

The Crisis of the Sociology of Education and Its Reflections in Turkey: On the Critique of Functionalist and Eclecticist Pragmatic Tradition

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Abstract

Basis of the study: The claims that the sociology of education has been in a crisis seem to be dependent upon the insufficiencies in doing science and acquiring results with the ontological and epistemological foundations of sociology as a discipline of science. The sociology of education has taken shape from the outset in the framework of American sociological tradition, and therefore has been the conveyor model of impasses arising from the limitedness of functionalist sociological agreement and pragmatic science tradition. The structure of a science practice of this sort favoring status quo, not only has narrowed its boundaries but it also has brought about the fact that the sociology of education has been unsuccessful in its defined targets such as the relationship between reality and education and unification of the issue of education with factual developments.

Purpose of the study: In this study, the kinds of directions taken in the field of the sociology of education is critically evaluated together with an assessment of issues in the field: the theoretical and methodological grounds of the practice of the sociology of education in Turkey; and the kinds of problems that the field is facing in the present situation.

Sources of Evidence: What is primary here is to characterize the theoretical and methodological insufficiencies in the background of claims of crisis. The epistemological and ontological discussions, which are descriptive of the insufficiencies in question, are evaluated with reference to the main texts, and the validity of claims of crisis in sociology of education is questioned with reference to the science practices that have dominated the discipline's course of development. Convictions in the West with regard to the idea that the sociology of education is in a crisis are exemplified in

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terms of their negative reflections in the discipline, and the actual debates in sociology of education are examined in comparison with the case in Turkey with reference to main sources in the literature.

Main Discussion and the Consequences: Discussions in sociology of education and the claims that the discipline is in a crisis are a reflection of the discussions that are searching epistemological and ontological foundations. However, sociology of education in Turkey has been to a large extent deprived of the foundation searching discourses that might constitute its internal dynamics. In the field of sociology of education in Turkey, theoretical correlations and scientific practices have not been the object of an attempted complete evaluation. Hence, the theoretical and methodological foundations upon which the discipline is based have turned out to be weak and superficial; conceptualizations have been depthless, and almost no methodological discussions have become a current issue in any way. Negativities such as these leading it to a crisis have cast doubt on the perfection of the field of sociology of education. Sociology of education is required. The condition of overcoming the crises that sociology of education experiences is subordinated to having a powerful scientific tradition, which takes new political processes and economic developments into account.

Kew Words: Sociology of education, crisis, functionalist consensus, eclecticist tradition

At the top of today's fields of intellectual debates, there are questions as to what degree social sciences in general and sociology in particular fulfill their professional missions, and to what degree they are successful in explaining social reality. Today, ontological, epistemological, methodological and theoretical grounds of sociology are subject to significant criticisms. The content of the criticisms has revived the claim that sociology is in a crisis. Indeed, several Western theoreticians such as Alvin Gouldner (1970), Zygmunt Bauman (2002), Alain Touraine (1999), Jurgen Habermas (1998) and Anthony Giddens (1990) seem to have started from the idea that sociology was in a crisis. In their minds, the underlying cause of the crisis was the uncertain state in determining the subject matter and the methodology of sociology. Should it examine social structures and society, or should it be restricted to individuals and to their actions? Is it to be structured in accord with the methodology of positivist natural sciences, or should it appropriate the hermeneutical approach, the aim of which is to understand the distinctive conditions of social life? This uncertain state, which involves separations such as structure-action, society-individual, macro-micro on the theoretical level, and which involves a wavering attitude between positivistic and hermeneutical approach on a methodological level, has given rise to a crisis in sociology. The epistemological and ontological foundation of sociology in the crisis has become controversial; and sociology has not attained the perfection required to explain both social actors and social collectivity. Appealing to structure-based or action-based theories, and focusing on solving problems related to the social field,

sociology has been unable to analyze the problems in their integrity, and has not been successful in the task of comprehending every aspect of social life.

Another element defining the crisis, according to some Western sociologists, is the unproductiveness of theoretical and methodological orientations that have dominated sociology for a long time. This unproductiveness, which is not free from the problem of structure-action duality, and which needs investigating concerning the influences it created, seems to have originated from one-sidedness and insufficiencies of dominant understandings in sociology. In this sense, functionalism, which is the prevalent scientific orientation in academic sociology, has supported the claims of crisis (Giddens, 1999, p. 11). Functionalism, revolving around an order and stability-focused reasoning, together with long-term developments, has overlooked rapid changes, conflicts and function-corruptive elements in the social field, and therefore has caused specifications of sociology concerning social reality to be superficial and insufficient. Moreover, sociology in this perspective has strictly resisted to the changes, and followed an attitude that favors status quo in its theoretical and methodological orientations structured within a functionalist framework. Sociology, instead of renewing itself, has continued persistently to cling to its early scientific presumptions, and to the functionalist tradition. Yet, functionalism or an understanding of sociology equated with functionalism is problematic in various respects and has controversial aspects in the task of explaining social reality.

The insistence of sociology that empirical investigations should be the dominant element in the examination of social problems constitutes the other side of the claims of crisis. In the framework of this understanding, sociology, which has taken form in accord with the model of natural sciences, has confined itself to an understanding of methodology that is isolated from theory. Consequently, in its analyses with regard to the social field, sociology has overlooked the determinative social processes such as history, individualism and subjectivism (Mills, 2000; Giddens, 2003). Sociology, while isolating itself from theory, has given prominence to a one-sided methodological mentality that involves extreme experimentalism, statistical assessments and the presentation of generalized data. However, a methodological orientation in that way, which has taken form within the framework of the model of positivist natural sciences, has dragged sociology to a difficult position in the definition of the social world, which is different from the natural world in various aspects.

