



Re-approaching Theoretical Patterns of Sociological Space in the Educational Environment (1960-1980)

Gogou Lela^{1*} and Kalerante Evaggelia²

¹*University of Western Attica, Greece.*

²*University of Western Macedonia, Greece.*

Authors' contributions

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ABSTRACT

The present paper delves into theoretical and research principles determinant to the development of sociology of education throughout 1960-1980. The productive conceptual discourse is analyzed, as it is conducive to interpreting fields of research which, through sociology, are developed and transform the ideological framework towards the institutional operation of education. Certain schools of thought are selected on the basis of their impact on issues of social environments perception and operation through the mediation of ideas that define the social subject and its construction and reconstruction through education. This time period is emphasized so as to underline the fact that contemporary considerations about the sociology of education are the outcome of concepts formed throughout 1960-1980. In this respect, a form of dialogue with the past sociology of education is established, as this is also eminent in the present given that sociological theoretical patterns of the period 1960-1980 can operate towards interpreting and understanding currently occurring phenomena.

Keywords: *Sociology of education; social space; social subject; social transformation.*

*Corresponding author: E-mail: ekalerante@yahoo.gr;

1. INTRODUCTION

Even though education, as a special field of research, was given special attention by Emile Durkheim¹, widely known for setting the foundation of sociology, sociology of education, as a relatively autonomous field of research, virtually occurred at the beginning of the '60s. In this framework, social inequalities are of utmost importance, deservedly identified as a major social problem. The studies inspired by various schools of thought – functionalism, the Marxist theory, theories of conflict, theories of reproduction – primarily refer to relationships analysis among the state, school and social classes as well as studying the differences among social groups, largely through analyzing family education traits based on social origin.

During the '60s and '70s, sociology of education is dominated by macro-sociological analyses, viewing the social agent as the object of social coercions. Functionalist and Marxist sociologists consider the possibility to comprehend education only in case it is integrated into the broader society. The causes that led to changes in education are sought in the broader society without taking into consideration the action and social relationships of people participating in the education system².

These macro-analyses have been severely criticized because they do not take into consideration human creativity and, by extension, human freedom, resulting in the loss of school reality complexity for those scholars of education inspired by the above-mentioned approaches. The macro-sociological level definitely offers a general framework to analyze education, yet insufficient to comprehend important aspects of the classroom and social relationships formation between teachers and students. This deficiency has led, over the past years, to developing new theoretical approaches in sociology of education which gave special meaning to studying social processes on smaller analysis levels and not in the entire education system. They are characterized as micro-sociological, particularly felt with their similarities and differences in the USA, England and France. Drawing data from the theory of social

interaction, ethnomethodology and social phenomenology, researchers endeavor to analyze the social interactions unfolded within the school classroom as well as the conditions, as viewed both by teachers and students.

The specific micro-analyses underline the necessity to renew empirical studies by focusing on the work performed on the social level. Thus, as from the beginning of the '80s, the researchers' interest was placed on "the opening of the black box", that is school or classroom³. This does not mean that they are not any more interested in unequal opportunities in education. On the contrary, they aim at approaching in vivo the inside of school reality. Henceforward, they do not study school success/failure through statistical research, but rather make an attempt to release the mechanisms of inequality reproduction aided by qualitative analyses. Thus, for a long time, a quite big number of researchers have been interested in treating school difficulties before students are isolated from the normal classroom and directed to value-deprived sections. One of the authors' most important intentions is to transcend the simple function between school success and educational practices with social origin.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH APPROACHES

One of the most important studies is proposed by Ph. Perrenoud [3] in his book *La fabrication de l' excellence scolaire*. The specific study on the evaluation in the primary school is a theoretical approach enriched by experience. It is based on an action research conducted in a school in Geneva drawing from several direct notes and in-depth interviews and it is mostly interested in the typology rather than statistical representativeness. Perrenoud intends to describe the manners by which primary school constructs crises and excellence hierarchies on a daily basis, based on the assumption that excellence refers to the class of representation, or even that this school competence is not an inherent trait of human behavior. Perrenoud, in an attempt to compare with psychiatric crises (the construction of insanity) or penal crises (the construction of

¹ See (indicatively). Durkheim [1,2] associates education with the development of societies. Thus, educational principles and systems are defined in terms of sociology.

² See (indicatively). About the correlation between sociological approaches to education and broader sociological patterns relevant to social subjects' participation and integration into collective actions [5].

