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methods of Sociology

Sociology, as we have discussed earlier, is also a science. It would also therefore, use certain methods by which sociological facts could be collected, analysed and put into proper form and certain conclusions drawn from them. The question of proper methodology is of great significance in Sociology because the claim of our subject to be regarded a science depends upon the use of a methodology which can eliminate the possibility of personal bias from influencing our comprehension and evaluation of social facts.

Sociology is still in its infancy. It has therefore, not been able to find a method of its own appropriate for its researches. It has however, met with appreciable success in analysing the social phenomenon and its use of methods employed by other social sciences is quite proper.

Introduction

While available records indicate that Sociology began as an academic discipline in the 1880s and 1890s, we cannot rule out the fact that early scholars of diverse callings have engaged in some activities at explaining and understanding social life.

However, some events in the 18th and 19th centuries Europe have no doubt impacted on the rise of sociology as an academic discipline. The immediate factor that gave rise to sociological theorising was the French Revolution of 1789 and the lasting effects that were carried over through the following centuries. Other factors include industrial revolution, urbanisation, rise of capitalism, the enlightenment and the growth of science (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). As earlier stated, Sociology was born in England, France and Germany where changes that rocked the period was the greatest. The discipline has continued to grow as a profession and academic discipline. By the beginning of 20th century, Sociology had spread to Asia, Africa, North America and South America through globalisation process, with the mandate of not just to understand society but to bring about change toward social justice (Giddens, 2001; Oyekola, 2018). The rapid global transformations are also impacting on its development.

Though some of the original factors that heralded the emergence of Sociology may no longer exist in their original forms, the realities of their existence in other forms and many social issues are begging for answers. From a humble beginning in the 18th and 19th centuries, Sociology has evolved and developed keen interest in customs, norms and values which emanate from day-to-day living and in the way day-to-day living has in turn been influenced by these customs, norms and values (Ritzer, 2011).

Consequently, a number of many specialised fields now exist in the discipline of Sociology so as to meet the demands and the realities of modern societies.

The link between sociological theory and each of the fields of sociology is crucial to the sub-disciplines. Theory binds the sub-disciplines to the general discipline of Sociology more broadly than any other part of the sociological enterprise (Cooper et al., 2016). Also, theory is what commonly differentiates studies in the fields of sociology from socially-oriented research in related fields such as Public Health, Psychology, Economics and Education research. Precisely, sociological theory is a common denominator for all the fields of sociology. It is the driving force and analytical tool for a nuanced understanding of various aspects of social life. In this Chapter, efforts will be made to discuss some of the fields of Sociology and their major preoccupations in proffering explanations of and solutions to social issues in a rapidly changing world.

Fields of Sociology

Sociology is considered the most recent discipline in the social sciences. However, its recent emergence as an academic field of study in the 19th century could not suggest its least influence on human society. In fact, its impact in the social sciences in particular and on human society in general cannot be underrated. This is further strengthened by its link to virtually all other academic disciplines. In this section, I will mention some fields of Sociology. The list is endless due to its continued popularity and growing relevance.

Among the branches of sociology (in alphabetical order) are: Applied sociology; Architectural sociology; Behavioural sociology; Comparative sociology; Criminology/Sociology of deviance; Critical sociology; Cultural sociology; sociology; Economic sociology; Educational sociology; Empirical sociology; Environmental sociology; Feminist

sociology; Historical sociology; Humanistic sociology; Industrial sociology; Internet sociology; Interpretive sociology; Macrosociology; Marxist sociology; Mathematical sociology; Medical sociology; ; Military sociology .Sociology of agriculture; Sociology of art; Sociology of childhood; Sociology of culture; Sociology of cyberspace; Sociology of demography; Sociology of differentiation; Sociology of disaster; Sociology of economy; Sociology of education; Sociology of emotions; Sociology of family; Sociology of fatherhood; Sociology of finance; Sociology of food; Sociology of gender; Sociology of health Sociology of immigration; Sociology of knowledge; Sociology of language; Sociology of law; Sociology of leisure; Sociology of literature; Sociology of markets; Sociology of sport; Sociology of stratification; Sociology of technology; Sociology of terrorism; Sociology of the Internet; Sociology of the history of science; Sociology of urbanisation; Sociology of work; Structural sociology; Theoretical sociology and Visual

