A Sociology of Industrialisation: an introduction

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A Sociology of Industrialisation: an introduction

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and
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Editor's Introduction

This series is a direct outcome of the opportunities and challenges created by the rapid expansion of higher and further education in the past decade.

The expansion involved changes in the structure of advanced education, through the CNAAs, the Polytechnics, the Regional Management Centres and the professional bodies which encouraged staff to develop new and experimental teaching. Substantial changes have taken place in the definition, scope and methodologies of the social, administrative and management sciences leading to modifications in the presentation of these subjects. Many new full-time students and staff have questioned traditional approaches and methods and have established more open discussion and debate on their courses. Demands for qualified manpower led to an expansion in part-time education and increased questioning by students in full-time jobs of the relevance of their studies.

Each of these developments has had a profound impact on the structure and content of courses and given fresh impetus to the discussion and modification of curricula and teaching methods in polytechnics, universities and colleges of further education. The editor and authors of the books in this series have made a deliberate attempt to respond to these changes.

The books set out to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date introduction to the ideas and methods of their subjects for specialist and non-specialist students in fields such as business and management studies, social science and administration. Their aim is to help students who have little or no previous knowledge of them to achieve a mastery of the scope and basic techniques of their subjects and to use them critically and with imagination for further study or for practical professional applications. They also seek to make some contribution to discussions of teaching and learning problems in their field.

Many introductory books present their subjects as a coherent body of knowledge of which the logic is self-evident and the concepts and methods clear to the careful reader. Students do not always find this so. Confronted as they are by a well-established discipline which has developed a particular method that may not bear any obvious relationship to the way in which they have been accustomed to think or to realities as they see them, students often

have difficulty in comprehending the significance and detail of the forms of analysis it employs.

The editor and authors of the series felt that they should not take for granted the 'self-evident logic' of their subjects, but try to demonstrate to readers the ways in which their disciplines provide an effective framework for the analysis of problems in their field. When abstractions or concepts are introduced their functions and limitations are explained. Where methods or techniques are described the authors show why they take the form they do and the ways in which they may be used for particular tasks of analysis.

Students often criticise courses because their subjects or parts of them do not have any obvious, or immediate, practical applications. They may present what appear to be unnecessarily complicated ways of dealing with quite straightforward problems or, paradoxically, they may be regarded as over-simplifying or ignoring difficulties which are experienced in real situations. Criticisms of this sort are due to misunderstandings about the nature of subjects. Systems of knowledge provide generalisations which are derived from a variety of abstractions and models. Some of these yield tools of description and analysis that have direct applications. Others suggest ways of looking at problems that, however fruitful, may have only limited or indirect applications.

The authors have tried to make clear the relevance of their subjects. Where concepts and methods have direct applications they show how, and under what circumstances, they can usefully be applied. Where they are of indirect use they show how a process of simplification may isolate and draw attention to the important characteristics of a complex problem, or how the study of complicated or abstract aspects of a problem may throw fresh light on it.

The authors have rejected a view, reflected in many basic textbooks, that students at an introductory level should concentrate on 'learning up' the information and techniques of their subjects and not be troubled with discussions of concepts and analytical method. This 'descriptive' approach, which divorces the study of techniques from that of conceptual and analytical structures, makes it more rather than less difficult for students to appreciate how a technique has developed, why it takes a particular form and how it functions. As a result students can spend a considerable time trying to understand, with limited success, a method of describing and presenting information or a method of analysis and fail to achieve any real facility in using it. The discussion of concepts and analytical method also acquaints a student with some of the difficulties and controversies surrounding the ideas and techniques he is studying. Without such knowledge he is unlikely to appreciate their limitations or establish any real ability to discriminate between alternative approaches and methods.

One of the more important aims of education is to develop a student's capacity to formulate and solve theoretical and practical problems. It is clear that few business and administrative problems are in practice separable into the neat categories represented by disciplines such as economics, accounting, law, sociology, psychology and computing. But most courses are based on combinations of studies in these and similar discrete disciplines which are rarely effectively integrated. It is recognised that the develop-

ment of bodies of knowledge which provide rigorous rather than superficial integrative approaches will be a long and difficult task. The editor and authors of the books in this series are aware of this problem and within their limitations have attempted to indicate points at which contributions from other disciplines are necessary to the analysis of the problems with which they are dealing. It is thus hoped that in the long run the series will make some contribution to the development of interdisciplinary approaches.

The problems outlined above are common in the teaching and learning of many subjects which, although emerging historically as systems for analysing and solving practical problems, have developed advanced methodologies and a logical order of presentation that may not bear an obvious relation to the practical problems with which they are supposed to be concerned.

