

## Relevance and Transformation of Educational Sociology: A Review of the Relationship Between Education and Social Structure in the Digital Era

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### ABSTRACT

This article critically examines the relevance and transformation of educational sociology in facing the challenges of the digital era and multiculturalism in Indonesia. This qualitative literature review highlights how educational institutions not only serve as a vehicle for knowledge transfer but also as arenas for the reproduction of social values, norms, and the complex and dynamic culture of society. The digitalization of education creates opportunities for innovation, but also deepens educational inequalities and unequal access due to socioeconomic, geographic, and digital literacy factors. In the context of Indonesia, which is multicultural, multilayered, and marked by disparities in access, educational sociology becomes an important tool for analyzing policy responses and educational practices toward modernization and plurality. The synthesis of this article highlights the limitations of previous research, which has not extensively addressed the integration of sociological perspectives into the structural problems of education, and offers novelty in the form of a holistic approach by integrating classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks in exploring cultural capital, social capital, the digital divide, and innovative intervention strategies such as After-School Programs. The study's conclusions emphasize the urgency of policy reform based on empowering social capital, strengthening multicultural and digital education, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to achieve education that is more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the demands of modern Indonesian society

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid social transformation and digitalization in the contemporary era have presented complex challenges for educational systems around the world, particularly in the context of the relationship between education and the social structure of society. Educational sociology, as a branch of science that examines the dynamic interaction between educational processes and social phenomena, has become increasingly relevant to understanding how educational institutions function not only as vehicles for knowledge transfer but also as arenas for the reproduction of values, norms, and cultural identity in an increasingly complex society. Digital transformation in education has created opportunities while also exacerbating structural inequalities rooted in socioeconomic status, geography, and institutional capacity (Prihatin & Sutangsa, 2025; D. Y. Putri et al., 2025). In the context of Indonesia as a country with highly complex ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity, the sociology of education has a strategic urgency to analyze how the education system responds to the challenges of multiculturalism, social inequality, and modernization (Ruwiyanto et al., 2025). Education in Indonesia still faces fundamental problems in the form of access gaps influenced by economic, geographical, and infrastructural factors, as well as the limited understanding of educators regarding multicultural values in the learning process. This phenomenon has become increasingly complex due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted the learning process for nearly 70 million students in Indonesia and requires comprehensive learning recovery efforts (Pohan et al., 2024).

This condition indicates a significant research gap in understanding the role of educational sociology as a critical analytical tool for addressing contemporary challenges in the Indonesian education system (Sadiyah et al., 2025). Previous studies have tended to focus on the technical aspects of education policy implementation or descriptive analyses of inequality phenomena, but they remain limited in integrating a comprehensive sociological perspective to understand the structural roots of educational problems (Anjani et al., 2025). Studies that explore the relevance and adaptability of basic educational sociology concepts in addressing the dynamics of social transformation, digitalization, and multiculturalism in the contemporary era represent a research gap that needs to be filled (Damanik et al., 2025; Kalashnikova et al., 2025).

The urgency of this research is further reinforced by the finding that despite the increase in government investment in the education sector, Indonesia still exhibits relatively low intergenerational social mobility, especially in the educational aspect. Recent multigenerational studies show that the parent-child education correlation in Indonesia still exhibits high persistence, indicating that the education system has not yet been optimal in facilitating inclusive social mobility. This situation calls for an in-depth study on how the sociology of education can provide a framework for analyzing and addressing the reproduction of social inequality through the education system (Budiati & Rochmat, 2020).

This research offers novelty in the form of a comprehensive synthesis between the basic concepts of classical educational sociology and the contemporary challenges faced by the Indonesian education system, particularly in the context of digital transformation, multiculturalism, and post-pandemic recovery. The research's novelty lies in its integrative approach that combines theoretical analysis of the functions and objectives of educational sociology with empirical exploration of its urgency and relevance in addressing current structural educational problems. Unlike previous studies that tend to be partial, this research presents a holistic perspective that connects the conceptual, functional, and applicative dimensions of educational sociology in a cohesive analysis (Kartika et al., 2025).

