SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

EDU453

**KEYNOTE OFFPRINTS
SERIES 01**

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SOCIOLOGY: A Review of Concepts and Ideas – What do they really mean?

1. What is Sociology?

'Sociology' is derived from the Greek words **'socius'** (or 'associate') and **'logos'** (or 'words' – Thus **'sociology'** relates to the **'words or symbols about human associations or society'.**

2. What does 'words or symbols about human associations or society' refer to?

The phrase refers to the sociological process of making meaning in the social world, or **'The Sociological Imagination'**.

For Sociologists, the words/labels that we use to make sense of the world are important because they will define social conditions/problems – Leading to actions being taken on the conditions/problems (for example 'poverty').

QUESTION: Can you think of other 'social' problems in contemporary Malaysia?

3. What does Sociology study?

a. **Social life** within society;
b. The social causes of a '**social problem**';
c. How **we influence and reinforce certain social conditions/structures** that exist in society (e.g. poverty, gender bias, social class, etc).

4. What do Sociologists do?

They study society (of course), and they work as Educators, Researchers, Administrators and Consultants – Based on their field of expertise (e.g. Urban Sociology, Criminal Sociology/Criminology, etc).

BUT, there are also other **practical aspects** of Sociological work. For example:-

A 'shopping mall' has been planned in the outskirts of a modern city, costing millions of RM to the developer. Below are some details about the location of this new mall:

~> It will be located in the middle of a densely populated residential area;
~> Next to this new mall, are schools and a park/recreational area;
~> The residential area is populated by low to lower middle income workers;
~> There are many small shops and stalls in the area.

QUESTION: As a sociologist, you have to collect data about the possible 'social' impact of this new shopping Mall on the immediate locality. Can you foresee any conditions/problems arising from this project? How would you collect your data?

5. What happens next, when 'Sociological' data is collected?

Sociologists play a crucial role in the **construction, implementation and evaluation** of '**Social Policy**' – The formal arrangement for living in society, based on the shared norms and values of those within that particular society. Moreover, in certain conditions, norms and values are shared cross-culturally.

Within all human societies certain knowledge will become '**common sense**' – Natural, Inevitable and Unproblematic – And 'common sense' knowledge is the reason why Sociology has emerged in the first place, as **a direct challenge on 'common sense'**.

QUESTION: As a budding Sociologist, can you please think of some examples of 'common sense' knowledge in Malaysian or Asian society. Do you see any problems with these different 'knowledge'? Are they useful or are they dangerous?

Think about the position of men and women in society, as a start – And please come up with more examples ☺

6. How do Sociologists collect their data to examine society?

Unlike society with its 'common sense', Sociologists have to rely on **Sociological Research** (Social Scientific) **Methods** – For example, 'Direct / Participant Observations', 'Un-/Semi-/Fully Structured Questionnaires and Interviews', etc.

Remember, we Sociologists NEVER conduct experiments on people or try to come up with an experimental condition, (unlike Physics and Psychology, for example) – **Can you guess why?**

7. Is Sociological data true and accurate? How useful is it compared to just our 'common sense'?

Sadly, Sociological data will not always be true and accurate ☹ BUT we when we do Sociological research this is inevitable because **as Sociologists we are only describing a specific condition happening at a certain point in time**. This also makes it difficult to generalise Sociological data cross-culturally.

STILL, compared to common sense, Sociological knowledge is much more useful. In fact, as Sociologists we always need to rethink our view of the social world from one moment in time, to the next – **What do you think?**

8. So, how should Sociologists view the social world?

In a **detached, objective and rational** manner. As Sociologists we know that there is not just one 'truth' but different versions of 'the truth' – And that there is always another side of the coin! Sociologists seek a deeper understanding of how life is structured (that is why Mrs. Thatcher wanted the subject abolished!) ☺

9. All Sociologists try to develop 'the perspective of a stranger', what does this mean?

'The perspective of a stranger' is an idea brought forward by Schutz (1943). According to him, 'knowledge' could be seen in three levels:

Level 1: **The person on the street**

Someone at home in a particular place, operating with tacit knowledge, someone who is just 'getting by' without having to think deeply.

Level 2: **The cartographer**

Someone who is an expert in mapping the physical environment, but s/he is unable to understand how life is like in the social environment (traditional Sociology – the 'Omniscient').

Level 3: **The stranger**

Someone who is passing through, s/he needs to understand not just the physical environment but also to comprehend the social surroundings to get by – The stranger is not unreflective like our 'person on the street' not is s/he too detached from social life like the expert 'cartographer'.