³ See (indicatively). About sociology of education throughout the 1960's with emphasis on the research field and the study on special issues within the school environment in which educational issues are handled as social issues of education [6].

juvenile delinquency), eventually proves that excellence is constructed.

In a similar vein, a research conducted by R. Sirota [4] attempted to showcase a theoretical composition viewing the school classroom as an object of sociological analysis. It focuses on the interactions taking place inside the classroom, aiming at comprehending teachers' range of autonomy and interpreting students' behaviors in relation to their social course.

Given the researchers' ongoing interest in the theory of social interaction, there is increasing interest in the field of educational strategies. M. Crosier and E. Friedberg's [7] impact on these analyses is prominent, indicating an ongoing interest in education tied to the sociology of organizations. It is important to underline the impact of the theory of social interaction on the above-mentioned authors, as they regard social agents interacting within a framework of limited thought. Thus, freedom is coincidental rather than limitless. Rarely are their aims explicit, yet their behaviors, whether sensible or not, are meaningful and refer to strategies. Their analysis is not confined to studying organizations, but is rather expanded in the whole of "particular action systems". A particular action system is a humanly constructed whole, coordinating the participants' actions through relatively stable mechanisms, maintaining, at the same time, its structure. The strategic analysis method suggested by these two sociologists applies certain strategies as its starting point, which refer to the structure of power relationships that associate social agents among each other and makes the settings of the observed action system comprehensible. Thus, the intention of not ignoring coercions tied to the systemic framework is revisited, identifying at the same time the social agents' unrelenting range of freedom.

The above authors attempt to transcend the particular action systems in a broader sense and refer to the strategic act that goes beyond the framework of certain sociology. Their intention is to approach the issues of people's collective organized action through conditions that make it feasible, yet without ignoring the imposed coercions.

The impact of sociology of organization is depicted in an empirical study conducted by D. Paty [8] focusing on the identity of twelve colleges. The author is interested in the

composition of social relationships, the authority exercised by the principal of the institute and students' socializing.

The reconciliation between the micro-sociological approach and the prominent question across Europe and the USA is admittedly difficult (following Bourdieu and Passeron⁴, Baudelot and Establet and Boudon's [9] major studies in France along with Bowles and Gintis' ones in the USA). This question pertains to the role of school within the entire social process. In other words, to what extent school can contribute to society's democratization or to what extent it ensures a reproduction of social inequalities. Ethnomethodology and social phenomenology are particularly conducive to utilizing the social agent's subjectivity, without taking into consideration the historicity of the social as well as revisiting hierarchy social relations. These two intellectual trends do not fully address the reconciliation between the acting agent and the social. The most common critic addressed to micro-interpretative sociological approaches is that they do not adequately take into consideration the fact that action is confined by the surrounding conditions. Thus, the sociologist must necessarily take into consideration the limitations imposed by school social agents and study their consequences.

The Weberian view [10] attempted to combine the micro-level with the macro-level of approaching education claiming that whatever occurs within schools and classrooms must be correlated with broader social processes. Such an analysis has been attempted by scholars adopting Max Weber's ideas, namely Ronald King [11], Randall Collins [12] and Margaret Archer [13]. The researchers must study social interactions between teachers and students, interpret their behavior and comprehend the subjective meaning of their actions, without ignoring the existing social and economic structure which affects human actions. It is necessary to take into consideration how social agents perceive their situation, aims and objectives as well as the consequences of their actions. This does not mean that individuals are fully autonomous, as viewed by certain phenomenologists and social interaction scholars. The Weberian view focuses both on

⁴ The decade 1960-1970 is tied to more general theories about the policy of rights with emphasis on theoretical highlighting patterns and the effects of social inequalities in education. The Marxist readings of the educational system are incorporated in this general framework [14, 15, 16].

micro-social and macro-social processes given that it studies people's social interactions and the manner by which action and interaction are affected by the existing social and economic system, having an impact on it at the same time.

Some French researchers' interest to fill the gap of macro-sociological analyses was conducive to focusing on local approaches [17]. Besides, sociologists of education and sociologists of rural and urban sociology collaborated in various researches, putting forward school processes through the lens of local processes.