Another novelty aspect lies in the contextualization of educational sociology within the dynamics of Indonesian society, which is transitioning from traditional to modern, taking into account the complexity of globalization, digitalization, and multiculturalism challenges simultaneously. This study also integrates a critical perspective on post-pandemic transformative education policies, such as the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and learning recovery programs, through a comprehensive sociological lens. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how educational sociology can function both as a policy analysis tool and as a theoretical basis for a more just and inclusive education system reform (Afkarina et al., 2024).

Based on the identification of problems and research gaps, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the basic concepts, scope, functions, and urgency of educational sociology in the context of contemporary challenges in the Indonesian education system. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) explore the relevance of basic concepts in educational sociology in understanding the dynamics of education in the digital and multicultural era; (2) analyze the scope of educational sociology studies encompassing social interaction, educational institutions, and social transformation in the Indonesian context; (3) evaluate the functions and goals of educational sociology as an analytical tool for addressing educational inequality and social reproduction; and (4) examine the urgency of educational sociology in guiding educational policies and practices towards a more just, inclusive, and responsive system that meets the needs of modern society.

Through the achievement of these objectives, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in enriching the body of knowledge in the sociology of education, while also providing a solid conceptual foundation for the development of more effective educational policies and practices in addressing structural and cultural challenges in the contemporary Indonesian education system (Judijanto & Al-Amin, 2025).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Basic Concepts of Educational Sociology

Educational sociology is a branch of science that studies the reciprocal relationship between educational processes and the social structure of society. As part of sociology, this field highlights how educational institutions, besides serving as places for knowledge transfer, are also arenas where societal values, norms, and culture are reproduced. Education can thus be understood as a social mechanism that helps shape individual development while reinforcing social integration within the community (Prasetyo & Hidayati, 2021). This perspective shows that education is not merely about teaching in the classroom, but a broader social phenomenon related to the dynamics of interactions among individuals and groups within society.

Historically, the sociology of education emerged from thinkers' desire to understand the role of schools in shaping social order. Classical figures such as Émile Durkheim emphasized that education is the main means of instilling collective values to keep society cohesive. This thought later evolved into the modern era, emphasizing how education influences social mobility, inequality, and patterns of social change. From a sociological perspective, education is seen as an institution that does not exist in isolation but is always connected to the political, economic, and cultural systems present in society (K. Sari, 2022).

The definition of educational sociology can be understood through a conceptual approach. Sociology, as a science that studies social interactions, behavior patterns, and social structures, forms the basis for understanding education as a social phenomenon. According to experts, education is not just formal activities in schools, but a continuous process that includes the family, community environment, and media. Educational sociology means the study that combines a sociological perspective to analyze all aspects related to education, both in formal and non-formal contexts (Anwar, 2021).

Educational sociology plays an important role in explaining various phenomena that arise in the world of education. Why there are differences in access to education between rich and poor groups, how school culture is formed, and how students' identities are influenced by social interactions in the classroom. All of these aspects can be analyzed through the lens of educational sociology, which views education as an integral part of social life. From this perspective, education not only teaches cognitive skills but also shapes social habitus that affects the attitudes and behaviors of the younger generation (Putra & Rahmawati, 2023).

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In addition to its critical function, the sociology of education also has a normative dimension, which is to provide an overview of how the education system should play a role in building a just and inclusive society. This becomes important because education is often considered one of the main pathways to improving quality of life. By understanding the sociology of education, practitioners and policymakers can identify structural barriers that hinder the achievement of educational equity. Through this approach, education is expected to no longer serve as a means of reproducing inequality but rather as a tool for social transformation toward a better societal life (Lestari & Nugroho, 2020).