Sociology has proved in recent years to be an outstandingly popular field of interest for both students and 'laymen'. This may be partly due to a growing awareness of the significance of social relationships and structures as factors in understanding human activities and problems and partly to concern about developments and problems in contemporary society. But all too frequently those who approach the subject have difficulties in grasping its scope and complexity. It prescribes neither objective solutions nor simple programmes. It may appear to put forward unusually complex concepts to explain apparently simple phenomena, to employ unnecessarily specialised terminology or even to be a mere extension of radical, left-wing political science. In its analysis of human behaviour and structures sociology is concerned to make explicit the assumptions, which may be historically and socially determined, through which social systems and action have evolved, and this may confront students not only with a rigorous discipline but with the problems of making major adjustments to their own frames of reference. The authors have sought to provide a rigorous foundation in industrial sociology in a form that the student who masters the book will not only have a grasp of specific problems and methods in this field but also a basis for a more adequate understanding of the nature of contemporary sociology.

The editor and authors of the books in this series are conscious of their limitations in attempting to implement their ideas in writing and teaching and do not suppose that their presentation will solve students' learning problems. They do not ignore the critical importance of motivation and sustained and disciplined study as factors in effective learning. But they felt that if subjects were presented in a way that made their form and justification explicit rather than implicit this would aid teaching and learning.

In seeking to achieve their aims the books in the series have been subjected to a great deal of critical scrutiny. Each is written by more than one author. This has enabled authors to combine a comparison of views with a considerable, and sometimes uncomfortable, degree of mutual criticism. The editor and authors have all, in recent years, had considerable experience of designing and teaching new CNAAB honours degree, diploma or professional courses. Their manuscripts have been discussed with colleagues in education and the professions and have been tested in classes with students.

My thanks as editor are owed to the authors who responded to my request to write the books in the form that I have outlined. This has involved them

in an extremely demanding process. The fact that we shared some basic assumptions about education and learning was of great help. The editors and staff of Macmillan with whom we have worked have showed great patience and could not have done more in difficult circumstances to encourage the series. My thanks are also due to George Brosan, Maurice Peston and Bruce May, who through many discussions have significantly influenced my educational ideas, and to my wife Diane, who has kept a discerning eye on my activities and the progress of the series.

ALAN HALE

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Introduction

This book is the product of several years' experience teaching sociology both to sociology students and to non-sociologists, particularly business studies students. The central organising perspective used is the notion of the free market, and the way it has developed, especially in the British context, indeed perhaps only to its fullest extent in nineteenth-century England. The main idea is to show the ways in which the structures arise which constrain the social activities of individuals and therefore to demonstrate the need for an awareness of what causes these structures to develop and change. The emphasis on structure is complemented by a treatment of ideology and legitimation which relates systems of social justifications to these underlying structures. This perspective in our view is important not only to an understanding of sociology as a discipline but also to an understanding of what sociology has to offer to business studies students. The emphasis is clearly not on practical problem solution in such areas as organisational design, motivating the work-force or selecting new recruits. The major objective is to alert students to wider issues about the nature of society and the changing context of business. It is seen as the appropriate underpinning for further study in industrial sociology, industrial relations and, in other contexts, for sociological theory as well.

We recognise that this approach 'ignores' many of the key concepts, such as role, socialisation, community, etc., which are central to most introductory sociology textbooks. However, the continuity we hope we have achieved should more than compensate those who wish to understand problems of industrial enterprises in their contemporary social and political environments. In the cause of brevity we have also omitted several topics currently occupying the limelight in sociology. For example, we have not made an explicit analysis of the changing role of women in industrial society. This is not out of malevolence, but a belief that the application of the class/market model presented here can account for such changes, and that the understanding of the basic processes of market society must come first.

We might well have extended our treatment to illustrate how the ideology of the nuclear family became used as an ideological justification for the exclusion of women from certain privileged labour markets. The Factory

Acts, Ten Hours Act, and the acts regulating hours of work, particularly night-work, can be seen as state interventions to ensure that women were kept out of certain sectors of the labour force and confined to positions chiefly concerned with the reproduction of labour power. Market society depended upon a plentiful supply of labour prepared and able to work, such a labour force depended upon a particular pattern of exploitation of women via unpaid housework. This text has chosen not to look at sex as the critical variable: that remains an essential second step in analysis if we wish to understand the functioning of particular social arrangements in contemporary society. The major issues we raise and discuss are thought to effect everybody, although particular qualities of groups, of which sex is one, obviously mediate the consequences of the changes outlined.

Finally a definite attempt has been made to relate the sociological approach to the problems tackled by positive economics. We believe that while sociology has a distinctive emphasis, it does not have a distinctive area of investigation, but in its various areas overlaps with economics, law, politics, psychology and history. Without accepting the thesis that economic requirements determine the forms of social arrangements we have considered that this provides the appropriate organising argument to integrate the major sociological theories about the nature of advanced society.

The text is a genuine collaboration and we have discussed and reworked each chapter together to endeavour to ensure that a unified perspective emerges. We hope this comes out. The number of people who have influenced our thinking is considerable, particularly students who have suffered earlier versions of this approach; we have learnt much from them.