

Sociological Approaches Explaining Communication Technologies and Educational Problems in the School Environment

المقاربات السوسيولوجية المفسرة لتكنولوجيا الاتصال والمشكلات التربوية في الوسط المدرسي

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Abstract: This study examines the main sociological approaches that explain the impact of communication technologies on educational problems in the school environment. It adopts a theoretical and analytical perspective to explore how digital technologies reshape educational practices, social relations, and symbolic meanings within schools. The study draws on several sociological frameworks, including the Uses and Gratifications Approach, the Network Society Approach developed by Manuel Castells, and the Cyber cultural Approach inspired by Pierre Lévy, to analyze the role of digital media in transforming learning processes and authority structures. In parallel, it examines educational problems through the Structural-Functionalist Approach, Bourdieu's Educational Field Theory, and the Symbolic Interactionist Approach. The analysis shows that digital technologies intensify existing inequalities, reshape power relations, and redefine everyday interactions within the school space. The study concludes that understanding educational problems in the digital age requires a multidimensional sociological perspective that integrates structural, cultural, and interactional levels of analysis.

Keywords: Sociological approaches; Communication technologies; Digital education; Educational inequality; School environment.

الملخص: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على المقاربات السوسيولوجية التي تفسر تقنيات الاتصال والمشكلات التربوية في الوسط المدرسي. وتنطلق من تعريف المقاربة السوسيولوجية باعتبارها أداة نظرية لتحليل الظواهر الاجتماعية ضمن أطرها البنيوية والرمزية والتفاعلية. من بين النماذج الأساسية التي تناولت تأثير التكنولوجيا الرقمية على التربية، نجد مقارنة الاستخدامات والإشباع التي تتبنى منظورًا سلوكيًا لفهم دوافع استخدام التلاميذ والمدرسين للوسائط الرقمية من أجل تلبية حاجات معرفية، نفسية أو اجتماعية. أما مقارنة مجتمع الشبكة، التي طورها مانويل كاستلز، فتذهب أبعد من ذلك، إذ تدرج المدرسة ضمن شبكة اجتماعية أوسع، وتبرز كيف تعيد التكنولوجيا صياغة علاقات السلطة وأساليب التعلم والتنظيم داخل المؤسسات التربوية. بالموازاة، تركز مقارنة الثقافة السيبرانية على الأبعاد الرمزية والإدراكية للتكنولوجيا، مبيّنة كيف أصبحت الصور والرموز والمثالات الافتراضية تهيمن على المخيال التربوي للتلاميذ والمعلمين، وتذيب الحدود بين الواقعي والرقمي.

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أما فيما يتعلق بالمشكلات التربوية، فتبرز ثلاث مقاربات سوسيولوجية رئيسية. أولها المقاربة البنائية الوظيفية التي ترى أن المدرسة تُعيد إنتاج الفوارق الاجتماعية، والتي تزداد حدة بسبب التفاوت في الوصول إلى الموارد الرقمية. ثانياً مقارنة الحقل التربوي المستوحاة من بورديو، التي تعتبر المدرسة ميداناً للصراع الرمزي بين فاعلين يمتلكون رؤوس أموال ثقافية وتكنولوجية متفاوتة. وأخيراً، تسعى المقاربة التفاعلية الرمزية إلى تفسير المشكلات التربوية من خلال التفاعلات اليومية داخل الفصول الدراسية، مبيّنة كيف تُعيد الوسائط الرقمية تشكيل المعاني والأدوار والهويات. تشكل هذه المقاربات في مجموعها فهماً متعدد الأبعاد لكيفية إعادة تشكّل البنية والخبرة التربوية في ظل التحول الرقمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقاربة السوسيولوجية، المفسرة، تكنولوجيا الاتصال، المشكلات التربوية، الوسط المدرسي.

-Introduction:

In recent decades, the school environment has undergone profound transformations due to the rapid spread of new communication technologies, particularly the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms. These technologies have contributed to reshaping learning patterns, interaction methods, and the nature of educational authority. This new digital reality has prompted the sociology of education to reconsider its analytical tools and theoretical models to better understand the complex and intertwined relationship between modern technologies and the growing educational challenges.

In this context, several sociological approaches have emerged to analyze the relationship between communication technologies and educational change from various angles. Among the most prominent are the Uses and Gratifications Approach, which analyzes individual behavior and seeks to understand users' motivations for utilizing digital media to fulfill cognitive and psychological needs. The Network Society Approach (Manuel Castells), on the other hand, views technology as a structural force that reshapes social relations and generates a new model of networked action extending into the school environment. Meanwhile, the Cyber culture Approach focuses on the symbolic dimension of the digital world, emphasizing how educational reality has become saturated with virtual images and representations that erode traditional pedagogical references and blur the boundaries between the real and the virtual.

