SOCILOGICAL ANALYSIS AND COMPARATIVE EDUCATION: A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

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Abstract – The bibliography cites English language material at the intersection of two fields of study: sociology of education and comparative education. The collection of material is biased (a) toward the general reader rather than the specialist already working in the area, and (b) toward the identification of overlap between the two fields of study.

Résumé – La bibliographie cite le matériel en langue anglaise à l'intersection de deux domaines d'étude: la sociologie de l'éducation et l'éducation comparée. Le matériel rassemblé s'adresse davantage au lecteur ordinaire qu'au spécialiste travaillant déjà dans ce domaine et vise surtout l'identification de la partie commune aux deux champs d'étude.

Zusammenfassung – Diese Bibliographie umfaßt englischsprachiges Material am Schnittpunkt von zwei Studienfeldern: der Erziehungssoziologie und der Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft. Das gesammelte Material ist (a) mehr auf den allgemeinen Leser als auf bereits in diesem Bereich tätige Wissenschaftler ausgerichtet, und (b) bezieht sich vorzugsweise auf die Feststellung von Überschneidungen zwischen den beiden Studiengebieten.

The main aim of this bibliography is to provide an introductory listing of English language literature which might be of interest to comparative educationists who know little of developments in sociology and the sociology of education; and to sociologists with an interest in education who know little about the condition of comparative education. The bibliography may also be of some use to graduate students whose research takes them between the fields of study. For them, too, it is merely a point of departure, and an entry to the footnotes and bibliographic citations contained within each article or book mentioned in this short bibliography. It is also hoped that the bibliography may be sufficiently non-esoteric to be of use and interest to educationists in general, and to policy-makers and planners whose work involves them in making sociological and comparative assumptions.

As a corollary, the bibliography will not be of major use to the relatively few scholars who are rewriting the literature, especially those who, confident of their mastery of one field of study have spent some time immersed in the literature of the other field. They have already decided on their own points of
departure, and are defining them in public for others. It is their work which makes up several items in the bibliography.

The last fifteen years or so, as evidenced by the literature, has seen significant development in Western sociology: a move away from the dominant structural/functionalist paradigm, and the increased use of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and interpretative frameworks. This has been of most significance in the sociology of education during the last decade. For some time, during the 1960’s, works such as Halsey et al. (2.24) provided the staple reading diet for students in this field, offering a classic analysis of education-society relationships. However, with the publication of Young’s Knowledge and Control in 1971 (2.39), and its wide readership, the position changed. The challenge of neo-Marxist, phenomenological, and other interpretive sociological approaches became apparent in much of the subsequent literature. The early 1970’s tended to be dominated by micro-sociological approaches (especially with regard to classroom interaction) and the study of the curriculum. Examples cited here are Bernstein (2.10) and Young (2.38). The late 1970’s saw a reaffirmation of macro-analysis, but this time reflecting the perspective of neo-Marxism. Bowles and Gintis (2.15) is perhaps the most well-known example of this kind of approach. At the same time, ethnographic studies of schooling also became popular. Beck et al. (2.8) is an interesting collection of such studies.

The comparative education literature of the 1970’s reveals both important shifts in perspective and continued emphasis upon traditional themes. Such traditional themes include the fundamental questions of what comparative education is and ought to be.

Throughout the 1970’s, the continuation of historic questions, concerning the nature of comparative education as a field of enquiry, is very much in evidence. The ‘intellectual and ideological orientations’ of the field are examined by Kazamias and Schwartz (1.22) in an edition of the Comparative Education Review devoted to ‘The State of the Art’. In the context of North America, comparative education is judged to have been dominated by ‘liberal humanism’ up to the 1950’s. During the 1950’s and 1960’s, mainstream social science approaches prevailed, whilst the 1970’s saw the introduction of neo-Marxist and interpretive sociological models. In that the authors suggest that comparative education might pay more attention to pedagogy in the future, links with contemporary pre-occupations in sociology of education and educational enquiry as a whole may be detected.

There was a clear mainstream literature as defined by the established standard texts, such as Bereday (1.9), Holmes (1.16), King (1.24) and Noah and Eckstein (1.26). There were definitions of the condition of the literature, notably Bristow and Holmes (1.11), and, of course, continued attempts to redefine or reassert the point and function of the field and its methodologies, such as Edwards et al. (1.13).