3. DUAL MECHANISMS OF SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

It is noteworthy that a significant body of the discussions in sociology of education comes from the field of general sociology. It is widely known that in sociology several important theoretical approaches are contradicting. Some scholars essentially distinguish between the holistic theoretical and individualistic approach. The primacy of the social over individual behaviors was mainly underlined by Durkheim. According to this perspective, individual behaviors are the result of imposed social structures, which, in turn, are the products of a story unfolded under their rules. These behaviors become meaningful in relation to these structures. According to this paradigm⁵, quite prominent nowadays among the practices of research in sociology, individuals act through structures relatively stable in the course of time that is the mediation of "representations" that interpret the internalized social by the individual consciousness. Therefore, the work of sociology is to reveal structures, describe and interpret their operation inside various social groups. Contrary to this dominant paradigm is the individualistic one which refers to the social agent and attempts to unveil the manner by which individuals form their relationships with other group members, eventually with the entire society.

Following the sociology of everyday life as an extension of the two former trends as from the end of the '70s, new trends, namely symbolic

interaction and ethnomethodology, are against classic sociology, as they mainly question the positivistic methodology. These new schools of thought vindicate a changing perspective that is, the transfer from holistic sociology to individualistic sociology. The former is a macro-sociological approach since the focal point is tied to social structures. It adopts a deterministic view about the human, as it regards them to fully act within a macro-system. It uses the same methodology as natural sciences do, as it intends to study social phenomena as objects which the sociologist, aided by the classical analytical model of assumption – verification, can observe neutrally, objectively and "scientifically" [18]. The latter is a micro-sociological approach since it gives meaning to studying the individual regarded as the basic element of every social formation and the acting agent of social organization, through interactions and everyday actions. This approach rejects, in this way, every deterministic mechanism and gives particular meaning to a participatory methodology, in which the sociologist does not withdraw behind neutrality and objectivity [19].

While the former perspective of sociology was inspired by positivism, the latter is based on phenomenology and is of an interpretative nature. The works by ethnomethodologists or the followers of symbolic interaction, E. Goffman's [21] work being the most widely known of them, illustrate this interpretative paradigm which includes studies about giving meanings to individuals as social agents. It is a scale of analysis closer to acting agents.

3.1 Theorists' Approaches to Binarisms

Nowadays, sociological reflection is characterized by various contradictions among numerous theoretical paradigms. The contradictions traversing the science of sociology refer to binarisms having been developed within it, such as individual / society, action / structure, individualism / holism, subjectivism / objectivism, micro-analysis / macro-analysis. Through the contradictions characterizing the sociological theoretical trends of researching social phenomena, polarization is observed either in the one or the other pattern of the previously mentioned binarisms. However, the efforts of composing, transcending and unifying are particularly obvious. It is eventually even more evident that the creation of appropriate conceptual composition tools allowing the

⁵A "paradigm" and a "theoretical model of thought" directing the whole research and theoretical thought towards a given sector. The concept of the word "paradigm" is the one having been given by T. S. Kuhn. It is about a holistic conceptual framework aiming at orientating both a holistic theoretical act and the following special researches. [20].

transfer from one theoretical perspective to the other is necessary [22].

According to Bourdieu [23], the tension objectivism – subjectivism that is, the change entrapped within the science of sociology must be overcome. In the first case, he contends, an objective truth is completely unapproachable by common experience through the analysis of statistical data. In the second case, the science of sociology restrains the social world within the acting agents' representations about it.

According to A. Cicourel [24], micro-sociological analyses must necessarily take into consideration the social framework in which social interactions are unfolded, while micro-processes should not be ignored by macro-sociological analyses. A research based on micro-sociological frameworks must refer to broader social frameworks, while in a macro-sociological study social life must be taken into consideration by its micro-activities. Cicourel contends that social agents' everyday social activities include many levels of complexity, while micro-sociological and macro-sociological data are integrated. However, researchers wish to focus on the one or the other level of social reality, even though it is possible, according to Cicourel, to balance the two levels of analyses.

Giddens' [25] ambition lies in transcending classical contradictions represented through the binarisms structure / action, system / individual, micro-analysis / macro-analysis, known to us due to sociologists' extensive conflicts. Giddens claims that the specific acting agent is absent in classical sociology. In particular, its representatives have not managed to reconcile action and structure proving their inability to transcend the following binarisms: as regards the binarism subject / object, either the acting subject is confined within a subjectivity (the social is internalized) or the human is depicted as the game of a structure, of a social class of eluding things or rules (the social is externalized) [26]. As regards the binarism individualism / holism, either social reality is formed strictly by individuals or these individuals are integrated into an organic whole that transcends them within a system. As regards the binarism determinism / freedom, either the intention of human actions is depicted in order to maintain needs, habitus, values and rules or the rationalism of human actions is maintained. The social is either

coercion and reproduction or strategy and production. As regards the binarism synchrony / diachrony, it is meant either the stability and staticity of social systems or their transformations and dynamics.