Criticisms leveled against sociology are not merely composed of these. The criticisms, starting from contradictions and insufficiencies in theoretical traditions that have given shape to sociology, touch upon numerous problems on the methodological level. However, the main point underlying the criticisms is the fact that sociology is not capable of doing acceptable analyses in its present form. The sole way of responding to the criticisms, for Western sociologists, is to develop some new theoretical and methodological expansions capable of counterbalancing them on behalf of sociology, and capable of rendering sociology again a legitimate science. This is both a historical responsibility and a scientific requirement in their

perspectives (Esgin, 2008). Indeed, there has been a process of intense controversy since the 1970s in which sociology returned to itself in the West, questioned its theoretical, methodological orientations, searched for its insufficiencies and fostered some new investigations related to the nature of sociology. The common emphasis is that sociology needs to search out new epistemological and ontological foundations that are capable of securing itself from claims of uncertainty and crisis. In this regard, both functionalist sociology, and the conception of American sociology, in which functionalism was represented, have gradually been abandoned, and the uncertain state, which is defined as the duality between positivism and hermeneutics, has been overcome by means of new expansions. Anthony Giddens' *theory of structuration*, Jürgen Habermas' *communicative action theory*, Jeffrey Alexander's *new-functionalism*, Alain Touraine's *activist sociology* and Pierre Bourdieu's *practical theory* are the products of such an aim.

Most of the problems voiced with regard to sociology in the historical process are not separate from the problems sociology of education has experienced and faced. Therefore, sociology of education, which is a sub discipline of sociology, has had to meet the criticisms leveled against sociology. Indeed, all criticisms that address the insufficiencies of sociology in its theoretical and methodological orientation, its definition of science favoring status quo, and its future position are equally in force with regard to sociology of education (Shain & Ozga, 2001, p. 110). In this regard, sociology of education has become a pitiable field day by day in parallel to sociology. This is because practitioners in the field of sociology of education have, from the outset, defined it as a field restricted to some marginal issues and some specific fields of problems, instead of attaching the subject of education to social processes completely. More importantly, the inner dynamics of sociology itself or the scientific rules it entertained have specified the characteristics of sociology of education. Accordingly, sociology of education has also been subject to the crisis and to the uncertain state by the distinctions experienced in sociology between structure and action, society and individual, macro and micro (Shilling, 1992; Young, 2001). In its present situation, sociology of education is criticized and is seen as a field in crisis on the grounds that it has the same problems with sociology, that it is unproductive in theoretical and methodical sense, that it is insufficient in specifying the relationships between education and society, and that it is confined to one-sided methodological findings isolated from theory (Shimbori, 1979; Becker, 1986; Shain & Ozga, 2001; Young, 2002).

Controversies in sociology of education and the claims that the discipline is in a crisis are the reflections of the discussions that search for epistemological and ontological foundations. However, Shain and Ozga (2001, p.115) contend that influences of these reflections in sociology of education are more destructive. The reason for this, in their minds, is the fact that sociology of education mostly lacks some discourses that seek for foundations that are capable of constituting its inner dynamics. Sociology of education, even when rested on theoretical traditions that are prevailing in sociology, has not attempted to evaluate theoretical relations and scientific practices all together. Accordingly, the theoretical and methodological foundations on which the field rested have remained quite weak and superficial.

Conceptualizations in sociology of education, which subsist on sociology, have become distant from profundity, and one has never entered into methodological discussions. Within this framework, the claims of crisis in sociology of education are associated with its making itself isolated from theoretical and methodological discussions.

Similar developments concerning the issue in the West, just as those in sociology, brought about a process of self-criticism in which scientific assumptions of sociology of education were questioned, scientific practices and their future status were reconsidered, and new quests were fostered. Sociologists of education have questioned the qualifications of their own discipline for the first time since the 1970s; and they have formed a critical estimate of their own perspectives. What shaped the most important debate in that process was the question of why had it come to occupy a more pitiable position than it had in the past? The primary cause of this is the perception of the science of sociology of education and its making itself isolated from daily problems of social life in the context of methodological practices (Young, 2002, p. 65). Isolation is mainly a product of theoretical orientations that have dominated the sociology of education for a long time, namely the product of the "old conception of sociology of education". In the comprehension of the criticisms, the conception of sociology that represents the old or former intellects is unsuccessful in understanding the relations between education and society and in solving the possible problems. The old sociology of education, which advocates and supports status quo is full of insufficiencies (Shimbori, 1979, p. 406). The disputes displayed throughout 1960s are what constitute the background of criticisms with regard to sociology of education. It is especially possible to see a reflection of the influence of critical theory on sociology in the field of sociology of education. The definitions of "new sociology of education" in the field of sociology of education is a new concept of sociology that has developed under the influence of critical theory and has taken shape against functionalist sociology which was dominant in the field. Those who advocate new sociology of education have defined their chief aim as reevaluation of the scientific convictions of sociology of education, its theoretical and methodological orientations, and their fundamental functions.

