (weeks to few months).

**What is sociology of Education?**

As a school teacher and administrator, all are living in a small society known as school. You will find various relation learner and teacher, peer group, boys and girls, different social background etc, values (religion and culture) in educational institutions. So we must know the pattern, concerns of this society for effective educational outcome. The relation between sociology and education has always been a subject of debate. One concept says education is meant to overcome the inequalities of society, whereas the other says the prime function of education is to promote the equilibrium status of the society, that is, it tries to maintains equality/inequality whatever state is prevalent in the society (Mahuta, 2007).

However an individual can learn very little by himself. Others play a very important role and contribute a lot to his learning process. The presence of other persons is important because a person learns from the knowledge gained by others. Therefore the process of getting education is always a social process. Thus the word **Education** comes from the Latin word **e*-ducere***meaning *“to lead out*.” (Mahuta, 2007). Webster dictionary defined *education* as the process of educating or teaching. *Educate* is further defined as “to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of...” Thus, from these definitions, one can assume that the purpose of education is to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of students. “The aim and process of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think - rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.” (Parelius & Robert, 1978).

The foregoing explains that sociology of education has been an important part of the development of the discipline of sociology, with its origins in the ideas of Emile Durkheim, who was a professor of sociology and education at Sorbonne at the turn of the 20th century. Sociologists of education study the myriads connections between education and society at all levels of the education system, including primary, secondary and post secondary. Some scholars have emphasized the extent to which schools, colleges and universities are socializing institutions, whereas others attend to socio-economic success and examine the within-school and between- school stratification processes that amount to education’s observed effects. Still others view the relationship between education and society in a micro perspective, analyzing how curricula create and legitimate the modern nation-state or understanding the supply of and demand for education in terms of social movements, social control and patterns of social change. To buttress this view, Oni (2013) explained why Sociology of Education is defined as the scientific analysis of the social processes and social patterns involved in the educational system. This assumes that education is a combination of social acts and that sociology is an analysis of human interaction.” Educational process goes on in a formal as well as in informal situations. Sociological analysis of the human interaction in education may include both situations and might lead to the development of scientific generalizations of human relations in the educational system.

Maahuta (2007) defined Sociology of educationas the study of how public institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcomes. It is most concerned with the public schooling systems of modern industrial societies, including the expansion of higher, further, adult, and continuing education. It is a philosophical as well as a sociological concept, denoting ideologies, curricula, and pedagogical techniques of the inculcation and management of knowledge and the social reproduction of personalities and cultures. It is concerned with the relationships, activities and reactions of the teachers and students in the classroom. It emphasizes sociological problems in the realm of education (Parelius & Robert, 1978).

In other words, Sociology of education has provided important insights into the ways in which schools affect individuals and groups. Through an examination of the relationship between society and schools, sociologists have uncovered how educational processes affect the way people think, live, and work; their place in society; and their chances for success or failure. (Parelius & Robert, 1978). That is why research in the sociology of education has attempted to understand whether educational systems provide opportunities for all children to achieve based on their merits or whether they reproduce existing social inequalities.

Tracing the history of sociology of education, Parelius & Robert (1978) posited that the discipline of sociology of education developed at the end of the nineteenth century amid the promise and problems of industrialization, urbanization, and a developing belief in education in Europe and the United States. During this period, more and more children were required to go to school, and sociologists began to examine the relationship between school and society. As schooling became more available to increased numbers of children, many believed that schools would be critical to a modern era where merit, talent, and effort would replace privilege and inheritance as the most significant factors for social and occupational mobility.

Until the 1960s, sociologists for the most part shared this optimism about the role of education in a modern society. They examined important themes, including how children are socialized for adult roles, the school as a social organization, and the effects of schooling on students' life chances. Beginning in the 1960s, sociologists of education began to doubt that schools, by themselves, could solve social problems, especially problems of economic and social inequality.

Sociologists of education continued to believe that they could improve education through the application of scientific theory and research. Because of their scientific orientation, they are more likely to ask *what is* rather than *what ought to be,* although sociological research has been the basis for trying to improve and change schools. They want to discover what occurs inside of schools and what the effects of schooling are on individuals and groups. The distinctive feature of the sociology of education is empiricism, or the collection and analysis of empirical data within a theoretical context in order to construct a logical set of conclusions. (Parelius & Robert, 1978).

Thus, the sociology of education according to Bamisaiye (1990) relied on empirical methods to understand how schools are related to society, how individuals and groups interact within schools, and what the effects of schooling are for individuals and groups of children. Its findings are based on an attempt to be objective and scientific. It examines individuals and groups in their social context and examines the social forces that affect them. The sociological approach to education is crucial because it provides conclusions based on focused and tested observations. Without such an analysis, one cannot know *what is;* and without knowing *what is,* one cannot make *what ought to be* a reality.