As regards the distinction micro-analysis / macro-analysis, Giddens views this type of contradiction as a "ridiculous war", had such a war ever taken place. He believes that whatever occurs, the one approach does not precede the other. He also contends that even for those who do not consider these two approaches contradicting, the distinction micro / macro results in some sort of segregation of intellectual work between the entities undertaking "micro" studies and those dedicated to "macro" studies. Micro-sociology is interested in the "free acting subject's" activities in order to clarify the object of their study and invokes theoretical standpoints such as those of symbolic interaction or ethnomethodology. On the other hand, macro-sociology analyzes structural coercions conducive to restraining free activity. Transcending the distinction micro / macro, enhanced through a philosophical binarism, calls for a more complete reformulation of the theory about the social.

Giddens suggests viewing binarisms not in terms of these principles coexistence, but rather in terms of structure and interdependence. The sociologist focuses on human practices, which entails comprehending them, on the one side, in relation to their meaning and rationalizing them, on the other, by placing them in people's space and time. Giddens underlines, therefore, the dual character of structures without omitting the repetitive nature of social practices. He contends that the structure is concurrently the means and product of human activities.

The theory of structurization, according to Giddens, is not a variation of hermeneutics or hermeneutic sociologies. On the other hand, it is not a form of structural sociology even though the idea that society is not constructed by subjects is relevant to the theory of structurization.

The deterministic paradigm has dominated in sociology for a long time (functionalism, Marxism, structuralism....). Nowadays, the paradigm of the "social acting subject", that of interaction among free subjects is prominent. E. Morin [27] develops his own perspective, keeping a distance from the above-mentioned scholars. He considers it possible to have two research directions attempting to transcend this gap, by

considering the intricate thought significantly meaningful. He claims that the contradictions that seem to be radical and dogmatic can potentially include a supplementation because what is competitive is also supplementary. According to Morin, intricate thought is not the opposite of simplistic thought, as the latter is incorporated. Intricate thought is the one that embodies uncertainty and is capable of comprehending organization, associating and globalizing, while, at the same time, identifying the unique and specific.

A new question about social bond helps avoid the erroneous variation between holism and methodological individualism or the classical contradiction between society and the individual. The dual cul-de-sac, upon which both the utilitarian model and the prevailing reproduction of structures end, calls for a shift of view to the one being the core of the social bond. Focusing on the social bond that is, the foundation of practices, places and objects, allows researchers to transcend the old contradiction between the acting agent and the system, the agent and the structure.

Facing the questioning of immense traditional segregations and attempting to transcend the dilemma between holism and individualism, I. Boltanski and L. Thénevo [28] endeavor to prove that social reality is not one and only, but rather multiple. Based on this multiplicity of worlds of action, the subjectivation processes are interrelated.

Nowadays, humanitarian sciences are considered to include a perspective that does not pertain to deification of the subject neither to its dissolution. On the contrary, the ongoing complexity of issues is jointly re-evaluated, while any form of dogmatism is being denied. At the same time, a certain form of vagueness is sought, the one that makes human enclosure to a one and only moral, genetic or national rationale futile.

4. THE “LOCAL” IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Social relationships that join people among each other or contradict them and geographical relations that unite people with places are pertinent. A movement of ideas results from a new approach of human relationships with space, as geographical research focuses on epistemological issues and the conceptual

approach of space and landscape. Many analyses inscribed on this movement of ideas attempt to set the foundation for research pertaining to “the results from place and territory” of special social phenomena, namely criminality and juvenile delinquency. These phenomena are considered significant to and revelatory of a social organization on a given territory and of the relationships that unite people and places.

The term “local” is defined as the place of contradicting differences of the national and abstract space. According to Bourdet [29], locality is verified as a space of solidarity and autonomy in contrast to the central hierarchy, deemed dysfunctional and arbitrary. The urban setting, the distinction of the three scales of local life, such as the neighborhood, the district and the community, allow research orientation. They pertain to four segments of local social life that is, residence and local community, production and local life. In the rural setting and some urban districts new occurring partnerships sometimes decisively influence the transformation of social life. The field of education – culture is significant in order to comprehend potential transformations of social relationships in local life. Several researchers studied children – environment relationships as well as the organization of open schools and various pedagogical experiences. Descriptions of health centers, local radio stations, etc. are found in researches along with new forms of cultural and social life. Additionally, historic studies on this issue are conducted, given the perspective that thought can be directed to various development and decay stages tied to a transformation process. Researches about political life, residents’ relationships, local authority, central authority and new manners of decision-making are also interesting. Focus is placed on developing deep understanding about the possibility of people – acting agents’ intervention to space, city or district organization. The entire issue of political decision, the relations between companies and political parties, the determining districts and their role in social life and the organization of district committees are questioned. All the above form a whole that can be studied in order to better understand the possibilities of democracy on a local level [30].