At the same time, sociological approaches that seek to explain educational problems adopt broader social interpretations. The Functional-Structural Approach views the school as a space that mirrors and reproduces the existing social structure, where digital technologies often exacerbate class-based inequalities and contribute to digital exclusion. The Field Approach (inspired by Bourdieu) focuses on tensions and symbolic struggles within the educational field, where the use of digital technologies reshapes the balance of power among actors with unequal cultural capital. As for the Symbolic Interactionist Approach, it explains educational problems through the daily symbolic interactions in the classroom, showing how communication technologies reshape meanings and help build teacher and student identities.

This theoretical diversity reflects not only the multiplicity of perspectives on the phenomenon but also highlights the complex nature of the relationship between schools and communication technologies in the digital age. It calls for adopting a multi-dimensional approach that integrates symbolic, structural, and contextual analysis to better understand the issues arising from the deep entanglement of education, technology, and society.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the sociological approaches that explain modern communication technologies and educational problems in the school environment. We will begin by clarifying the concept of the sociological approach as a theoretical tool for analyzing social phenomena within their structural, symbolic, and interactive contexts. Then, we will present the most relevant approaches to communication technologies- namely, the Uses and Gratifications Approach, the Network Society Approach, and the Cyber culture Approach- due to their interpretative power in analyzing educational practices in digital environments. In the second part, we will discuss the sociological approaches that focus on educational problems in schools, particularly the Functional-Structural Approach, the Field Approach, and the Symbolic Interactionist Approach, with the aim of shedding light on the complex interactions

between technology and the school space and the resulting sociological and pedagogical dysfunctions.

1- Sociological Approach Definition:

An approach refers to the theoretical framework that guides the researcher in selecting the subject of study and determining the perspective from which it is addressed. It differs from a method, which focuses on the practical tools and procedures used to handle the topic. While a method is a technical and objective tool used for collecting and analyzing data, an approach is closely tied to the researcher's cognitive and value-based orientation, reflecting what is considered important or meaningful in understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Marume & et al, 2016, p. 69).

The significance of an approach lies in its expression of the researcher's perspective on social phenomena, whether it concerns a specific aspect of the subject or an entire field of study. Thus, approaches are inherently subjective and value-laden, shaped by the researcher's theoretical and intellectual background, whereas methods tend to be more neutral and objective in their application.

Based on this conceptual distinction, it is useful to explore the main approaches used in analyzing phenomena, focusing on how they are employed in social fields such as public administration, education, or media, depending on the nature of the research topic.

In this context, the sociological approach is defined as a theoretical and methodological perspective used to analyze social phenomena by focusing on the structural, cultural, and interactive dimensions that shape individual and collective human behavior. This approach seeks to understand how social structures- such as class, family, school, power, and culture influence patterns of action and interaction, as well as the production of inequalities, representations, and social dynamics (Mehdi & Grid, 2024, p. 10).

The sociological approach serves as an analytical tool that enables the researcher to question social reality and deconstruct its underlying mechanisms, drawing on

diverse theoretical perspectives- some of which emphasize conflict and inequality, others meaning and interaction, and still other's structure and function. Therefore, selecting the appropriate sociological approach is a crucial step in understanding the phenomenon under study and locating it within the broader social system.

In the same context, the sociological approach enables researchers to delve deeply into the understanding of social phenomena by analyzing the complex interactions among structural, cultural, and social factors. It helps uncover both visible and hidden relationships between individuals, institutions, and social systems, allowing researchers to interpret the causes and consequences of social behavior within its historical and cultural context. This approach also allows scholars to focus on a specific set of sociological concepts and theories- such as power relations, social inequalities, and dynamics of social change- which serve as a conceptual framework for analyzing the phenomenon under study. Through this integrated theoretical perspective, researchers can produce credible scientific knowledge that contributes to the development of policies and practices within various social fields. Study and locating it within the broader social system (derbal & benouhiba, 2024, p. 102).

In other words, this definition shows that the sociological approach is not merely an analytical tool, but also a comprehensive epistemological perspective that aims to connect the micro with the macro, and surface phenomena with the deeper structures that govern them. It enables the researcher to move beyond superficial interpretations of social reality by engaging in a multidimensional critical reading that takes into account historical contexts, class relations, symbolic interactions, and mechanisms of domination and exclusion. In this sense, adopting a sociological approach in the study of phenomena- such as education, media, or public administration- allows for the production of scientifically grounded knowledge with both explanatory and guiding dimensions, contributing to a deeper understanding of reality and the proposal of effective alternatives for intervention or reform.