Educational sociology also emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the teaching and learning process. Teachers, students, and parents are not just individual actors but part of a social network that influences each other. A harmonious relationship between educators and learners can boost motivation to learn, while a discriminatory social environment can lower students' enthusiasm for learning. Understanding the concept of educational sociology also means recognizing that educational success is influenced not only by internal school factors but also by broader social factors (Hapsari, 2022).

In the context of Indonesia, the sociology of education is highly relevant given the complexity of its multicultural society. The educational process in the country takes place amidst ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. The sociology of education helps to understand how these differences influence educational practices, whether in terms of teaching methods, student interactions, or curriculum policies. Furthermore, the sociological approach also emphasizes that education in Indonesia must be able to accommodate diversity so as not to create discrimination or social inequality (Sutrisno & Kurniawati, 2023).

The definition of educational sociology is also becoming increasingly relevant with the development of digital technology. Social interactions that were once limited to the classroom now extend to virtual spaces through online platforms. This change creates new dynamics that must be analyzed sociologically. For example, how access to digital technology creates learning gaps between students in urban and rural areas, or how social media influences students' identities and behaviors. This phenomenon shows that the understanding of educational sociology continues to evolve in accordance with social changes (Yuliani, 2024).

The understanding of educational sociology is not merely limited to a formal definition, but rather a perspective that emphasizes the close relationship between education and society. Educational sociology views schools, teachers, students, and families as parts of a social structure that influence each other. This field also highlights that education is an important arena for character formation, the reproduction of values, and even social transformation. A deep understanding of educational sociology becomes a crucial foundation for efforts to develop an educational system that is increasingly inclusive, fair, and relevant to contemporary challenges (Mahardika, 2025).

## 2. Functions and Goals of Educational Sociology

The sociology of education has a very crucial function in understanding, explaining, and simultaneously critiquing educational phenomena that occur within society. From this perspective, education is seen not merely as an academic activity taking place in classrooms but as an integral part of the social structure that influences and is influenced by society. The main function of the sociology of education is to provide an analytical framework to understand the reciprocal relationship between educational institutions and social dynamics. Essentially, education reflects the values, norms, and interests of the society in which it operates, thus the sociology of education exists to reveal these social mechanisms (Rahardjo, 2020).

In addition to its analytical function, educational sociology also serves a descriptive function, namely providing factual explanations about how education takes place in a certain social context. This descriptive function is important for understanding the actual conditions of education, for instance concerning differences in access to education between urban and rural areas, or disparities in the quality of education between high and low socioeconomic groups. With a descriptive approach, educational sociology can show how social, economic, and cultural factors influence the educational process. These descriptive findings form the basis for developing more inclusive and equitable education policies (Mulyani & Pratama, 2021).

The critical function of educational sociology is also equally important. This science not only describes social conditions in education but also critiques injustices, inequalities, and biases that may occur within the educational system. Curricula that are too focused on dominant groups can result in the marginalization of other groups. In this context, educational sociology teaches how education can serve as a means of reproducing power structures while also providing opportunities for social change. Its critical function is to uncover injustices while opening avenues for improvement through social approaches (Utami, 2022).

Another function is the predictive function, where the sociology of education can help project the direction of educational development in the future based on ongoing social trends. Technological changes, globalization, and demographic dynamics of society present new challenges for the field of education. Through sociological analysis, it is possible to anticipate how the development of digital technology will impact teaching and learning interactions, or how globalization influences curricula and educational values. With this predictive function, the sociology of education serves as a planning tool that helps prepare society to face future challenges (Iskandar & Wulandari, 2023). In addition to these functions, the sociology of education also has practical functions in helping educators, policymakers, and society understand their roles within the education system. Teachers, for example, can use a sociological perspective to understand the diversity of students' backgrounds and how it affects the learning process. Policymakers can utilize educational sociology analysis to formulate policies that favor equitable access to education. Society in general can also understand how education functions as a means of enhancing

social mobility. These practical functions demonstrate that the sociology of education does not stop at the theoretical level, but also plays a tangible role in everyday life (Handayani, 2021).