Several researches already conducted aim at revealing disorganization and dominance processes and potentially emerging new forms of social life on a local level. At the same time, they aim at studying whether contemporary

movements aspire to a more general transformation or correspond to temporary reactions. Researchers consider the issue of local democracy in these studies that is, the new forms of people's decision-making and expression. A question emerges as to whether elements of thought about processing democracy in the entire society are present on a local level as well as whether there is a tendency of new forms of social life self-management. The emerging new forms of social life are studied locally in relation to the ideal societies' transformation. Based on this perspective, it is difficult to understand the initial planning of social transformations. Hence, approaching new forms of social life must necessarily be based on the historic study on traditional ways of social life [31].

To understand the processes of emerging new forms of everyday life in cities, it is important to refer to rural life characterized by different transformations. In contemporary transformations, the processes of technical, economic, social and cultural dominance are aggravated. A question is posed as to whether awareness and under which circumstances is feasible as well as whether residents can become social agents regarding decision-making. In industrial societies, the pressure of central authority and dominant groups is manifested in various ways based on their economic growth and political status. Developing new industrial practices allows the general enhancement of this dominance. Benefiting from these transformations can be real only in case powerless groups are capable of understanding and expressing their desires and needs and setting forth their plans.

It is not possible to consider transformation processes in a district, city or village without concurrently exploring their association with the transformation of the entire society that is, the issue of democracy in general [32]. The focal point is true democracy through which a certain self-managing tendency can allow powerless groups to become social agents. Changing the ways of decision-making on a local level – a fact that permits dominant groups to express themselves – is a utopia in case the transformation of the entire group is not sought. Nonetheless, democracy can be experimented in terms of local life conducive to conducting a study on a general transformation program. Local democracy can be achieved through powerless groups' awareness and their vindications, taking

into consideration all manifestations of public will or all new marginalized forms, namely anti-culture, anti-authority and the entire conflicts, typical of everyday life in the area of local social life.

Determining the unity of local social life is a contemporary issue lacking the outline of how it can be solved. Researches on the unity of neighborhood (city, the entire residence) are quite interesting, as they emphasize the methodological level and the comparison among new forms of residence. Nowadays, the unity of neighborhood is called unity of residence since, according to life professionals, this name corresponds to a new perspective about residence through which residing is in contrast to huge blocks of flats that compose a collective lifestyle. Over the past years, reference is made to districts, yet nobody is able to provide a valid definition of them. Based across different countries and relevant authorities, the word "district" is tied to 8.000 up to 10.000 residents, 5.000 residents and in some cases some hundreds, a small neighborhood or even some houses. Relevant monographs about districts provide information about life in them. Analyzing the practice of district by observing the course of its residents and their using the market, shops or coffee shops is a form of research that allows the comprehension of the experienced reality within this local unity.

Sociology and urban ethnology often regard the district as an object of analysis because this is easily observed and often corresponds to an administrative division. The district has been considered a "natural area" to study social integration as from the days of the Chicago School by several researchers. Districts were viewed as neighborhood communities which represent a significant factor of socializing and mutual assistance.

For many years in the Anglo – Saxon countries several researches have been developed around the concept of district. This concept is introduced in the sociology dictionary by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies [33]. The concept of community was widespread in the USA by R. E Park and the students of the Chicago School, who coined (in the framework of sociology / urban ethnology) a new term based on a model borrowed by Ecology⁶ in order to characterize

⁶ R. Park was inspired by Professor Eugenius Warming's book titled "Plant Communities". His observations referred to various kinds of plants intended to form groups called communities. The plant communities obviously manifested a

the relationships among social groups on the one hand and the transformations of urban environment, on the other. According to Park, local studies conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago are based on the fact that full awareness of places and urban people can shed light on local issues.