Likewise, the sociological approach, in one of its classical orientations, is based on a positivist conception of the social sciences, which relies on the correspondence theory of truth, where truth is defined as the degree of alignment between theory and objective reality. According to this view, the essence of the scientific process lies in the relationship between the scientist (the knowing subject) and the social phenomenon (the object). The researcher is seen as an external observer who engages with reality in an objective and measurable manner, aiming to produce scientific knowledge that is free from personal values or subjective bias (Kaharuddin, 2023, p. 65).

In this broader understanding of science, a sociological theory produces meaningful and context-sensitive knowledge when it seeks not only to describe reality objectively, but also to engage with it critically and responsively. Rather than confining itself to rigid empiricism or detachment from societal values, this view recognizes that research is inherently situated within social contexts and that value-aware inquiry can contribute to a deeper and more transformative understanding of social phenomena. Approaches that emphasize interpretation, reflexivity, and responsiveness to real-world problems- such as public sociology- may move beyond the boundaries of "strict science" but offer powerful tools for connecting theory with practice and knowledge with action.

Public sociology, as developed by Michael Burawoy, represents a clear example of a sociological approach that originates from social reality to understand its problems and respond to its needs by activating the relationship between scientific research and society. Rather than limiting itself to abstract analysis, this approach aims to produce social knowledge that emerges from and is directed toward society, reflecting the interconnection between theory and practice. This vision highlights that sociology is not only a tool for understanding reality but also a means for transforming it by interpreting social phenomena within their structural, interactive, and cultural contexts. A prominent illustration of this can be found in studies addressing gender-based violence, or those concerned with analyzing the social determinants related to the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through such research, sociology contributes to deconstructing the structures that generate social problems and providing scientific explanations grounded in an understanding of social, political, and cultural contexts. In this way, the sociological approach demonstrates how sociology, when engaged with society, can produce impactful knowledge that enhances understanding and drives meaningful social change (Torrás-Gómez & et al, 2019, p. 218).

Based on the aforementioned epistemological foundations, the sociological approach can be operationally defined as: A theoretical and methodological perspective used to analyze social phenomena by interpreting the relationships between social structures, culture, and symbolic interactions, with the aim of understanding patterns of individual and collective behavior within their historical and social context. Its function lies in uncovering the hidden mechanisms that reproduce inequalities, shape meanings, and contribute to the construction of social reality. The sociological approach also serves as an analytical tool that guides the researcher in formulating appropriate questions, identifying key concepts, and selecting explanatory models that align with the nature of the studied phenomenon- whether through positivist, interpretive, critical, or contextual approaches.

2- Sociological approaches explaining new communication technologies:

New communication technologies have become a central component of contemporary social life, profoundly influencing patterns of interaction, forms of communication, and methods of organizing knowledge and power. This rapid development has produced a complex communicative reality that goes beyond mere technical use, extending its impact to social, cultural, economic, and political structures. From this perspective, the importance of sociological approaches emerges as essential analytical tools for understanding the deeper dimensions of this phenomenon and uncovering its intricate relationships with social systems. Sociology enables researchers to move beyond superficial or purely technical readings of communication

technologies, by analyzing them as dynamic social structures where individual interactions, institutional transformations, and symbolic meanings intersect.

In this context, sociological approaches gain particular importance in interpreting the phenomena associated with new communication technologies, as they provide a deep understanding of the transformations affecting usage patterns, social structures, and sources of authority and control. The uses and gratifications approach highlights the active role of users in selecting and utilizing communication media to satisfy their cognitive and social needs, reflecting a shift from viewing the audience as passive recipients to recognizing them as influential social actors. Meanwhile, the network society approach, developed by Manuel Castells, argues that network technologies have not merely altered communication tools but have reshaped the entire social structure, generating new forms of interaction and social organization. In contrast, the postmodern approach emphasizes the symbolic and representational nature of technology, suggesting that media no longer reflect reality but rather reconstruct it through images and representations, leading to a blurring of the boundaries between the real and the virtual. Finally, the digital governance approach offers an analytical perspective on how technology is used to enhance mechanisms of control and reshape the relationships between the state, individuals, and institutions, thereby providing a more precise understanding of how power is formed within digital contexts.

Taken together, these approaches show that communication technology is not merely a set of technical tools, but rather a complex social system that demands in-depth theoretical analysis to uncover its multiple dimensions and far-reaching impacts.

2-1- The uses and gratifications approach:

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) approach emerged in the 1940s as a critical response to the dominant communication models of the time, particularly the "hypodermic needle" or "magic bullet" theory. These early models viewed the audience as a homogeneous mass that passively received media messages in a direct and uncritical manner. They emphasized the unidirectional effect of mass media while

ignoring the cultural, social, and economic contexts of users, as well as their ability to choose, interpret, and assign meaning to media content. The U&G approach reversed this perspective by asserting that the audience is an active social agent who selects media according to specific needs and uses it in diverse ways based on personal goals, environment, and life circumstances (Quan-Haase, 2012, p. 2).