They have criticized orthodox Marxism much the same as they have criticized the foundations of functionalist sociology and the positivist understandings associated with it. According to the understanding of the new sociology of education, contemporary society has to be characterized by both change and conflict. The dimension of change is to be examined from every aspect of it. On the other hand, functionalist tradition has failed to explain the subject matter of the change as it has been jammed in an understanding that favors status quo, insisting on the issue of objectivity and ideological impartiality devoid of value. Therefore, it has not succeeded in realistically showing current problems and their causes. With its structure that favors status quo, functionalism has rendered problems superficial and served for the legitimacy of the order. It has been evident that the nature of education is not to be explained in terms of functionalisms. This is because functionalism has failed to comprehend the continually changing nature of education and societal

sphere and the determinative conditions of the change. For instance, the issue of equality of opportunity in education or class environment that does not consider conflict could not have been solved (Tan, 1990). These controversies have explained and established firmly the reason why the traditional form of sociology of education has been dragged to a state of crisis. Eventually, that the field should be set free from the functionalist approach and positivism has explicitly been expressed by sociologists of education. According to the sociologists of education who fulfilled this return, the present mission of sociology of education is to examine itself and the scientific dogmas it has, not to examine the concepts that have already been defined repeatedly. New sociology of education has to focus on the works of sociology of knowledge and to revise its theoretical and methodological foundations. Moreover, it is required to discuss the reflection of knowledge in the form of social organization or how and why certain pieces of knowledge become the subject matter of education (Shimbori, 1979, p. 407).

In its current state in the West, sociology of education is polarized within two main inclinations. The first is the old sociology of education, which prevails in America and maintains the criticized restrictedness of sociology of education, and the second is the new sociology of education, which we run across as an influential conception in Continental Europe, particularly in England. Indeed here, the old sociology of education becomes equal with the tradition of American sociology of education, which is a reflection of American sociology that represents positivist sociology favoring quantitative data from the outset. Consequently, the tradition of American sociology of education is taken largely to be the target of the criticisms related to sociology of education and of claims of crisis. Thus, according to many sociologists (Shimbori, 1979; Antikainen, 1992; Saha, 2008), functionalist American sociology of education has been insufficient in explaining the interaction between education and society while it restricts itself to micro sociological analyses and statistical data, and appeals merely to practical aims disregarding theoretical analyses. American sociology of education together with its static perception of science and with its structure that favors status quo seems to be a conception of sociology that lacks profoundness. On the other hand, new sociology of education, with the aim of overcoming perceptible problems in American sociology of education, has espoused a conception of dynamic sociology, which follows a more critical attitude, and the pessimistic aspects of which predominate. The purpose in the new sociology of education is to set the discipline free from dead ends in order to assist it in its struggle for the quest of foundations. Sociology of education seems to be in need of returning to itself, and of specifying its insufficiencies on theoretical and methodological levels. Otherwise, the field of sociology of education is bound to lose its legitimacy in the scientific and social spheres.

Therefore, it would not be a mistake to say that the effort of explaining the interaction between education and society in accord with the dominant functionalist tradition and with one-way quantitative data loaded analyses, in the field of sociology of education in the West recently, has been abandoned. While a practice of science of this sort is maintained in USA in certain senses, most sociologists of education sustain their attempts of overcoming insufficiencies in theoretical and

methodological foundations on which sociology of education rests, and of providing the discipline with the capability of producing solutions to social problems (Shilling, 1992; Shain & Ozga, 2001; Young, 2002; Saha, 2008).

The Crisis of Sociology of Education and Its Reflections in Turkey

Sociology, shortly after it arose as a science in the West, entered into Turkey and took shape in similar lines as it did in the West. Developed as a tool of finding solutions to economic, political, and social problems, primarily in France and other European countries, sociology became a basis for Ottoman thinkers who encountered similar difficulties and it became institutionalized during the course of time in parallel with the West (Erkul, 2009, p. 9-10). Entering into university in 1914 in Turkey as the oldest academic chair of the world, sociology seems to have followed various stages of development after it acquired the identity of an independent department in the 1960s. Sociology in Turkey, which has been dependent on Western sociology from the outset, has initially transferred theoretical texts found in the West to Turkish with an understanding of philosophical translation. Then it was quickly passed to the experimental edge, where field investigations that were devoid of theoretical foundations, assumptions and problems come into prominence, and the technique of surveying was the sole valid means of analysis (Kaçmazoğlu, 1999, p. 318). When we look at the issue in this perspective, the course of development of sociology in Turkey seems to have similar characteristics with the sociology in the West. Nevertheless, there are some differences as well. The most important of these is the fact that Turkish sociologists have a conservative practice of science that depends mainly on eclecticism while the Western sociology keeps its own dynamics of development, scientific acceptances, and foundations on theoretical and methodological levels alive. Accordingly, whereas the discussions in the West about the scientific identity of sociology (with regard to theoretical and methodological orientations) cover a large area, these discussions in Turkish sociology have stayed in the background in general. Sociological works in Turkey have kept going within the framework of dominant scientific convictions almost without questioning theoretical and methodological problems of sociology. Consequently, whatever the dominant sociological orientation is in the world, it has been the orientation maintained and accepted as a scientific foundation in Turkey. For instance, the tradition of Continental European sociology, with a theoretical foundation of which was more dominant, constituted the prevailing orientation in Turkey from the process of entrance of sociology into Turkey until the 1960s; American sociology has come to be the sovereign scientific orientation after those years in parallel with the sovereignty of the United States of America (Kaçmazoğlu, 2006; 2007).

