

ED 3: Modernity, Globalisation and Education

There is a maximum cap for this paper of 10 students.

This paper takes a wider, sociological perspective in order to study education in modern societies and the consequences of globalisation. It starts by discussing key features of modernity and how they inform our understanding of education. We discuss, for instance, different sociological accounts of trust and social bonds and how they help to explore the role of education in underpinning social cohesion. We examine how modernity is intrinsically tied to a rule and science-based rationality that informs bureaucratisation, the production of knowledge and expertise as well as a democratic way of collective decision-making. Modernity is also characterised by a specific notion of temporality differentiated into past, present and future which in turn creates a specific notion of progress that also informs education. These different accounts of modern society – seen as both rational and democratic - will be contrasted with the sociological literature that highlights the role of power, exploitation and social struggles. We discuss theoretical accounts of class, race and gender relations and explore the link between social mobility, power and education. The paper critically engages with these different sociological perspectives, also from a postcolonial perspective. It discusses the historical context in which the sociology had been developed, in particular the role of empire and other colonial constellations, and the extent to which this context still informs important sociological concepts. Furthermore, we explore whether, and if so where the concepts and theories are no longer able to come to terms with most recent developments. Are we, in other words, living in a postmodern society and what may be the consequences for a sociological perspective on education? The third-year paper on social theory and education will take this question further with a view to developing a transnational sociology of education.