This approach gradually evolved alongside developments in communication research, especially with the rise of digital media and social networks. Initially focused on radio, press, and television, it expanded to include the study of the Internet, messaging applications, and digital platforms. In today's context, the U&G approach has proven particularly effective for analyzing user behavior in a multiplatform media environment. It helps understand media usage, expected and obtained gratifications, and the factors influencing the selection of digital media. Media are thus used for various purposes such as entertainment, communication, learning, escapism, or identity construction. As a result, the U&G approach has become one of the most relevant theoretical tools for analyzing the dynamic relationship between media and the public in the digital age.

The uses and gratifications approach has evolved cumulatively alongside the development of communication studies, gaining greater theoretical and methodological depth with the emergence of digital media and the widespread use of social networking platforms. Although it initially focused on analyzing the use of traditional media such as radio, newspapers, and television, it quickly adapted to technological transformations to encompass the Internet, mobile applications, and social media platforms (WITMER & CHUTATIP TAWESUK, 2012, p. 292).

In today's digital environment- characterized by multimedia diversity and blurred boundaries between producers and consumers- this approach has become an effective analytical framework for understanding users' motivations and interaction patterns with digital tools. It no longer merely explains media use for entertainment or knowledge; rather, it explores usage as a means of self-expression, identity

construction, social communication, and escape from real-life pressures. This makes the uses and gratifications approach a central tool for analyzing the complex and interactive relationship between users and the digital environments in which they operate.

With the growing variety of media options enable by modern technologies- such as online streaming, video on demand, chat rooms, and interactive applications- the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach has become an effective framework for understanding how individuals seek to fulfill their communicative, social, and psychological needs through these new media platforms. Recent studies have shown that these technologies allow users to interact and participate, transforming them from passive receivers into active agents in the communication process, as they choose, share, and reshape content according to their interests. Research has also indicated that digital media not only meet traditional gratifications such as entertainment and information but also respond to new needs like real-time interaction, identity construction, and social belonging. This highlights the U&G approach's adaptability to the complex digital environment and its relevance in analyzing the evolving patterns of media use in contemporary society (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 14).

2-2- Network Society Approach:

The network society approach is closely linked to the contribution of the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, who provided an in-depth analysis of the transformations in social structure in light of the economic, cultural, and political changes that have occurred globally since the late 20th century. Castells argues that contemporary society is characterized by a new social structure called the "network society", a structure built upon the intertwining of networks in all areas of life-production, consumption, experience, and power-which redefines the concepts of time, space, and identity. He emphasizes that this society is no longer defined solely by its institutions or local cultures, but by its capacity to interact on a global scale instantly, thus creating a system of decentralized social relations. This system gives rise to a new model of the state,

known as the “network state”, where power is shared among various sovereign institutions through a process of negotiated decision-making (Castells, 2000, pp. 9- 10).

These transformations are closely tied to the development of information and communication technologies, which serve as the essential vehicle for the emergence of this new form of society. Through these technologies—especially the internet—it is now possible to organize social practices globally without geographical proximity, giving rise to a new space called the “space of flows”, where meaning and relationships are determined not by location, but by the quality of the exchanged information. Time, in turn, becomes “timeless time”, surpassing the traditional sequence of events due to the massive acceleration of communications. In this context, media has become the primary arena of politics, where politics is increasingly personalized and deconstructed through techniques of political marketing and digital media. Thus, technology is not merely a tool- it becomes a structural element that profoundly reconfigures culture, politics, the economy, and social relations.

The concept of the “network society” is closely tied to the development of modern communication technologies, as articulated by sociologist Manuel Castells. He argues that the profound transformation in contemporary social structure is largely due to the widespread proliferation of information and communication technologies, particularly those based on microelectronics. These technologies have redefined the forms of social organization, turning networks from a traditional pattern of social interaction into a dynamic new structure that reshapes production and consumption, human relations, and centers of power. This transformation extends the logic of “flows,” which has come to override the logic of “places,” as information, images, and capital now move and interact instantly across digital space, transcending geographic boundaries (Niemandt, 2013, pp. 25- 26).

In this context, societies are no longer built merely on physical presence or spatial proximity, but rather emerge from networked interactions based on shared interests and identities - a phenomenon clearly reflected in social media platforms. These

platforms establish new forms of belonging, self-expression, and connectedness, allowing individuals to know and be known, to belong and to communicate, independently of physical presence or location. This explains how religions, including Christianity, have found a place within digital space, taking advantage of mobile communication technologies to expand their social and cultural reach. This was highlighted in the Atlas of Global Christianity and by numerous researchers who affirm that the networked space has become a modern substitute for the public sphere, in which relationships, values, and identities are being reconfigured in an unprecedented and interactive way.