Development of sociology of education in Turkey is, naturally, not free from being connected with the process of development of sociology and the problems it had in Turkey. Therefore, the definition and institutionalization of sociology of education in Turkey as an independent discipline was possible after 1960s together with sociology itself. Until that period, the issue of education was evaluated in a

category of general definition like other social institutions in sociological analyses, not in the scope of sociology. With the entrance of sociology into Turkey, Turkish intellectuals began to examine the issue of education starting from analyses that involved sociological approaches of some Western sociologists such as Le Play, Edmond Demolines and Emile Durkheim towards education. Turkish intellectuals such as Munif Ali Pasha, Ali Suavi, Prince Sabahattin and Ziya Gokalp also assumed that society could be straightened by means of education and well-educated staffs, just as it was assumed in the West. Although not completely institutionalized, especially some of Gokalp's works might be seen to be in the discipline of sociology of education. Gokalp made some theoretical expansions with regard to the topics of culture, education, family and group life that were defined as the main topics of sociology of education (Doğan, 2011, p. 58-59). In the period of the Republic, similar endeavors were carried on by İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, Nusret Köymen and İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (Doğan, 2011; 2012). Although there are several differences between these thinkers with respect to their understanding of education, they might be said to have produced ideas serving the same purpose. The purpose in question was to grow citizens that were integrated with the West, to be able to reconcile society and individuals by means of education (Kaçmazoğlu, 2011, p. 265). However, one cannot say that sociology of education gained an academic identity in the process to come. The definition of the field of sociology of education as an academic discipline in Turkey and its incorporation into curriculum was possible with the establishment of Ankara University Faculty of Education. After the establishment of this faculty, sociology of education was taught at different universities, and there was an observable increase in the academic works associated with the field (Doğan, 2011, p. 72-73). Together with institutionalization and increase in academic works, theoretical and methodological foundations that constitute the scientific base of sociology of education, which proceeds with the scientific acceptances of sociology, came to take shape. Sociology of education, at this stage, was directly under the influence of the orientations of sociology prevailing in Turkey in that period. Therefore, the tradition of Continental Europe, which was initially more theory-based, was abandoned, and a rapid transition to functionalist American sociological understanding was adopted. Those who went to the United States of America for specialization in the field of education and sociology of education and those graduate students sent there in the name of Ministry of National Education began to put into effect the scientific information they acquired after returning to Turkey. Therefore, they accelerated the above-mentioned transition. In this way, in the years after 1960, a period began in which the conception of functionalist American sociology dominated in Turkey in every respect. Along this period, there was concern about micro sociological topics and their general connections, and the arguments of functionalist sociology were adjusted to the circumstances of the country. As American sociology began to develop as the dominant understanding, sociologists in Turkey assumed that the theories and assumptions that were produced in the United States of America were also acceptable in Turkey. Therefore, our sociologists endeavored to prove these theories and assumptions, and they tried to make the findings they searched for overlap with the findings they had (Kaçmazoğlu, 1999, p. 302-318).

The same understanding was effective in determination of topics and in selection of the techniques used in the investigations in the studies of sociology of education, which was dependent upon sociology. Sociologists of education transferred the concepts and the theories to the field by means of translations presented as the explanatory foundations of education in Turkey, and of societal interactions and problems. Especially when the content of textbooks used in the years 1970s and 1980s, and the treatment of the issues are examined, this assertion is obtained. Most of the textbooks in question were class books, which bore resemblance to each other largely in this respect and, approached certain issues such as education, school, class, family, culture, stratification and equality of opportunity in the framework of the definitions of functionalist American sociologists, and which were restricted to superficial evaluations in general. In this period, much of the academic activities related to the field were composed of the translations of the works of especially American sociologists. However, while the movements of translation led to acquisition of the required knowledge and assessments in the field, it also caused the orientations of sociology of education to become evident and therefore made room for the tradition of American sociology of education in our country. This is because theories acquired by means of translations were not the topics our sociologists of education mostly questioned. Theoretical texts originated in the West were usually seen as purely academic or sacred texts, and therefore, their relation with our historical and social structure was not carefully studied (Kayalı, 2002, p. 12).

Into this specification, one might incorporate the deficiencies in assessments concerning the methodological aspects of the sociology of education, as the corollary of the same understanding. For instance, an indication of this is the fact that no one has deliberated, appealing to functionalism, which is in the limelight in sociology of education in Turkey, on the difficulties of methodological orientations that give prominence to field investigations. In short, except for one or two examples, no one, in the studies about sociology of education in Turkey, has been involved in the task of criticizing and examining sociology itself, and its theoretical and methodological aspects. Yet sociology, due to its distinctive features, is a science one needs to examine continuously, and to rebuild systematically in view of those examinations (Giddens, 1990, p. 240). A differentiation in both the old and the current conception of sociology is an obvious evidence of this. In this respect, sociology of education in the West, both seeks to make expansions with regard to the society as its object, its rapidly changing new appearances, and to find theoretical and methodological foundations that will put these expansions into force. The gradual withdrawal of functionalism, especially in the years after 1970, in sociology of education in the West, the exposure of American sociology of education to significant criticisms and the development of new orientations on theoretical-methodological level is a product of such an understanding. What is required to ask at this point is where and in what context of understanding does sociology of education in Turkey, -which follows the West and, approves indisputably of the theories and the arguments it took from the West- take a position? Scientific grounds of sociology of education in the West are in accord with the central problems of sociology, and the issue of what route sociology of education (capable of explaining the present-day conditions) should take, is given

a primary place. Against this, the reason why sociology of education in Turkey still goes ahead with past habits seems to be an important question needing reflection. What makes this question important is the insistence of sociology of education in Turkey, which was motivated by an eclectic understanding, on following an effective yet contentious path, and the fact that sociologists in Turkey were closed to new approaches in sociology, instead of deliberating on scientific challenges. The reason for this, perhaps, as Kayalı (2005, p. 12) points to, was their assumption that doing sociology was associated with transmitting some theories and emphasizing some verdicts rather than facing the new approaches. Another reason might be that reducing sociology of education to the field investigations precluded the need for theoretical expansions (Cangızbay, 2005, p. 35-36). However, the genuine problem is the fact that sociologists in Turkey in general might be inefficient, in their sociological works, in doing *sociology of "sociology"* (Erkul, 2000, p. 42).