10. So how is the social world organised, through the eyes of a Sociologist?

Social life is structured in different spheres – Can you try to explain this in your own words?

The three main spheres that Sociologists study are:

1. Society   2. Culture   3. Socialisation

In our case, we are trying to specialise in the 'Sociology of Education'. Although all three spheres are relevant – **Can you please tell me which sphere is most relevant in our context as teachers and educators?**

QUESTION: It could be argued that 'socialisation' is the realm of Educational Sociology. This is due to different **'agents of socialisation'** – The Family, Peer Group, The School Institution, The Mass Media, Re-socialisation Institutions.

In your own opinion, how do the 5 agents of socialisation agents relate to the process of Education? (e.g. **the family** has to send children to school, etc).

 *** LASTLY** – Why should we teachers study the Sociology of Education? ***

'SAINTIS SOSIAL' Jurutera Masyarakat Yang Memperjuangkan Kebenaran
(**Reference:** 'Fokus' magazine Malaysia, 'Kerjaya', pp. 20-22, December 2005)

'All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing' – Edmund Burke

Sejak kita lahir, kita diasuh dan dididik dengan pelbagai sistem kepercayaan. Dari sistem nilai nenek-moyang sehinggalah kepercayaan lama yang masih lagi diguna-pakai. Dan ini ditambah dengan psikologi suku (atau folk psychology) yang ada untuk setiap situasi dari cara belajar terbaik, bagaimana untuk menjadi pintar, dan banyak lagi. Sayangnya, banyak pula kepercayaan itu salah, tidak berasas dan merosakkan komuniti serta masyarakat!

Ambil satu contoh mudah, tentang perbezaan jantina atau gender. Anak lelaki dididik supaya menjadi aktif dan yakin, tetapi anak perempuan pula dididik dengan kelembutan agar dia pasif dan lebih menurut perintah. Seperti kepercayaan dahulu kala, perempuan walau sehebat mana pun, tempatnya masih lagi di dapur. Nah, mungkin ada di antara kita yang masih percayakan perkara ini, tetapi seorang Saintis Sosial akan mula menyinsing lengan baju dan bersedia dengan kuda-kuda perang. Soalan demi soalan akan ditanya untuk 'menyerang' kepercayaan salah ini:

Kenapa anak lelaki dan perempuan harus dilihat berbeza, bukankah dari segi **psikologi** mereka lebih sama dari berbeza? Apa pula akan terjadi dengan struktur sosial jika semua perempuan dilatih untuk bekerja di dapur sedangkan mereka boleh menyumbang aktif kepada kemajuan masyarakat dan negara, dari segi **ekonomi**? Bagaimana caranya untuk menghentikan keganasan lelaki terhadap wanita yang dibuktikan oleh **kriminologi** jika lelaki dilatih bahawa mereka lebih 'superior' dan hebat berbanding wanita sejak kecil, hingga ketidak-adilan **gender** terjadi? Maka, wanita menghadapi masalah sosial seperti tidak mendapat bantuan untuk berdikari, perlu lelaki untuk membantu sedangkan ada lelaki yang hidupnya dibiayai wanita, dihina jika tidak mempunyai keluarga sendiri, semua ini jelas dalam kajian **sosiologi** kerana **polisi sosial** telah menempatkan wanita di strata sosial yang lebih rendah… Senarai soalan yang ditanya tidak akan terhenti!

Semua persoalan ini ditanya kerana sebagai jurutera masyarakat, Saintis Sosial adalah pakar yang memahami hubung-kait di antara setiap golongan manusia dari semua perspektif. Saintis Sosial mungkin dilihat sebagai pengacau dalam masyarakat kerana mereka kritikal dengan segala macam kepercayaan yang salah, dan mereka lantang menyerang dengan bukti kajian sosial-saintifik. Seorang Saintis Sosial percaya, kejahatan mudah menular dalam masyarakat, jika mereka yang baik dan berilmu hanya duduk diam dan tidak melakukan apa-apa, seperti kata Saintis Sosial Barat, Edmund Burke ☺

Sumber 1: Meriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary (2002), USA.

social scientist a person with advanced knowledge of more than one social science discipline (seseorang dengan pengetahuan mendalam mengenai lebih dari satu bidang sains sosial)

Sumber 2: WordNet 2.0 (2003) Princeton University, USA.

someone who is an expert in the study of human society and its personal relationships (seorang pakar yang mengkaji masyarakat manusia dan hubung-kait antara setiap ahli masyarakat tersebut)