In education the term “community” indicates the total of social agents interested in the educational act in and out of school. The studies about the community had been particularly popular in the USA and England up until 1970. In England, M. Young and his associates’ studies at the Institute of Community Studies were very significant. At the same time, in France, studies on the community also exist even though less widespread than in the Anglo – Saxon countries. Many of them are dedicated to school and children’s school socializing. They provide the possibility to comprehend the dynamic role of school in relation to community development or divergence. A number of these studies analyze in full detail teachers’ position in the local society, their integration into the environment, their relationships with families and their participation in political life. The most well-known publication is that of E. Morin which, among other things, allows close observation of the bonds between school life and social mobility as well as the intricate relationships among school, politics and religion.

4.1 Developing Relationships between School and Community

Shifting from studies on the community to analyses emphasizing the relationships between school and community was favored in the USA by a certain number of cultural anthropologists who focused on the developed societies. This orientation is particularly meaningful to the socializing process. As regards the observation

significant number of living organisms’ features, gradually being created and undergoing modifications before their destruction and replacement by other communities completely different from the previous ones. These observations were the starting point for all researches conducted by Park and his students at the Chicago School, established under the name “Ecology”. Ecology is undoubtedly a geographical science, from a certain perspective and to the extent that it intends to describe the effective allocation of plants and animals. However, human Ecology, according to the concept given to this term by sociologists, is not confused with Geography neither human geography. Park and his students are more interested in the community rather than the human, in the relationships among people rather than the relationship with the place of residence [34].

of contemporary societies, they take into consideration school operation, as this institution conveys the most important features of the legal culture. R. Benedict [35] and M. Mead [36] studied the characteristics of the American education system and analyzed it in comparison with other societies through studies conducted in societies different from theirs. Other studies emphasized school operation in popular districts, particularly the black population ghettos. According to Ogbu [37], the model used is deficient, as it renders significance to analyses about similarities and differences between community culture and school culture and, consequently, this cannot explain the differences noticed in the different migrants’ school performance (Asians or Mexicans). This is so, because it neglects the results of community structure and the society as a whole. As regards the school – community relationship, a number of researchers in the USA are interested in the major social and educational programs against poverty and school failure (it must be mentioned that these programs were subsidized by the Kennedy government).

As from the beginning of the ‘70s in England, a new trend called “the new sociology of education” [38] occurred. Its distinctive feature is focusing on processes resulting in studies on school and the local space (the community). These studies coincide with the creation of educational priority areas aiming at improving school operation for the non-privileged, based on the idea of an “educational community” to a large extent. In other words, their intention was to engage parents and all entities related to education in these areas.

In England, at the end of the ‘50s, perpetuating poverty was noticed despite the established welfare state. Its confrontation acquires a new dynamics in political discussions. As regards education, sociologists, especially J. Floud, A. Halsey and F. Martin revealed inequalities related to social origin tied to accessing secondary education which ensures better education despite the law of 1944 that established free education. In 1963, the Ministry of Education in Great Britain requested the Central Advisory Council that they examine all aspects of primary education as well as the shift to secondary education. To this end, a council of 33 members was composed under Plowden’s chair, who published his report in 1967. One of the most eminent recommendations in Plowden’s report, whose influence on education policy has

been widespread, is that of the “positive distinction” of non-privileged children (either socially or culturally) in the form of supplementary subsidies to some schools of “social priority” or to Educational Priority Areas [39].

The main intention was to help schools, whose mean score was below the national average, to a medium level, to improve teachers’ morale and to develop bonds between school and family in order to integrate community into the educational process. Despite the limited ambitions due to subsidizing issues, this policy stimulated school – community relationships in terms of practice and sociological theory. Researchers were particularly interested in field studies and the use of ethnography by partners who were not ethnologists. However, focusing on smaller units like school, classroom and the lesson led to a shifting interest from macro-sociological to micro-sociological studies, while the holistic perspective was entirely neglected.

In France, sociology of education is orientated to sociology emphasizing the reproduction process, while it ignores the “local” in terms of analysis. Priority is given to macro-sociological studies, but there is lacking interest (perhaps due to distrust) in these studies by those researchers in sociology of education focusing mainly on educational inequalities and the role of school as an institution in the reproduction of social segregation.

5. SPACE, TIME, CONDITION TOWARDS FORMULATING SOCIALITY

Contrary to macro-sociological studies, the analyses conducted by French researchers about the relationships between school and local environment refer to observing the specific forms of relationships between social classes and school and the possibility to analyze the dynamics of local society on a local level. This does not mean that they deny the significance of previously produced knowledge because these studies led to better understand the operation of the educational system. They do not consider a contradiction between the two types of research neither do they claim that micro-sociological research is henceforth the only appropriate method of knowledge. They believe that some researches are quite difficult, if not impossible to be conducted on an extensive scale and only in case they are conducted on a local level their results will contribute significantly.