While sociology of education in Turkey, in the years after 1990, seems to have preserved its tendencies of quoting Western resources and practicing statistical studies devoid of theoretical content, the changes that appeared in sociology of education in the West, had a direct influence, in parallel to the global changes, on our fields of interest. The concepts such as new world order, society of knowledge, postmodernism and globalization came to the forefront in the analyses of sociology of education and determined the orientations of sociology of education in Turkey as well as in the West. Sociologists seem to have carried out theoretical analyses in sociology of education in the West to a significant extent, and have sought to construe conditions of changing the world by means of developing new theories. The changes in the subject of sociology of education have brought about questioning and examining once again its theoretical and methodological foundations as a science in a different way than the past, and led to developing new orientations. Yet, while the field of sociology of education seems to have taken form in that period around the concepts mentioned, it does not seem to have adopted an attitude of critical reconstruction as it has done in the West. Discussions of this sort have become effective especially in recent studies of sociology of education with the increase of relevant translations. Yet, it seems obvious that it still keeps away from discussions similar to the dominant perspective in sociology of education.

Today, sociology of education in Turkey seems to be experiencing an obvious loss of value. Negative evaluations, on the part of the the Higher Education Council, universities and academic environment, regarding the insufficiency and needlessness of the field of sociology of education have increased. Accordingly, courses of sociology of education have been degraded to service courses losing their status as compulsory courses. In an academic sense, there have been significant decreases in the studies in the field of sociology of education. More importantly, sociology of education, insistently sticking to American sociology, and focusing on analyzing the relationship between education and society merely by means of quantitative data abstracted from the theory, seems to have handed over its functionality to some fields in sciences of education such as psychology of education, social psychology and practices of service to the society. This is the result of its resistance to criticisms

and change. Indeed, the basic reason of this negative picture drawn in the name of sociology of education is its inability in overcoming the crisis it has been experiencing in Turkey.

The crisis of sociology of education is directly connected with the fact that our sociologists have not sufficiently questioned the theoretical and methodological orientations in the processes described. Many factors have given rise to more obvious sense of the consequences of the crisis in Turkey, such as: being unopened to new theoretical quests; not being able to develop distinctive theories positively associated with the realities of our country; following methodological attitude without a theory related to functionalist paradigm; and more importantly the mentality of starting from a practice of science focused merely on statistical findings designed according to the model of natural sciences. The habit of starting from similar concepts in almost every study related to the sociology of education, making definitions that are almost in the same level of superficiality, and harping on the same string have strengthened the negative perception related to the field. Indeed, the repetition of countless failings, mistakes and limitedness in the consecutive editions of textbooks, not renewed even in terms of subject and problem selection, has intensified the negative perception related to the field (Doğan, 2011, p. 76). The other area where the repetitions in question and the practices of science subject to criticism, are frequently seen is in the other academic journals. Most of the articles published in academic journals monotonously follow an understanding of science that is deprived of theoretical analyses and evaluations. The issues examined in these publications are analyzed with reference to data acquired from samples selected by means of survey or other techniques without taking into consideration the historical analyses that are at the center of the problems, and without taking into consideration the intellectual backgrounds and the multi-dimensional causes. For instance, the descriptive criteria, which were developed in accordance with the characteristics of Western men and their social problems, are translated into Turkish and are attempted to be adapted to our society with the intention of finding solutions, by means of these criteria, to our problems related to our environment of education and to the young. Moreover, the studies that are formed with an understanding of this sort are seen as a necessary part of the scientific legitimacy in most academic journals. In these journals, the publication of the researches is subordinated to their conforming, both in terms of content and in terms of form, to the dominant understanding of science. Yet, this limited act of writing of this kind, which involves merely the parts of problem, method, findings and discussion, and which is mainly effective in the model of natural sciences, restricts not only the content of sociology of education, but it also restricts the content of other disciplines of social sciences. This is because the social scientist is not a technician who communicates the data he or she acquired. Between getting to know how a series of hypotheses are to be tested and getting to know the theory on which the hypotheses are to be grounded is an obvious gap (Merton, 1974, p. 239). Inattention to theory and reduction of scientific researches to the dimension of testing and data assessments not only makes that study a superficial one, but it also makes the social scientist a technician. In brief, the description of social problems solely by means of spontaneous data and findings acquired from the field

undermines the aim of social sciences of explaining social problems in all respects. Social problems are not suitable for explanation by means of spontaneously arising data or findings acquired from a specific group of samples. Besides, given the deficiencies and insufficiencies of positivism-centered sociology of education in the experimental process, it would be obvious how superficial and unsolvable an understanding of social science or sociology of education suffering from a lack of theory might be.