The purpose of educational sociology cannot be separated from the functions it possesses. One of its main objectives is to understand how education plays a role in maintaining social order. Education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge, but also a mechanism for instilling social values that act as the glue of community cohesion. Through education, individuals are taught the norms, rules, and ethics that apply in society. Thus, education functions as a means of socialization, preparing the younger generation to become productive and responsible members of society (M. Hidayat & Lestari, 2020).

In addition to maintaining social order, the goal of educational sociology also includes efforts to create social transformation. Education based on sociological analysis not only adapts individuals to society but also provides space for fairer changes. Education is expected to be able to dismantle imbalanced social structures, such as gender inequality, ethnic discrimination, or economic disparities. The aim of this transformation is to make education a social change agent that can promote the creation of a more democratic and equitable society. In other words, educational sociology seeks to guide education so that it functions not only conservatively but also progressively (Kurniawan, 2022).

Another goal is to enhance students' critical awareness of social realities. Through the educational sociology approach, students are expected not only to master the lesson material but also to understand how the knowledge they learn relates to social issues around them. This critical awareness is important so that students do not merely become passive individuals who accept social structures as they are, but rather become agents capable of changing circumstances. Education with critical awareness allows for the emergence of a generation that is more caring, critical, and innovative in addressing social issues (A. Wijaya, 2023).

The sociology of education also aims to explain the role of educational institutions in social mobility. Education is often regarded as the main pathway to improving an individual's socio-economic status. However, in reality, not everyone has equal opportunities to benefit from education. Through sociological analysis, the aim of this study is to find strategies so that education can truly become an effective instrument of social mobility, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities. Fair and equitable education can pave the way for the creation of a more equal society (Suhartono, 2021).

Furthermore, the aim of educational sociology is to connect theory with practice so that education does not become trapped in a void. Sociological theories applied in education can help improve curricula, teaching methods, and even school management strategies. By integrating theory and practice, education can become increasingly relevant to societal interests. This is important so that the educational system does not merely produce graduates who master theory, but also individuals capable of contributing to solving real problems in society (Ramadhan, 2024).

The functions and objectives of educational sociology are closely interconnected. Analytical, descriptive, critical, predictive, and practical functions support the achievement of goals such as maintaining social order, promoting transformation, enhancing critical awareness, strengthening social mobility, and connecting theory with practice. Educational sociology is not merely an academic study but a discipline that provides direction and meaning for the implementation of education. A deep understanding of the functions and objectives of educational sociology is an important foundation for creating an educational system that is increasingly fair, inclusive, and adaptive to the development of the times (T. Nugraha, 2025).

### **3. Contemporary Theoretical Framework in Educational Sociology**

Theoretical developments in contemporary sociology of education indicate an increasing diversification of approaches that are more comprehensive in understanding the complexities of the relationship between education and social structure. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction remains the dominant framework for analyzing how educational systems perpetuate social inequality through the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and fields that interact in the reproduction of class structure (Stahl & Guanglun, 2022; Wicaksono, 2024). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has undergone significant adaptation in the digital era, where access to technology and digital literacy becomes a new form of cultural capital that influences educational opportunities and social mobility (Permata et al., 2024). This theory provides a deep understanding of how educational institutions, although seemingly neutral and meritocratic, actually reproduce and legitimize existing social hierarchies through selection mechanisms biased towards cultural capital dominant class (Siswadi, 2024).