Given this explanation we can see that sociology of education has mirrored the larger theoretical debates in the discipline of sociology. From its roots in the classical sociology of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim to the contemporary influences of symbolic interactionism, postmodernism, and critical theory, sociology of education research has been influenced by a number of different theoretical perspectives.

Hence, sociologists have come up with different definitions of sociology of education. Ezewu (1983) defined sociology of education as “a scientific study of human behavior in groups having for its aim the convening of regularities and order in each behavior and expressing these sceneries as theoretical propositions that describe a wide variety of patterns of behavior in learning environment”. This definition shows that there is a very close relationship between the individual and the society. It looks at how children become fully-fledged socialization. Furthermore, the definition talks about social relations in a learning environment and network of such relations which are known as society.

Harold (1968) defined sociology of education as “the study of origins, organizations, institutions and development of human society”. His definition refers to the study of sociology of education by using the historical approach. It studies initial specific conditions. For any institution, organization or society to develop properly there is needed to trace the origin or background. In other words, this approach explains how society and the institution develop. It looks at interactions within the society and also society and other institutions. There are also possible outcomes or achievements of these interactions.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who is regarded as the ‘father’ of sociology of education clearly defines sociology of education as “a systematic study sociological perspective”. This definition of sociology of education is suitable because it speaks much of what goes on in education system. It clearly states that it is important to know sociology before knowing what sociology of education is. This is because sociology is related to sociology of education (Oni, 2013)

Durkheim further stated that sociology of education is the “study of education”. He applied a sociological approach to the understanding of education system unlike other sociologists who defined the term sociology of education. He also came up with idea that education should be studied from the sociological perspective which helps students to understand sociology of education. To Durkheim school system is the main focus of sociology of education. To this effect he looked at the structure of the school and interactions in the school. He looked at the way individuals interact, that is teachers with fellow teachers, teachers with pupils, administrators with fellow administrators, administrator with teachers and pupils and pupils with fellow pupil. He looked at how discipline can be maintained in schools since in sociology of education try to understand the problem of education from a sociological perspective. Durkheim not only looked at interactions within the school but also the relationship between the school and the community. He looked at the outcome of these interactions because individuals have influence on other individuals and society has influence on the education system. (Mahuta, 2007).

Apart from the structure of the school, Durkheim also looked at the functions of education and society. He believed that it was the duty of education to make responsible and reliable citizens out of school children. To work out this, parents and teachers need to work hand in hand to achieve a common goal. The school can make the behavior of a learner depending on the type of administration in which a learner is found. These lead us then to understanding that sociology of education becomes the study of association in terms of participation and unit (cohesion) in schools. On the other hand, it becomes the study of disassociation in terms of conflicts in schools. (Mahuta, 2007). Therefore Durkheim believed that every society had its own education system which was shaped by the society-cultural needs. He also believed that education was the influence exerted on the young generation by the old generation and this influence was a changing process.

In conclusion, Durkheim’s definition of sociology of education is the integral part of the education process. This is profe enough that his definition is suitable because someone can read his classic work on sociology and education with great interest. All in all he stands out as the founder of the discipline and the classic sociologists of education. His contribution to sociology of education has stimulated sociologist to do research in a number of areas. These areas are those that Durkheim had already researched such as function of education, relationships of education to societal change and many more. From his findings came up with the term sociology but not sociology of education as Durkheim did.

To summarize all these definitions, we can subscribe to the definitions of;

Omokhodion, and Dosumu, (2000) that sociology of education is the application of the general principles and findings of sociology to the field of education. The focus of sociology of education is the analysis of the sociological processes involved in the educational system and the society.

Oni (2001) defined sociology of education as attempts to study the nature of relationships between education and the other institutions such as the family the economy, religion, culture, etc. It also tries to examine the various aspects of education with particular reference to its aims, methods curriculum and administration and how these differ from one society to the other, in response to the culture and political tone of the society in which they operate.

With the explanations above, we can see that Sociologists of education has particular affinity to other subfields in sociology, including the Sociology of the family, social stratification and mobility, the sociology of organizations and occupations, political sociology, and the sociology of age and the life course. Because education is a public good, sociologists of education have a great deal to say about educational policy and practice, applying the knowledge the field has produced to a broad array of educational and social problems. Among these are unequal access to education, what makes schools effective, dropping out and persisting in school at various levels, teachers’ professional development and collaborative work, ability grouping and tracking in elementary and secondary schools restructuring and the school-to-work transistion, to name but a few.

**Scope of Sociology of Education**

Bamisaiye (1990) summarizes the scope of sociology of education as follows:

1. The study of social-relevant processes of education
2. The study of educational concepts which have social relevance: these are social groups and associations within the school;
3. The study of social systems and institutions which are relevant to education;
4. A comparative study of the educational processes and institutions across culture.