Conclusion: Requirement of Quest for Foundation

After all these specifications, we can say that the studies in the field of sociology of education in Turkey have for the most part been dependent upon West-transferring, i.e., quoting from Western resources. Therefore, although they reflect some periodical differentiations parallel to the discussions in the West, they seem to have preserved their West-addict peculiarity up to the present time. The tradition of functionalist American sociology has prevailed, especially in the years after 1960, in the field of sociology of education, as well as in sociology itself. Turkish sociologists who unquestionably adopted the functionalist and pragmatic American sociology have overlooked its insufficiencies on behalf of science and have confined it to a narrow domain. Indeed, American sociologists regarded education mainly as a tool of solving social problems because the USA had numerous multidimensional problems such as crime, divorce, unemployment, and poverty awaiting immediate solutions. Accordingly, social sciences in the USA were defined as a practical activity that gave priority to solving problems and it thereby acquired a characteristic that brought pragmatic inclinations forward. In other words, American sociology was not developed for academic reasons but as a response to practical needs (Shimbori, 1979, p. 396). The understanding of American sociology of education, which was formed in association with some pragmatic aims, kept theoretical expansions in the background, and restricted sociological analyses to statistical data and descriptions. The resistance that was leveled to the understanding of American sociology of education in the West in the years after 1970 gave rise to re-examination of the field and it accelerated the quests for alternative foundations. Conversely, no one ever attempted to enter into these discussions in Turkey; instead, one attempted to solve the problems within the scope of the definitions and the methodological orientations of the functionalist approach. In the field of sociology of education, as is the case with other sociological studies, the theories that were put forth in the USA, and that were effective in that society were adapted to Turkish society. Moreover, the verification of effectiveness of the theories was subordinated to using data. However, when the relevant data did not match up with the theories, or when the effectiveness of the theories was not convincing, one pointed to the backwardness of Turkish society as the cause. This situation, which was a significant delusion, is due to the acceptance of the arguments of Western sociologists and adopting unquestionably their methodological orientations (Kaçmazoglu, 1999, p. 318). Such a practice of investigation has given rise to important problems with respect to the perception of science. For instance, there have been some insufficiencies in the association of data,

the aim of which is not clear, with the theories, in their analyses and interpretations (Içli, 2001, p. 35). Therefore, scientific analyses have turned into analyses of quantitative data. Problems inherent in the relation between education and society have been defined within the scope of functionalist restrictions that ground on consensus and integration. In short, as a result of the sociological postures that are deeply connected to the Western sociology, an understanding of sociology has been effective, which is distant from the realities of its own society while peering into the West (Kızılcelik, 2005, p. 127). Focused on developments arising in the West and on the solutions developed for problems of Western society, sociology in Turkey has not been concerned with its own development and its own history, and therefore it has not been able to produce real solutions to its own problems; instead, it has satisfied itself with West-transferring (Kızılcelik, 2000, p. 129; Erkul, 2000, p. 32). This is the mentality of a social science that is unable to overcome its own difficulties, which does not question its insufficiencies, and regards science as a fixed and stereotyped field of practice that sees criticisms as external discourses contrary to the science, and which restricts itself to West-transferring as a way of doing science. Unfortunately, this mentality limits the sighting distance of the social scientist, as well as devastating the very prestige of the social sciences itself (Esgin, 2011).

Sociology of education is a discipline that explores, from a sociological perspective, the social processes and structures that are related to education. Sociology of education aspires to understand and analyze the relationship between institutions of education and society by using theories and methods on micro and macro levels (Saha, 2008). In this context, sociology of education is a field of study that has three aspects. These aspects consist of making analyses as the scientific aspect, of involving various practices as the technological aspect, and of producing theories as the mental aspect (Akyüz, 1992, p. 117). In other words, sociology of education comprises the theory, the methodology and the practice all together. Theory is a web of concepts that corresponds to field-related evaluations and intellectual foundations. It consists of intellectual conclusions related to historical, philosophical and scientific aspects of the relationship between education and society. Theoretical foundations are crucially important in the definition of the possible interactions between the two fields, and in determination of cause-effect relations. The other foundation that is as much important as the theory is the methodology. Methodology is the aggregate of all methods and techniques required for scientific analyses. Methodology involves the ways of acquiring knowledge descriptive of social reality. Accordingly, methodological analyses that are broken off from the theory or the theoretical abstractions and that are far from methodological groundings are not satisfactory for definitions of being scientific minded. Indeed, since sociology of education is a dynamic field, its theoretical and methodological orientations should display a continuous development. This is because the society, the subject matter, is exposed to change. It does not seem realistic that one could penetrate into problematic fields of the changing society by means of a methodological orientation that is fixed by a theory belongs to previous decades. In the last quarter of the 20th century in the West, scientific foundations of sociology of education have been exposed to significant criticisms. The criticisms have provided

the field with its returning to itself, and its reevaluation of its theoretical and methodological orientations. In the context of these evaluations, Western sociologists have addressed some responsibilities that sociology of education should undertake on its own. The first of these is its entering into a quest of a new epistemological foundation that is different from an empirical research method that originates from positivism in methodological orientations of sociology of education. Second is the confrontation of sociology and sociology of education with the duality that comes into existence by virtue of theoretical breaks. The third is the fact that sociology of education has to solve the difficulties that new theoretical approaches have created (Saha, 2008, p. 303). In fact, these designations have various implications for sociology of education as well as for sociology and for the whole of social sciences. The questionable nature of scientific definitions and their changeability constitutes a crucially important feature of the scientific mind, although it is not taken for the most part into consideration. This is especially an obvious requirement for social sciences in comparison to natural sciences. The social sciences are a field that is the subject matter of a continuous change. Knowledge of change is more complicated than the relative continuous facts. Accordingly, in social sciences in general, and in sociology in particular, the effectiveness, objectivity, universality, relativity, and repeatability of the knowledge produced need to be examined (Güvenç, 2000, p. 25). In this sense, the requirement that the science should operate by some fixed and universal rules seems unrealistic. An understanding of science of this sort oversimplifies human abilities and the conditions in which these abilities arise. Moreover, the understanding that science is not changeable has a nature that harms science and renders it dogmatic while it overlooks physical and historical conditions that affect scientific change (Güzel, 1996, p. 15). The nature of social sciences that is open to questioning and changeability is the necessary requirement of its producing more effective solutions to problems of the social realm that display relatively rapid change. Besides, social sciences did not only intend to find the method of doing something, or reaching some practical aims. Social sciences are also concerned with answering the questions about what a "good" and "desirable" way of life is (Benton & Craib, 2008, p. 219). The most obvious aim of social sciences is to specify the conditions of creating a more humane society. Therefore, the conditions in question can only be determined with social sciences' acquiring a structure deep enough for getting reliable consequences.