With the rise of the network society and the expansion of new communication networks, we are witnessing an explosion of horizontal communication networks that are largely independent of traditional media and governments. This has led to the emergence of what is known as "self-directed mass communication." It is mass communication because it spreads across the internet and can theoretically reach all corners of the world, and it is self-directed because it is often initiated by individuals or groups, bypassing the traditional media system. The explosion of blogs, video blogs, podcasts, streaming services, and other forms of interactive, device-to-device communication is creating a new system of global horizontal communication networks that, for the first time in history, allows people to connect with one another without going through the channels established by social institutions for institutional communication (Castells, 2005, p. 13).

2-3 The cyber cultural approach:

The pioneering work of the French scholar Pierre Lévy helped establish the cyber cultural approach as a new cultural dimension of communication technology. Through his book *Cyber culture*, Lévy laid the conceptual foundation for understanding the profound transformations brought about by the digital environment in knowledge, communication, and society. He argues that digital technology is not merely a tool for information transmission but a framework that shapes and evolves new patterns of

thinking and practice within cyberspace. According to Lévy, cyber culture is a complex system of material and intellectual techniques, practical habits, values, and norms that continuously emerge and interact with the expansion of cyberspace, reflecting the deep impact of this technology on social structure, modes of thought, and the dissemination of knowledge (Bennis, 2024, p. 37).

Based on the perspective of cyber culture and its interpretation of communication technology, Pierre Lévy's vision represents a new understanding of the relationship between humans and technology- one that moves beyond a reductionist view of technology as a neutral tool, toward recognizing it as a new cultural and cognitive environment that reshapes modes of perception, communication, and meaning. From this standpoint, cyber culture does not merely produce tools for communication, but generates new symbolic and semiotic systems, allowing individuals to interact with infinite bodies of knowledge and imagined communities that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries (ROTARU, 2014, pp. 3- 4).

In this context, “totality” is no longer imposed by a central authority or a grand narrative, but is replaced by “universality without totality”: an open, pluralistic universality founded on horizontal interaction and the collaborative accumulation of knowledge. Thus, cyberspace is no longer just a technical infrastructure, but a cultural and political space where values such as cooperation, diversity, and collective creativity take shape.

Therefore, the cyber cultural interpretation of communication technology is grounded in the idea that this technology brings about profound transformations in social and epistemological structures. It enables collective intelligence to reconfigure the public sphere and restores the human being to the center of action and creation within a virtual environment that is rich in meaning, polyphonic, and constantly evolving.

On the other hand, American thinker David Bell presents a complementary approach, addressing cyber culture as a model for understanding human interaction

with digital technologies in the context of everyday life. In his book *Cyber culture Theorists*, Bell defines cyber culture as a way of life shaped by digital spaces—a network of embedded practices and representations that includes texts, images, speech, behaviors, and narrative structures. Bell demonstrates that cyberspace has become more than just a medium of communication; it is now a dynamic cultural space where identity and social interaction are reshaped. His approach reveals that communication technologies are no longer neutral tools, but cultural instruments through which power relations are enacted and values and identities are transmitted, making cyber culture a fundamental dimension in understanding the contemporary network society.

Overall, the cyber cultural approach to communication technologies shows that computers and cyberspace were not merely technical inventions, but the result of a broad human social movement aiming to radically transform the structure of knowledge and culture in society. Cyber culture, characterized by its dynamism and constant evolution, paved the way for the emergence of cyberspace by striving to make digital production tools accessible to a wide range of users. This transformation was not only technical, but also political and cultural, centered on a core objective: the democratization of communication and the activation of collective intelligence through open, decentralized digital networks. From this perspective, cyberspace is not a space of separation or isolation of the human experience, but a new framework for liberating human potential through interactive communication tools that reconstruct the foundations of perception, thinking, and expression (Teixeira & et al, 2017, p. 128).

In this context, the development of cyber culture cannot be separated from the concept of virtualization, which stands as one of its most complex expressions. Virtualization, enabled by digitization, is not the opposite of reality, but rather a new form of human existence and interaction. It reshapes our understanding of the body, text, economy, and society through multimedia spaces where knowledge is produced in a participatory and ever-evolving manner. It also opens wide horizons for new forms of discourse and thought that go beyond classical writing to dynamic and geometric

texts in which color, sound, and movement interact to create meaning. In this digital environment, orality and writing do not disappear; instead, they are renewed and interact with intellectual technologies of information, generating new patterns of thought and communication characterized by decentralization, interactivity, and continuous innovation. Thus, cyber culture is not merely an expression of the digital revolution, but a comprehensive civilizational shift that redefines the meaning of knowledge, selfhood, and the world.