ᄔ *social scientist* – genus/type tree
    ᄔ sociologist, media expert, gender expert
    ᄔ political scientist, social policy expert
    ᄔ penologist, criminologist, behavioral scientist, psychologist
    ᄔ economist, economic expert
    ᄔ anthropologist, developmentalist, culturalist

anthropologist – a social scientist who specializes in anthropology

behavioral scientist – a social scientist with medical training and expert in human behavior

criminologist – a social scientist trained in criminology who studies criminal behavior patterns

culturalist – a social scientist who studies popular culture and its effects on human lives

developmentalist – a social scientist who looks at development and its effects on our lives

economic expert, economist – an expert in the social science of economics

gender expert – a social scientist who examines gender relations and its impact on everyday life

media expert – a social scientist who examines media critically and attempts to deconstruct it

penologist – a person who studies the theory and practice of prison management

political scientist - a social scientist specializing in the study of government

psychologist – a social scientist who specializes in the scientific study of the human mind

social policy expert – a social scientist who critically examines social policies within societies

<u>sociologist</u> - a social scientist who studies the institutions and development of human society

* Setiap bidang di atas tergolong dalam kelompok kajian Sains Sosial, seorang Saintis Sosial pula adalah pakar dalam lebih dari satu bidang yang dinyatakan, dan nyata sekali banyak bidang di atas masih belum diperakukan (malah tidak pernah didengar) di Malaysia, bagaimanapun trend ini pasti semakin berubah semakin masyarakat kita menjadi maju, matang dan kompleks…

Seperkara lagi yang harus ditekankan, Sains Sosial diajar secara '*cross-curricular*' atau '*broad spectrum*' dan tidak seperti pengajian ilmu tradisional, contohnya siswi/a akan mengambil kertas seperti 'Sosiologi Asia Barat' atau 'Asas Kajian Media', dll yang membosankan.

Contoh kuliah Sains Sosial: '*Understanding Social Problems in Modern Society*', '*Family Life and Social Policy*', '*Sociology of Work, Health dan Population Development*', '*Criminal Behaviour, Justice Systems and Social Policy*', '*Gender, Technology and Media Representation*', dan lain-lain.

Kajian Sains Sosial moden di Barat kini menggabungkan lebih dari satu disiplin untuk menjadikannya lebih releven dan berguna agar Saintis Sosial lebih cekap memerhati, menyelidik dan memberi kritikan atau cadangan demi mewujudkan masyarakat yang lebih adil, moden dan benar-benar maju dari segala segi.

Pemikiran kritikal sebegini amat perlu jika kita mahu menjadi masyarakat yang maju menjelang 2020 nanti, dan tidak hanya berfikir secara '*common sense*' atau berpandukan pemahaman norma tentang masyarakat, yang lazimnya salah dan tidak berasaskan ilmu pengetahuan terkini.

Menjadi Saintis Sosial tidak menjanjikan seseorang kekayaan atau glamor seperti yang terlihat dalam hidup Ibn Khaldun, Bapa Sains Sosial Moden. Tetapi, ia akan memberi kepuasan apabila kita benar-benar menghargai nilai ilmu dan dapat menggunakannya demi mencari keadilan serta kebenaran untuk membantu orang lain, mereka yang selalu dilihat sebagai 'masalah' dalam masyarakat, dan mereka yang tidak berupaya merasai segala faedah yang dinikmati ahli masyarakat lain.

Dengan segala bukti sosial-saintifik yang diperoleh, Saintis Sosial akan menggunakan saluran media massa untuk mengubah persepsi masyarakat tentang perkara yang selalu diambil mudah seperti ketidak-adilan gender, masalah sosio-ekonomi (adakah orang miskin, menjadi miskin kerana mereka 'malas' seperti kepercayaan norma masyarakat), jurang antara masyarakat bandar dan luar bandar (kenapa sukar untuk masyarakat luar bandar dibawa masuk ke arus pemodenan, adakah ini kerana mereka cetek ilmu dan tidak berdaya-saing seperti kepercayaan norma atau 'common sense' masyarakat) ☺

Sumber 3: Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (2005) USA.

Main Entry: ***social science, social scientist*** / Function: *noun*

1 : a branch of science that deals with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society

2 : a science (as economics or political science) dealing with a particular phase or aspect of human society

Sumber 4: The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition (2000) Houghton Mifflin Company, USA.

social science *n.*

1. The study of human society and of individual relationships in and to society.
2. A scholarly or scientific discipline that deals with such study, generally regarded as including sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and history.

social scientist *n.*

1. An expert with research background and advanced knowledge arising from more than one of the disciplines within the social sciences.

Ibn Khaldun, Father of Modern Social Sciences (1332-1395 C.E.)