Sociology of education has undertaken an important mission in the determination of the conditions of a more humane society by means of education. Yet the negativities that force it into a crisis bring the perfection of sociology of education into disrepute. However, its definition as being a field in crisis, and even its being degraded in various respects does not eradicate the significance that sociology of education has for academic and political fields. Sociology of education is needed. The claims of crisis seem to be acceptable for only a practice of science that is restricted to a functionalist understanding, that overlook its theoretical and methodological deficiencies, not for sociology of education in its entirety. Today, the primary task of sociology for many theoreticians is to construct some explanatory propositions, analytical tools and interpretative directives that are applicable to the problems

related to the theoretical and methodological dimension of sociology (Camic & Gross, 1998, p. 455). The construction process in question is both a requirement and a necessity on behalf of social sciences. The possibility of overcoming the crisis for sociology of education seems to require having a powerful tradition of science taking new political processes and economic developments into consideration. With this design, the problems that are defined with structure-action, society-individual, and macro-micro divisions, and that are regarded as the central problems of sociological theory need to be reevaluated in their own contexts. In addition, a critical attitude should be developed towards the insufficiencies of positivist paradigm that determine methodological orientations of the field, and the contents of alternative paradigms should be evaluated (Shain & Ozga, 2001, p. 115). Social sciences in general and sociology in particular have to keep alive the quest for scientific foundations by means of which one can realize the realities and problems peculiar to the social world. Otherwise, sociology of education will come face to face with being an obsolete human endeavor, and will lose its ground of legitimacy completely in the course of time.

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Eğitim Sosyolojisinin Krizi ve Türkiye'deki Yansımaları: İşlevselci ve Aktarmacı Pragmatik Geleneğin Eleştirisi Üzerine

Atıf:

Esgin, A. (2013), The Crisis of the Sociology of Education and Its Reflections in Turkey: On the Critique of Functionalist and Eclecticist Pragmatic Tradition, *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 50, 143-162.

(Özet)

Çalışmanın Temeli: Eğitim sosyolojinin kriz içinde olduğu iddiaları, onun bilimsel bir disiplin olarak ontolojik ve epistemolojik temelleri ile bilim yapma ve sonuçlara ulaşma pratiklerindeki yetersizliklere dayanmaktadır. Eğitim sosyolojisi başından beri, ilk kurumsallaşma sürecini yaşadığı Amerikan sosyoloji geleneği çerçevesinde biçimlenmiş, dolayısıyla, işlevselci sosyolojik oydaşmanın ve pragmatik bilim geleneğinin sınırlılıklarından kaynaklanan açmazların taşıyıcı modeli olmuştur. Bu türden bir bilim pratiğinin statükocu yapısı, onun sınırlarını daraltmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda eğitim sosyolojisinin sosyal gerçeklik ve eğitim ilişkisini açıklama ve eğitim konusunu güncel gelişmelerle bütünleştirebilme gibi tanımlanmış hedeflerine ulaşmada başarısız olmasına yol açmıştır. Hal böyle olunca, üniversitelerde eğitim sosyolojisi bölümleri kapatılmaya başlanmış, eğitim sosyoloji alanının çalışma konuları başka disiplinlerin çalışma alanlarına dâhil edilmiştir..

Çalışmanın Amacı: Makalenin amacı, eğitim sosyolojisindeki bu türden yetersizliklerin Türkiye'deki eğitim sosyolojisine nasıl ve hangi yönleriyle yansıdığı, Türkiye'de eğitim sosyolojisi pratiklerinin teorik ve metodolojik dayanaklarının neler olduğunun ve gelinen noktada eğitim sosyolojisi alanının ne türden problemlerle yüzleşmek zorunda kaldığı konularının eleştirel bir değerlendirmesini yapmaktır.

Kanıt Kaynakları: Sosyolojinin bir alt dalı olan eğitim sosyolojisinin krizi iddialarına temel teşkil eden problemler, doğal olarak, tarihsel süreçte sosyolojinin yaşadığı ve yüzleşmek zorunda kaldığı problemlerden bağımsız değildir. Dolayısıyla burada öncelikli olan, kriz iddialarının arka planındaki teorik ve metodolojik yetersizlikleri tanımlamaktır. Çalışmada söz konusu yetersizlikleri tanımlayıcı epistemolojik ve ontolojik tartışmalar ana metinlerden hareketle değerlendirilmiş, özellikle alanın gelişim seyri içinde hâkim konuma yerleşen bilim pratikleri üzerinden eğitim sosyolojisinin krizi iddialarının geçerliliği sorgulanmıştır.