As regards studies on the relationships between school and local environment, there are certain often justified reservations, as they generally focus on the orientation towards this type of research provided by a large number of Anglo – Saxon works as well as to the theoretical frameworks used to lead such research. Thus, our placing in relation to emerging concepts from previous approaches is necessary. One of the focal concepts when studying the relationship between school and place is that of the community. The concept of community, as stated above, was introduced in the sociology dictionary by Tönnies. In his book published in 1887, titled *Community and Society*, he distinguishes between the community (*Geneinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*). Community is developed through family and is found in the village or small town. Blood and friendship, habit and trust bonds verify the experienced character of social morale. Advancing urban planning is conducive to developing community towards society. This change is produced through an abstraction verified by the fact that everyone lives for themselves within a condition of economic and social competition. As regards community, reference is made to agriculture, whereas as regards society, reference is made to commercial activity, industry and science. The society (*Gesellschaft*) is characterized by laws and conventions, the community (*Gemeinschaft*) by peace and the customs probably spread across both types.

The idea of local environment is replaced by the concept of community in most Anglo – Saxon studies. Using the concept of community can mostly lead to analyzing relationships between school and social agents in terms of integration or lacking integration of values shifted from the institution to the group. Hence, in most American studies on the relationships between school and community, the researcher’s discourse is much closer to the social agents’ discourse. Many researchers adopted a more conflicting theoretical framework and an act coming up against teachers’ monopoly in terms of institution and the discourse that legalized this monopoly through assumed harmonious interests tied to all acting agents. They did not consider, in advance, teachers as the only informants by putting forward labor unions, families and all those deprived of institutional authority inside the school.

Using the concept of place is more preferable because, in this way, the idea of inner harmony

of the group tied to the term “community” is avoided. The polysemy of the place is not problematic because reference can be simultaneously made to material space and the external conditions in which the individuals live and evolve as well as their moral environment, social group, social class and family or labor environment.

In France, some researchers considered studying the relationships between school and local environment as a revelatory process about important data tied to school – society relationship, through observing certain forms of the relationship between school and social classes. These researchers focused on the detailed analysis of phenomena on a limited level in order to renew local approaches by filling the gaps of holistic sociological approaches. Studies conducted in popular districts attempt to reveal the existing strategies to avoid school on the side of families and teachers. Other studies seek to reveal the discussion about closing the school by analyzing the relationships between teachers and parents [40] as well as the fully detailed analysis of the relationship between non-privileged families and children’s school life, inscribed on a planned study on some popular districts [41,42]. Therefore, the interest is shifted from system to the local.

5.1 The “Local” Defined in Economic and Social Terms

At the same time, the local, in terms of object and level of analysis, is studied so as to include the economic and social transformations in order to highlight the local peculiarity of some phenomena. Studies on the local indicate a shifting interest to studying processes rather than studying the cause and effect relationships.

Establishing educational priority areas in 1981 in France, aspires to introducing major changes to this end since this is the first time that teachers and local social agents are invited by official circulars. These entities are interested in non-privileged children’s socializing and school life in terms of educational and social level, in collaborating on processing and realizing an educational planning adapted to the needs of the circumscribed area.

A tendency to ameliorate the so-called “sensitive” districts is also observed. The national committee on district social development, established concurrently with that of educational areas,

sought to associate with them in order to create a joint policy. These two policies aimed at confronting school failure of a large number of children from non-privileged districts and labor cities.

It must be mentioned that many relatively dynamic social groups in the local scene vigorously stood up against these policies, as they considered school impossible to transform the local society without being transformed itself in the first place. In similar occasions studies play a crucial role because although they do not provide ideal solutions they can provide interpretations and direct entities related to decision-making as well as local social agents .to suitable choices.

Researchers study the role of school in the local society from an economic, social, geographical and historic perspective and analyze various groups’ integration into the local environment. This integration is made clear through the place of residence or the participation in various local collective events as well as subjective matters such as people’s perception about the local space. They explore in depth the subjects and groups’ representations in order to understand how they perceive their role and the role of others within the educational activity. Studying representations and practices of a social group in relation to the institution of school is conducive to highlighting special features in the school setting as well as the form of association between their representations and practices in other sectors of social life. This way, analyzing teachers’ standpoints, mainly their reactions against recent reforms, provides useful data that help comprehend the manner by which they are integrated into and participate in the local area.