1-Criminology

deal with the same subject matter: criminal behaviour. In other words, criminology refers to the study of criminal behaviour of individuals or groups through the use of scientific approach (Siegel, 2007). It is also referred to as the body of knowledge that studies crime or many other deviant behaviour as a social phenomenon. The scope of criminology covers the origin, types and causes of crime; law, punishment, police; as well as the process of making, breaking and reacting towards the breaking of laws (Scott & Marshall, 2005b). It aims at developing a body of general principles that can be applied to the process of making laws and to the treatment and management of crime. This branch has had a long standing history and has since evolved into the contemporary society (Jensen, 2015)

2-Sociology of Religion

Sociology of religion focuses on the influence of religion on the societal structure as no society is ever without some forms of belief in the supernatural. Specifically, this sub-discipline examines the structure of religion in a given social system and analyses the social behaviour of

human beings in relation to their religious compositions. Sociology of religion emerged in order to examine the religious behaviour of individual members of society from a sociological standpoint.

According to Shankar-Rao (2006), early sociological research on religion had three distinguishing methodological features and these include evolutionist, positivist and psychological characteristics. Examples of these are found in the works of sociological and anthropological scholars such as Auguste Comte, Edward Tylor, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim. While some of these works are still relevant today, few of them can no longer stand the test of time or the demand of the modern day society. For example, Emile Durkheim's (1964)

contribution to religion as the collective conscience is less useful in the contemporary civilised societies as religion not only unites, but also divides (Shankar-Rao, 2006; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). Also, Marx and Engels' (1957) explanation of religion as the opium of the people does not hold in all cases. As a

result, the task of sociology of religion is demanding as no social phenomenon is more resistant to scientific explanations than religion majorly because of the emotional and rational bias factors.

3-Sociology of Economy

This branch of sociology (also called economic sociology or sociology of economic life) studies the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services in relation to the socio-cultural context within which such activities take place. In other words, sociology of economy is the application of general principles, frame of reference, and explanatory models of sociology to the complex but interrelated activities concerned with the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of relatively scarce goods and services for the satisfaction of individual members of society (Smelser, 1963; Smelser & Swedberg, 2005). Specifically, it studies the cultural conditions of life and how they are produced, distributed, exchanged, consumed and reproduced through social processes (Hughes & Kroehler, 2008).

Initial focus of sociology of economy is on economic activities alone: especially how these social activities are organised into roles and collectivises. The second focus of economic sociology examines the relationship between sociological variables in relation to their economic as well as non-economic contexts (Shankar-Rao, 2006). This sub-

discipline can further be divided into occupational sociology, plant sociology, sociology of consumption, sociology of markets, and sociology of work.

4. Historical Sociology

of past events and sociology is the study of human relations, historical sociology is referred to as the systematic study of the past so as to describe and reconstruct empirical findings about the social world. In actual sense, these past events are not to be considered a day or month old; rather, the study of past events is commonly useful in studying social phenomena that are more than five decades (Shankar-Rao, 2006). Via this study, historical sociology reveals the genesis of social events: When and how diverse social organisations or groups originated? Historical sociology focuses on comparative study of how past social life affect contemporary world. While social anthropologists might be interested in studying the composition, interrelationship and social conditions that support or challenge social groups, historical sociologists would be interested in examining them in contrast with the histories of past cultures and societies.

The roots of historical sociology lie with the classical founders of sociology such as Max Weber (who is a historical sociologist). However, not able growth and reconstruction were experienced after World War II (Wilson & Adams, 2015).

Today historical sociology is characterised by methodological pluralism, along with a wide engagement with scientific inquiries into large-scale social change, the development and institutionalisation of contemporary societies, and the epistemological roots of social science history (Wilson & Adams, 2015).

5. Sociology of Knowledge

Sociology of knowledge is a newly developed sub-discipline of sociology and it explains that our knowledge (of the world and everything in it) is the result of social phenomena. It presupposes the idea that our knowledge is, to a very large extent, a social product (Shankar-Rao, 2006). In other words, our knowledge is usually determined by the society we live in. Sociology of knowledge specifically focuses on the relationship between how human cognition are processed and produced on one hand and their socio-cultural roots and consequences

(Meja, 2015). General ideas and belief systems (such as moral and religious beliefs), scientific theories, mental categories, philosophical and political doctrines, cultural and organisational discourses, and the forms of everyday knowing are embedded in human cognitions which continue to shape (and be shaped by) the society and its cultural elements. Marx and Engels (1967) had earlier raised the relationship between knowledge and society and acknowledged that knowledge is created by the two opposing and conflicting class interests – the bourgeoisie and proletariat. According to them, each class distort, direct and