Ana Tartışma: Eğitim sosyolojisindeki tartışmalar ve disiplinin kriz içinde olduğu iddiaları, sosyolojideki epistemolojik ve ontolojik temel arayıcı tartışmaların bir yansımasıdır. Ancak, eğitim sosyolojisi kendi içsel dinamiklerini oluşturacak temel arayıcı söylemlerden büyük ölçüde yoksun kalmıştır. Eğitim sosyolojisi, sosyolojide egemen olan teorik geleneklere yaslanırken bile, teorik bağıntıları ve bilimsel pratikleri bütünüyle değerlendirme girişiminde bulunmamıştır. Dolayısıyla alanın dayandığı teorik ve metodolojik temeller oldukça zayıf ve yüzeysel kalmıştır.

Sosyolojiden beslenen eğitim sosyolojisinde kavramlaştırmalar derinlikten uzaklaşmış, metodolojik tartışmalara ise neredeyse hiç girilmemiştir.

Batı'da özellikle son dönemde eğitim sosyolojisi alanında eğitim ve toplum etkileşimini baskın işlevselci gelenek ve tek yönlü nicel veri ağırlıklı analizlerle açıklama çabasının artık terk edildiğini söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Bu türden bir bilim pratiği Amerika'da belli açılardan devam ettiriliyor olsa da, çoğu eğitim sosyoloğu, eğitim sosyolojisinin dayandığı teorik ve metodolojik yönelimlerdeki yetersizlikleri aşma, disipline sosyal problemlere çözüm üretme meşruyetini yeniden kazandırma çabalarını sürdürmektedir.

Batı'da 1970'li yıllardan sonra Amerikan eğitim sosyolojisi anlayışına karşı gelişen direnç, alanın teorik ve metodolojik yönelimlerinin sorgulanmasına ve alternatif temel arayışlarının hız kazanmasına neden olmuştur. Oysa ülkemizde bu tartışmalara neredeyse hiç girilmemiş, aktarmacı bir anlayışla, işlevselci yaklaşımın tanımları ve metodolojik yönelimleri çerçevesinde problemler çözülmeye çalışılmıştır. Diğer sosyolojik çalışmaların çoğunda olduğu gibi, eğitim sosyolojisinde de Amerika'da ileri sürülen ve o toplum için geçerli olan teoriler toplumumuza uyarlanmış, teorilerin geçerliliği veriler kullanılarak kanıtlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Ancak veriler örtüşmeyince ya da teorilerin geçerliliği kanıtlanamayınca, neden olarak Türk toplumunun geri kalmışlığı gösterilmiştir. Büyük bir yanılğı olarak gösterilebilecek bu durum, kendi sosyal koşullarına uygun teoriler üretmek yerine, Batılı sosyologların argümanlarını ve metodolojik yönelimlerini tartışmasız kabul etmekten kaynaklanmıştır. Böylesi bir araştırma pratiği, bilim algısı açısından önemli problemler doğurmuştur. Bilimsel analizler, felsefi ve teorik temellerden kopuk, nicel veri analizlerine dönüşmüştür. Eğitim ve toplum ilişkisine ait problemler, çatışma, çelişki ve zıtlıkları geri plana itip, daha çok düzen, denge, değer ve normlara önem veren, oydaşım ve bütünleşmeyi temel alan işlevselci sınırlılıklar çerçevesinde tanımlanmıştır. Kısacası, Türkiye'de Batı sosyolojisine sadık bir biçimde bağlanan sosyolojik duruşlar alanın yaşadığı problemlere kayıtsız kalmışlar, eğitim sosyolojisinin değer yitimine neden olan bu problemlere dönük temel arayıcı eleştirel çalışmalara yönelmemişlerdir.

Sonuçlar: Eğitim sosyolojisi, eğitim aracılığıyla daha insancıl bir toplumun koşullarının belirlenmesinde oldukça önemli bir görev üstlenmiştir. Ancak onu kriz içine sürükleyen olumsuzluklar, eğitim sosyolojisi alanının yetkinliğini gölgelemektedir. Fakat onun kriz içinde bir alan olarak tanımlanması, hatta belli açılardan değer yitimine uğraması, eğitim sosyolojisinin akademik ve politik alan için taşıdığı önemi değiştirmemektedir. Eğitim sosyolojisine ihtiyaç vardır. Eğitim sosyolojisinin içinde bulunduğu kriz durumundan kurtulmasının koşulu, sosyal dönüşümleri, yeni politik süreçleri ve ekonomik gelişmeleri hesaba katan güçlü bir bilimsel geleneğe sahip olmaktan geçmektedir. Bunun için öncelikle yapı-eylem, toplum-birey ayrımı ya da makro-mikro bölünme şeklinde tanımlanan ve sosyolojik teorinin merkezi problemleri olarak nitelenen problemlerin kendi bağlamında yeniden değerlendirilmesini gerekmektedir. Ayrıca alanın metodolojik yönelimlerini belirleyen pozitivist paradigmanın yetersizliklerine ilişkin eleştirel bir tutum geliştirmeli, alternatif paradigmaların içerimlerini değerlendirilmelidir. Genelde

sosyal bilimler, özel de sosyoloji, sosyal dünyaya özgü nitelik ve problemleri çok boyutlu olarak kavrayabilecek bilimsel temel arayışlarını canlı tutmalıdır. Aksi durumda, eğitim sosyolojisi meşruiyet zeminini yitirerek değer yitimine uğramaya devam edecektir.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Eğitim sosyolojisi, kriz, işlevselci oйдаşma, aktarmacı gelenek