3 -Sociological Approaches Explaining Educational Problems in the School Environment:

Educational problems in the school environment are a central topic in the sociology of education, as these phenomena are interpreted through a range of theoretical approaches that seek to understand the social dynamics within educational institutions. The importance of these approaches lies in their ability to reveal the structural, cultural, and interactional dimensions that influence the emergence of academic failure, school violence, educational inequality, and student dropout. These analyses are based on the notion that the school is a social space that reflects and reproduces the structural tensions of society, which makes understanding educational problems in this context require a multi-level analytical perspective.

Among the most prominent sociological approaches that have contributed to the explanation of educational problems are the structural-functional approach, which views the school as an institution that performs essential functions in society such as socialization and ensuring equal opportunity, and sees dysfunction in these roles as a cause of educational issues. The field theory approach, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, highlights how power relations and symbolic capital contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities within the school, interpreting the failure of certain groups as a result of a mismatch between school culture and learners' culture. In contrast, the symbolic interactionist approach focuses on the daily interactions between educational actors (teachers, students, administration) and on how meanings and perceptions regarding

success, failure, and discipline are constructed- thus offering a nuanced understanding of how educational problems emerge through everyday practices.

3.1- The Structural-Functional Approach:

The structural functionalist approach is one of the prominent sociological perspectives developed in the mid-20th century. It aims to analyze how different components of society interact to ensure its stability and balance. This approach assumes that society is a complex system made up of interconnected units, each performing a specific function that contributes to the overall health and equilibrium of the social system. Thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton contributed to the development of this perspective, focusing on the functions and dysfunctions of social institutions and the role they play in maintaining order and cohesion within society.

The structural functionalist approach is one of the most important sociological approaches that seeks to explain how society functions by understanding the relationships between its components and institutions, such as the family, education, religion, and government. This approach assumes that society is an integrated system composed of interrelated parts, each with a specific function that contributes to maintaining overall stability and balance. In the educational context, the structural functionalist approach views the school as a tool for transmitting cultural values and social norms, achieving integration and social cohesion, as well as playing a role in sorting individuals and preparing them to occupy certain roles in the labor market. According to this approach, education does not only aim to socialize individuals but also contributes to classifying and ranking them according to their abilities, which enables the efficient allocation of social positions. The approach also emphasizes that any change in the function of a given social institution-such as the school-will inevitably impact other institutions, in accordance with the logic of structural interdependence (Nargiza & et al, 2023, p. 272).

The structural functionalist approach explains educational problems in the school environment by viewing the school as a social institution that performs multiple functions aimed at maintaining social cohesion and stability. From this perspective, the educational institution contributes to transmitting cultural values and norms, preparing individuals to fulfill their future social roles, and enabling opportunities for social mobility and integration within the social structure. However, this approach also acknowledges the existence of dysfunctions that may hinder the achievement of these goals, such as reinforcing social disparities among students due to class-based discrimination, economic inequalities, or cultural differences. Schools do not always operate in a neutral manner; instead, they may reproduce existing social inequalities rather than address them, leading to the emergence of educational problems such as school dropout, low academic achievement, and marginalization within classrooms. Therefore, the structural functionalist perspective helps us understand how the malfunctioning of educational functions contributes to crises in the school setting, while emphasizing the need to reform these functions in order to achieve balance and equity within the educational system (Sharma, 2023, p. 748).

In this context, this approach acknowledges the existence of functional imbalances that may hinder the achievement of its goals, such as the reinforcement of social disparities among students resulting from class-based discrimination, economic inequalities, or even cultural affiliation. The school does not always play a neutral role; rather, it may reproduce existing societal inequalities instead of addressing them. This leads to the emergence of educational problems such as school dropout, low academic achievement, and marginalization within classrooms. Consequently, the functionalist approach helps to understand how the malfunctioning of educational roles contributes to crises within the school environment, while emphasizing the importance of reforming these roles to achieve balance and equity within the educational institution (Muhlis, 2024, pp. 48- 49).

In light of Talcott Parsons' Structural Functional Theory, the stability and effectiveness of the educational system depend on the fulfillment of four essential functions: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latence (the preservation of cultural patterns). Adaptation refers to the school's ability to adjust its policies, structures, and resources in response to internal and external changes, such as accommodating students with special needs or integrating technological innovations. The goal attainment function reflects the institution's ability to achieve its educational mission by involving all stakeholders in the implementation of clear and equitable objectives. Integration aims to coordinate relationships among the various components of the school community- administration, teachers, parents, and students—to ensure a harmonious and inclusive learning environment. Finally, the latency function reinforces the school's values and cultural orientation, ensuring its long-term stability and identity (Azhar & et al, 2025, p. 481).