The above social scientists analyze the observed changes resulting from interventions in school / local environment and draw the conclusion that non-privileged children’s school success is due to the nature of interactions between school and district. Moreover, they conclude that development along with the view of the popular environment depend on the quality of school institutes and educational activities that take place within them. They claim that schools and popular districts can potentially be annihilated and, at the same time, be developed [43].

The dynamics school / district is often the product of an arduous creation. Research data

indicate that it is not easy for teachers to relinquish the depreciatory biases tied to popular environments and a part of the teaching personnel reinforces depreciatory mechanisms [40]. Non-privileged parents' cultural and educational practices are often perceived in a negative manner by the school, namely timetables, pace of life, parents – children's verbal exchanges as well as an array of other issues for which parents' rationale does not coincide with that of the teachers.

When the social environment is perceived as being deficient, teachers find it difficult to make ambitious evaluations about their efforts' effectiveness. They develop defeatist expectations about their students and their own teaching performance, too. They depreciate children's capabilities along with self-depreciation tied to their own work. Thus, a question is posed about the effectiveness of pedagogy on a non-privileged social environment given that teachers develop negative representations about students and their families [44]. One of the most important prerequisites for school success tied to children residing in non-privileged districts is the positive transformation of teachers' representations about the popular environment. Research shows that the dynamics school and district can be conducive to transforming teachers' representations in case their relationships with parents are redefined [45,46].

Action can be practiced on different levels such as improvement of students and personnel's reception and working conditions, recognition and support of teachers' efforts and utilization of students. This is feasible through providing assistance to teachers in order to modify their relationships with the district given that they are introduced to the positive aspect of things and are helped to discover the place by moderating their previous negative ideas about the certain local environment. In this respect, teachers' responsibilities can be broadened, partnership with other professionals of education can be favored and children and youth's cultural educational environment can be enriched (utilization of leisure time, encouragement and artistic activities).

It is important to take into consideration the interactions between school and the local environment as well as the changes introduced by state initiatives aiming at encouraging the collective decentralization of school issues tied to children coming from non-privileged social

environments. For these reasons, the sociological study and in-depth knowledge of educational processes and their relationships with other social processes and local action systems is necessary.

Activities referring to social environment for a more autonomous, democratic and innovative organization of school and local life do not bring about better school success to the entire population of non-privileged children. The important thing is that opening of school towards the external environment, communication among the social agents and partnership among teachers are the means conducive to establishing, among other things, a more qualitative school in popular districts. This is about a trend of "socio-political" nature underlying the construction of a more joint social web, decentralization, residents' participation in local actions and a more democratic school and city management. This is an educational and social intervention to non-privileged social environments which is at risk of being confined to merely managing misery and segregation should not certain precautions be taken [47].

6. CONCLUSION

The content of associating school with society must be carefully defined. Hence, some researchers focus on socio-cognitive orientations concurrently referring to school learning and the partnership among social partners of education. This can be used as a stimulus of intellectual activity, cognitive and social dynamics. In other words, this is a trend referring to training and it primarily focuses on the cognitive objectives of instruction (content and learning procedures) as well as to the research of a "qualitative school" which allows the majority of the young to achieve at least an acceptable level of education if not a high one [48].

Social agents participating in educational priority areas become the mediators who develop multiple strategies such as pedagogic (for instance, they can determine a success pedagogy for non-privileged social environments), local (pertaining to joint participation in work with other social agents), institutional (pertaining to negotiation with other institutions such as the municipality and various public services), communicative (pertaining to information dissemination of the realized actions).

Hence, it is very important to manifest that sociological research is interesting, as determined by Alain Touraine. He attempts to redefine sociology not only in terms of the acting subject whose orientations are not determined in relation to the object of action, but as a study on social action, the action of the historic subject whose orientations are defined in terms of the total social conditions [49].

Given that this society is continuously being transformed, sociology of action, viewing the entire society as a system of action, can be applied. According to Touraine, sociology studies social relationships and its main method should allow direct observation and analysis. This presupposes the sociologist's energetic intervention, as they endeavor to showcase the social relations covered by an order of things and make them the main object of analysis.

Touraine contends that there is no method that allows the researchers to study the manner by which a society produces its cultural models, social relationships and practices. He considers sociological intervention the appropriate method to fill this gap since its objective is not to predict facts, but rather to analyze mechanisms through which collective action is formulated [50].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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