Ibn Khaldun, considered the greatest Arab historian, is also known as father of modern social sciences and cultural history. Abd al-Rahman Ibn Mohammad is known as Ibn Khaldun after a remote ancestor. His parents, part of the Banu Khaldun, an upper-class Andalusian family which held many high offices in Andalucia, who were originally Yemenite Arabs, had settled in Spain, but after the fall of Seville, had migrated to Tunisia. He was born in Tunisia in 1332 C.E. (732 A.H.), where he received his early education and where, still in his teens, he entered the service of the Egyptian ruler.

Under the Tunisian Hafsid dynasty, some of his family held political office. His family's high rank enabled Ibn Khaldun to study with the best North African teachers of the time. He received a classical Arabic education, studying the Quran and Arabic linguistics, the basis for an understanding of the Quran and of Islamic law, Hadith and Fiqh. The mystic, mathematician and philosopher Al-Abili introduced him to mathematics, logic and philosophy, where he above all, studied the great works of Averroes, Avicenna, ar-Razi and al-Tusi.

At the age of 17, Ibn Khaldun lost both his parents to an epidemic of the plague which hit Tunis. At the age of 20, he began his political career at the Chancellery of the Tunisian ruler, Ibn Tafrakin, with the position of kAtib al-a'Amah, which consisted of writing in fine calligraphy the typical introductory notes of official documents. In 1352, Abu Ziad, the Sultan of Constantine, marched on Tunis, and defeated it.

His thirst for advanced knowledge and a better academic setting soon made him leave this service and migrate to Fez. This was followed by a long period of unrest marked by contemporary political rivalries affecting his career. This turbulent period also included a three-year refuge in a small village Qalat Ibn Salama in Algeria, which provided him with the opportunity to write Muqaddimah, the first volume of his world history that won him an immortal place among historians, sociologists and philosophers.

Following family tradition, Ibn Khaldun strove for a political career. In the face of a constantly changing political situation in contemporary North Africa, this required a high degree of skill, developing alliances and dropping them appropriately, to avoid being sucked under by the demise of rules who at times held power only briefly. Ibn Khaldun's autobiography, in which he spends time in prison, gains the highest offices and enters exile, at times reads like an adventure story.

The uncertainty of his career still continued, with Egypt becoming his final abode where he spent his last 24 years. Here he lived a life of fame and respect, marked by his appointment as the Chief Malakite Judge and lecturing at the Al-Azhar University, but envy caused his removal from his high judicial office as many as five times.

Ibnu Khaldun, the Social Scientist

Ibn Khaldun's chief contribution lies in philosophy of history and modern sociology within the social sciences. He sought to write a world history preambled by a first volume aimed at an analysis of historical events. This volume, commonly known as Muqaddimah or 'Prolegomena', was based on Ibn Khaldun's unique approach and original contribution and became a masterpiece in literature on philosophy of history and sociology.

The chief concern of this monumental work was to identify psychological, economic, environmental and social facts that contribute to the advancement of human civilization and the currents of history. In this context, he analyzed the dynamics of group relationships and showed how group-feelings, al-'Asabiyya, give rise to the ascent of a new civilization and political power and how, later on, its diffusion into a more general civilization invites the advent of a still new 'Asabiyya in its pristine form. He identified an almost rhythmic repetition of rise and fall in human civilization, and analyzed factors contributing to it.

His contribution to history is marked by the fact that, unlike most earlier writers interpreting history largely in a political context, he emphasized environmental, sociological, psychological and economic factors governing the apparent events. This revolutionized the science of history and also laid the foundation of what he termed **Umraniyat** (or Sociology).

As part of this new science, Ibn Khaldun aimed to analyze objectively economic issues, and to show the consequences of various policies. He thought that those things mandated by God can be shown scientifically to be the best social policies, and that this is the natural consequence of the fact that economic principles and the foundation of the good life were both created by God.

These laws and social policies dictated that the state has certain limited functions: the defense of the community against injustice and aggression, the protection of private property, the prevention of fraud in exchanges between citizens, the overseeing of the mint to safeguard the currency, and the wise exercise of political leadership. He denounced high taxation and government competition with the private sphere because they lower productivity, take away the incentive of people to work hard, and ultimately ruin the state.

Ibn Khaldun's influence on the subject of history, philosophy of history, sociology, political science and education has remained paramount. His books have been translated into many languages, both in the East and the West, and have inspired subsequent development of these sciences. For instance, Prof. Gum Ploughs and Kolosio consider Muqaddimah as superior in scholarship to Machiavelli's 'The Prince' written a century later, as the former bases the diagnosis more on cultural, sociological, economic and psychological factors.