However, when one of these functions fails, educational problems clearly emerge in the school environment. For instance, poor adaptation to cultural diversity or disability issues can lead to the marginalization of certain students. Similarly, failure to attain educational goals can result in low academic achievement or increased dropout rates. A lack of integration among school components may weaken communication and collaboration, exacerbating disciplinary issues or school violence. Lastly, the absence of inclusive and equitable values within the school culture- i.e., a weak latency function- can reinforce a culture of exclusion and discrimination. Thus, dysfunctions in these structural functions are a fundamental cause of educational crises, making their reform essential to achieving equity and effectiveness within the educational system.

3-2- The Educational Field Approach:

The Educational Field Approach developed by Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most significant sociological contributions aimed at understanding the dynamic relationship between social structure and agents within the school environment. According to this approach, the educational field is viewed as a relatively autonomous social space

composed of positions and power relations defined by various forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Within this field, actors such as teachers, students, administrators, and parents interact based on their positions and the capital they possess. These actors are situated along a continuum between two poles: the autonomous pole, which holds legitimate authority within the field, and the heteronomous pole, which strives to gain legitimacy and ascend the field's hierarchy. The educational field approach reveals that the field is not static but subject to ongoing tensions and gradual transformations, governed by the concept of *habitus*- a system of dispositions shaped by individuals accumulated social experiences that guide their practices and perceptions within different fields (Schmitt & et al, 2024, p. 127).

When applied to the analysis of educational problems within the school environment, the educational field approach shows that such problems are not merely isolated incidents or individual failures but rather outcomes of imbalances in the field structure itself. When the educational field fails to maintain equilibrium among its actors, phenomena such as marginalization, school dropout, and low academic achievement emerge as consequences of the unequal distribution of educational capital—particularly among students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds. This approach reveals how schools, instead of functioning as instruments for social mobility, may become arenas for reproducing class and cultural inequalities, driven by implicit rules and hidden mechanisms that favor certain cultural norms over others. Thus, the educational field approach offers a deep analytical lens for understanding the internal logic and power dynamics of schools and highlights the need to restructure the educational field to promote greater justice and inclusion for all educational actors.

According to Bourdieu's concept of the educational field, the school space is viewed as a relatively autonomous social arena governed by internal rules that determine the positions of actors- such as teachers, students, and administrators- based on the type and volume of capital they possess, whether cultural, economic, social, or

symbolic. In this space, educational problems such as marginalization, underachievement, or school dropout are not seen as isolated individual issues, but rather as reflections of structural imbalances resulting from unequal positioning of actors within the school space. Instead of reducing social and cultural disparities, the school may reproduce them through invisible rules that reinforce the dominance of some actors while excluding others (Bathmaker, 2015, p. 67).

Moreover, the school space is not a neutral ground, but rather a contested field where actors continuously struggle to maintain or improve their positions by competing for symbolic and knowledge-based capital. External interventions- such as ministerial directives or neoliberal policy pressures- often reduce the autonomy of the school space, deepening internal tensions and weakening its educational and social function. Although Bourdieu is sometimes criticized for downplaying individual agency, his approach offers a dynamic understanding of relationships within the school space, where certain students or teachers may mobilize alternative forms of capital or move between different social spaces to challenge the status quo-even if their ability to enact change remains constrained by the field's rules, which may resist transformation.

The educational field, according to Bourdieu's conception, represents a multidimensional space where the material dimension (such as the school environment and educational tools), the social dimension (the relationships between actors such as teachers, students, and administrators), and the semantic dimension (the meanings conveyed within educational discourse) intersect. In bibliometric studies, although the focus is primarily on fields of science and knowledge, a similar approach is adopted when analyzing the academic field as a social field. Just as the educational field is understood as a dynamic arena in which inequalities are reproduced through seemingly natural practices, bibliometric literature treats scientific fields as arenas of competition and struggle over symbolic and cognitive resources, where relationships between actors, positions, and scientific capital are key determinants of agents' placement within the field (Schirone, 2023, p. 196).

When linking this perspective to the educational field approach, this space likewise appears as a dynamic and unstable domain, subject to struggles among educational actors seeking to consolidate or adjust their positions within field-specific rules that reproduce inequalities. Just as the bibliometric literature highlights the tension between the relative autonomy of the scientific field and external interventions that threaten it, similar patterns are observed in the educational field, where interventions such as government policies or market constraints lead to the erosion of actors' autonomy and a narrowing of their scope for agency. Although Bourdieu is sometimes criticized for downplaying individuals' capacity for change, his analysis of the field provides a dynamic understanding of actors' strategies-such as moving across fields or reshaping educational capital-albeit within the limits imposed by the symbolic domination and internal rules of the educational game.