But we have discovered that scope of sociology of education is vast and enormous. It concerns include the following;

1. It is concerned with such general concepts such as society itself, culture, community, class, environment, socialization, internalization, accommodation, assimilation, cultural lag, subculture, status, role and so forth.
2. It is also involved in cases of education and social class, state, social force, cultural change, various problems of role structure, role analysis in relation to the total social system and the micro society of the school such as authority, selection, and the organization of learning, streaming, curriculum and so forth.
3. It deals with analysis of educational situations in various geographical and ethnological contexts. Eg. Educational situations in rural, urban and tribal areas, in different parts of the country/world, with the background of different races, cultures etc.
4. It helps us to understand the effectiveness of different educational methods in teaching students with different kinds of intelligences.
5. It studies the effect of economy upon the type of education provided to the students e.g. education provided in primary, secondary and tertiary schools.
6. It helps us to understand the effect of various social institutions like family, school, religion, economy and government on the students.
7. It also studies the relationship between social class, culture, language, parental education, occupation and the achievement of the students
8. It studies the role and structure of school, peer group on the personality of the students
9. It provides an understanding of the problems such as racism, terrorism, communalism, gender discrimination etc.
10. It studies the role of schools in socialization of the students.
11. It suggests ways to develop national integration, international understanding, the spirit of scientific temper , globalization among the students
12. It promotes research studies related to planning, organization and application of various theories in education.

All these are the concerns of education and sociology as inseparable discipline focusing on the problems of the society.

**Difference between Educational Sociology and Sociology of Education**

Educational sociology is a branch of discipline of sociology which studies the problems of relationship between society and education. It evolved as a discipline designed to prepare educators for their future tasks. It uses the results of sociological researches in planning educational activities and in developing effective methods of realizing these plans. The main aim of educational sociology was to study **social** **interaction**. Singh, (1992) considered that, “All education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race”. He defined educational sociology as that discipline which applied the general principles and findings of sociology to the process of education. Thus, educational sociology is by definition a discipline which studies education sociologically, with the premise that it recognizes education as a social fact, a process and an institution, having a social function and being determined socially. It is the application of sociological principles and methods to the solution of problems in an educational system.

Educational Sociology threw light on the **importance of the interactions of different elements of the society with an individual**. Itemphasized the progress of the society through the medium of education.The problems of schooling and instructions were looked upon as problemsof the society. ( Mahuta, 2007; Singh, 1992). The educational sociology tried to answer the questions --as to what type of education should be given? What should be thecurriculum? Why children become delinquent?It threw light on those institutions and organizations and on those social interactions that were important in educational process. It used educational interactions that helped in the development of the personality of the individual so that he becomes a better social being. It was realized that though educational sociology made everyone realize the social nature of education, formulated ideals by which educational planning was guided, used the theoretical knowledge gathered by researches conducted by either sociologists or educational sociologists, there appeared to be confusion as to what the proper dimensions of educational sociology should be. There were differences of opinion regarding what types of researches are to be classified under the head of educational sociology. This led to the thinking that there should be a separate branch of knowledge which can be designated as ***sociology of education.***

Oni (2013) put this better when he explained the differences between the concepts of educational sociology, sociology of education and social foundation of education.

* **Educational Sociology**: This simply refers to the application of general principles and findings of Sociology to the administration and processes of education. This approach attempts to apply principles of Sociology to the institution of education as a separate social unit.
* **Sociology of Education**: This means an analysis of the sociological processes involved in the educational institution. This area of study evolved out of the field of Educational Sociology and emphasizes the study within the institution of education.
* **Social Foundation of Education**: This refers to a field of study, which usually includes History, Philosophy, Sociology of Education and Comparative Education. This field of study is broader than either Sociology of Education or Educational Sociology.

(Parelius and Roberts, 1978; Mahuta, 2007),

**Need to Study Sociology of Education**

Every society has its own changing socio – cultural needs and requires an education to meet these needs. Today’s needs are conservation of resources, environmental protection, global citizenship etc. Therefore education caters towards meeting of these different needs. Since the needs of the society change, education also changes. Hence there is need for studying sociology of education. It helps in understanding:

1. Work of school and teachers and its relation to society, social progress and development
2. Effect of social elements on the working of school and society
3. Effect of social elements on the life of individuals
4. Construction of curriculum in relation to the cultural and economic needs of the society
5. Democratic ideologies operating in different countries
6. Need for understanding and promoting international culture
7. Development of society through the formulation of various rules and regulations and understanding of culture and traditions
8. Need for promotion of social adjustment
9. The effect of social groups, their interrelation and dynamics on individuals

**Review Questions**

1. What is *sociology?* Explain it using your own words.
2. How can we differentiate sociology from other social sciences, which also study society and human culture?
3. Discuss the main socio-political and economic factors behind the emergence of sociology.
4. Mention at least five issues of sociological relevance in the contemporary society of Nigeria.
5. Discuss the personal and professional benefits of learning sociology/ sociology of education.
6. Consider the issue of students’ secret cult in your University. Discuss those aspects that would be interesting to study for a sociologist. What aspects might *not* be interesting sociologically? Why?

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