

Summary

Managers in contemporary society

A study in the sociology of education

This book is of transdisciplinary nature. First and foremost, it focuses on contemporary problems related to education, which is understood here in the widest possible terms, both in the sense of academic study and in the cultural sense, as the transmission of cultural values and norms, as socialization and as selection. If the issues presented here go beyond the boundaries of education, they always remain locked in mutual relations with it. On the one hand, as the subject of this study, managers constitute the source of inexhaustible inspiration, ideas and interest. On the other hand, managers comprise a group that is not easily accessible, remains slightly self-contained and tends to filter information that they are not willing to share with the researcher, which in fact is, at the same time, the kind of information that seems most valuable and most important from the research point of view.

The theoretical framework applied in this publication has been used before by this author in analysing the role managers play in social structure and in the empirical study of management education within contemporary societies. The present book is based on the economic and sociological perspective on the theory of ownership, which has been thought through once again and adjusted to the study of contemporary phenomena and processes. The term "economic and sociological" does not in fact do enough justice to the real spirit of this theory. It comprises elements that are strictly educational, although its origins are mostly sociological. Therefore, I have decided to take this theory up again and focus on its educational elements, which are applied here as the basis for analysing the situation of managers.

Consequently, in the present analysis of the position of managers in the society, I have the clear intention of presenting it in close relation to education, culture and economy. The managers are intended to be presented here as figures inextricably bound with education, especially on the academic level, and as those who have an impact on education in a broader sense (as I highlight right at the beginning), at least through their individual decisions. Education is at the core of the present theoretical discussion, which is rooted in empirical research. It determines the formulation of the questions in the interviews with managers and the hypothesis that are put forward, providing the ground for the academic discussion in this publication. Hence, if asked

about the particular discipline affiliation of this book, then I would point to “sociology of education” as the best label, especially when meant as an aspect of pedagogical research that seeks a much wider background for its conclusions and which lies outside teaching methodology as such.

The present perspective interweaves with what is identified as neoclassical thought, i.e. an attempt to adjust the conclusions of the classic theories to be able to apply them for the study of the contemporary, or as synergy in research. The overarching aim of this theoretical framework is an in-depth understanding of the educational, social and cultural processes involved. Managers, as a special category of people, provide here particular exemplification, but on the other hand, they can also be seen from a practical point of view as the driving force of change. Bearing all this in mind, I argue in favour of applying the ownership paradigm for the theoretical discussion and empirical study of the position of managers as the best possible tool and through the synergy as a widening perspective.

Moreover, this perspective allows this paradigm to be incorporated into educational studies and theoretical discussions on education in the broadest sense. Taking all these aspects together, this framework provides, to a certain extent, a new approach to both education and social structure, as well as their close mutual relations. This perspective does not blur the boundaries between education and its various spheres of influence, but instead it actually highlights them. It therefore remains in line with the rule of objectivity in social science. The present research was also determined by the trans-disciplinary precedence in contemporary studies, as well as being inspired by the concept of synergy in research. To a certain degree, the choice of the qualitative dimension was the consequence of this kind of approach, but it also stemmed from the intention to apply previous research experience and to provide an in-depth analysis of managerial narration. Taking into account the particular characteristics of the group of respondents in question, the method selected allowed for more direct contact and interaction with the respondents, and for retrieving data from a field study.

Chapter One is devoted to the issue of managers’ position in contemporary societies. It starts with an attempt to define managers as a particular social category. It is followed by presenting managers’ double-bind position, i.e. on the one hand, as leaders of a particular organisation, and on the other, as members of society. Against this background the notion of social capital is also raised, with its ambiguous meaning and applications.

Chapter Two discusses social variation, social structure, mobility and elitism, all of which are linked to education as phenomena and processes. On the one hand, my intention here is to bring out purely educational issues from the theory of social variation. On the other, I also try to discuss it from the perspective of the sociology of education, and in this way also point to what are broadly understood as the relations between education and social structure, to social class-determining processes mediated through education and, finally, to the social divides that exist in individuals’ consciousness.

Chapter Three is an attempt to apply the educational perspective in combination with the concept of the managerial mind and critical management studies on. This perspective takes us from analogy to critical pedagogy, through to the important el-

ements of critical management studies, such as the issue of manager education and organisational roles, comprises the contemporary dynamic overview of management, managers and the role they play in contemporary phenomena and processes.

Chapter Four is a report on the main principles and components of the research procedure. Here I attempt to introduce the concept of "research procedure" as a wide category encompassing general research methodology and empirical research methods. I justify the selection of procedure in terms of the qualitative research approach, referring to various concepts, including synergic research.

Chapter Five is an attempt to sketch out a portrait of Polish managers based on published analyses and the author's own research. Managers' narratives are presented to exemplify problems derived previously, but also as opinions, content and statements appearing spontaneously and autonomously, which I seek to reproduce accurately. While short cuts were obviously necessary, I took pains not to take short extracts of statements out of context, but instead to present and then interpret the ideas analysed just as they are.

The book closes with some thoughts on the main results, which prompt reflections on the strong and weak points of the research procedure, and also findings of a conceptual and theoretical nature. These are critical and, in my view, also open up new research perspectives.

Translated by Rob Pagett