3-3- The Symbolic Interactionist Approach:

The symbolic interactionist approach emerged in the early 20th century in the United States and is considered one of the most prominent theoretical currents in sociology, especially in analyzing the relationship between the individual and society. Its roots trace back to the works of George Herbert Mead, who focused on how the human self is formed through social interaction. According to Mead, individuals are not born with a complete self; rather, it is gradually acquired through communication and interaction with others. Herbert Blumer later developed this approach and coined the term "symbolic interactionism," emphasizing that human behavior is not a direct result of external structures or forces but arises from the meanings individuals assign to things around them and their continuous interaction with the social context (Dong, 2008, pp. 14-15).

In the school context, this approach offers a valuable framework for understanding educational problems as outcomes of daily interactions between teachers, students, and administrators, where meanings are constructed through language, symbols, and classifications. For instance, labels such as "troublesome

student" or "gifted" do not emerge arbitrarily but are shaped through repeated interactions that reinforce a particular image of the student in their own mind and in the minds of others. In this sense, symbolic interactionism explains how school identity is formed and how meanings attached to success or failure may reproduce social inequalities or, conversely, create space for individual strategies to resist negative labeling. Thus, the school becomes a dynamic space where symbols and meanings are constantly in flux.

Moreover, the symbolic interactionist approach offers a valuable perspective for understanding how teacher identity is shaped through daily interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators within complex social and situational contexts. A teacher's identity is not formed in a vacuum; rather, it emerges from continuous interaction between the "self" and the "other," through the meanings that teachers assign to their experiences and encounters both inside and outside the classroom. In educational environments marked by poverty, violence, and the pressures of educational policies, teachers often find themselves caught between contradictory meanings: their role as educational agents and their sense of helplessness in the face of challenges beyond their control, such as school dropout or parental neglect. Just as students are labeled as "lazy" or "smart" through repeated symbolic interactions, teachers also reshape their identities through their self-perceptions as either "influential" or "powerless," which are reflected in their educational behavior and classroom practices. Therefore, understanding educational problems from this perspective sheds light on the symbolic dynamics that produce either engagement or exclusion, and reveals how resisting stereotypes or reshaping professional identity is linked to the ability to interact with symbols, reinterpret situations, and construct new meanings for professional success and pedagogical effectiveness (Smit & Elzette Fritz, 2008, p. 92).

Despite the significance of symbolic interactionism as an approach to understanding educational problems in the school environment, several criticisms

highlight its limitations in offering a comprehensive explanation of educational reality. One major critique is its lack of an integrated social vision: symbolic interactionism does not provide a clear model of social structure, instead focusing on micro-level, symbolic interactions between individuals. As a result, society is often portrayed merely as a product of individual representations and personal interpretations. From this perspective, the school institution is not treated as a structured entity with its own authority and historical or social context, but rather as a space of daily interactions where meaning is produced through direct experience (Aksan & et al, 2009, p. 903).

Additionally, this approach tends to overlook the emotional dimension of educational action- such as feelings of frustration, anger, or enthusiasm experienced by teachers and students within classrooms. It also emphasizes immediate interactions without adequately considering the broader social contexts that frame the school, such as educational policies or structural inequalities. Nevertheless, the strength of symbolic interactionism lies in its ability to show how educational meanings are constructed and to explain how everyday labels- such as identifying a student as a “failure” or viewing a teacher as a source of inspiration- shape roles and identities. From this perspective, educational problems are not solely the result of structural dysfunction, but also emerge from symbolic misunderstandings, conflicting meanings, and disrupted interaction patterns within the school institution.

4-Conclusion:

The text emphasizes that analyzing the transformations occurring within the school environment amid the digital revolution requires moving beyond linear or one-dimensional explanations. It argues for adopting multi-dimensional analytical models that integrate structural, interactional, and contextual perspectives. The various sociological approaches-whether focused on communication technologies or educational challenges-highlight diverse dimensions of the relationship between schools and digital tools, from individual motivations for media use, to shifts in power

relations and educational meanings, and the reproduction of social and cultural inequalities.

The challenges posed by digitalization extend beyond issues of infrastructure and educational resources. They also involve the ways technology is embedded within a critical educational vision that accounts for social contexts and reshapes roles and identities within the school institution. Therefore, any meaningful educational reform in the digital era must be grounded in an understanding of daily symbolic interactions, structural dynamics of power and knowledge, and the broader social and cultural contexts influencing the educational process.

In this light, the integration of multiple sociological perspectives becomes not only a theoretical endeavor but a practical requirement for grasping the dynamics of change in schooling. Such integration provides essential critical insights that support the development of more equitable and effective educational policies in a rapidly evolving digital world.

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