#### **4. Critical and Transformative Perspectives in Education**

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy tradition has experienced revitalization in the context of contemporary educational challenges, particularly in facing the commodification of education and teaching labor (Misoczky, 2024). Freire's critical approach, which emphasizes education as a practice of liberation and social transformation, provides a theoretical alternative to the still-dominant 'banking' model in formal education systems (Govender, 2020; McLaren, 2020). The concept of conscientização (critical awareness) by Freire remains relevant in developing learners' critical awareness of social realities and their ability to transform oppressive structures (Budnyk et al., 2023). This approach emphasizes the importance of critical dialogue between educators and learners as a basis for developing emancipatory and contextually relevant educational praxis according to the social realities of the learners (A. E. Nugraha et al., 2024).

### **4. Digital Transformation and Its Sociological Impact on Education**

Digital transformation in education creates a new paradox in the sociology of education, where digital technology offers the potential for democratizing access to education while simultaneously deepening the digital divide that reflects broader social stratification (Sukmana et al., 2025). Educational digitalization is not a socially neutral phenomenon; rather, it is embedded in power dynamics and cultural relations that mirror existing social structures (Prihatin & Sutangsa, 2025). The digital divide emerging in the context of digital education shows how access to technology, connectivity, and digital literacy

becomes a new determinant in the reproduction of educational inequality, particularly affecting vulnerable groups with low income and education, the elderly, people with disabilities, and communities in remote areas (Hikmat, 2024).

Digital transformation in education has expanded the agenda of sociology of education with the emergence of a new dimension called the digital divide (Prihatin & Sutangsa, 2025). Digitalization brings great opportunities such as the use of artificial intelligence, online learning, and personalized learning, but it also deepens inequality due to disparities in infrastructure access, digital literacy, and the readiness of both students and educators (Sukmana et al., 2025). The challenges of digitalization are mainly related to limited infrastructure in remote and underdeveloped areas, low digital readiness of teachers, and the negative impact of reduced social interaction in online learning on the development of students' character and soft skills (Indrasari et al., 2024).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in this article is qualitative literature review (QLR), which is a literature study emphasizing critical analysis of various literature sources to identify trends, theoretical perspectives, and social dynamics in the topic of educational sociology. Unlike the systematic literature review that is based on systematic synthesis of all relevant literature using strict protocols, QLR focuses on interpretive examination of experiences, meanings, and arguments in diverse sources according to the researcher's perspective, thereby producing a deep understanding of educational, social, and cultural phenomena in society. This approach is often used to explore complex and multidimensional issues, as well as to reflect on contextual and subjective aspects that are not accessible through quantitative methodology (Stanley & Robertson, 2024; Susanto et al., 2024).

The research process began with a review of publications since 2020, using relevant keywords such as 'sociology of education,' 'educational inequality,' and 'social transformation.' The selected literature sources included empirical research results, review articles, and key reference books in the fields of educational sociology and multicultural education. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic coding approach to identify main themes and argumentative trends, as well as critical comparison and synthesis regarding the vision, concept development, and relevance of findings in the current Indonesian context (Abidin et al., 2023).

The QLR approach allows researchers to build a narrative synthesis across literature and generate new insights into the concepts, functions, and urgency of educational sociology in addressing digitalization challenges, educational inequality, and multiculturalism. This study emphasizes in-depth interpretation, theoretical reflection, and critical evaluation of the relevance of educational sociology to support more inclusive and responsive education system reforms in Indonesia. The validity of the qualitative literature review is strengthened through source triangulation, analysis processes, and discourse on current academic debates (Tilman et al., 2025).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Scope of Educational Sociology Study

The scope of the study of educational sociology is very broad because it involves the relationship between education and various social aspects in society. Education never stands alone as an institution but is always related to social structures, interactions among individuals and groups, and cultural dynamics. In this regard, educational sociology seeks to reveal how education functions in maintaining social order while also influencing social change. Thus, its scope includes various dimensions, ranging from social interactions in the classroom, the relationship between schools and the community, to the connection of education with the economic, political, and cultural systems expanding (Santoso, 2020).

One of the main areas in the sociology of education is social interaction in the educational environment. The teaching and learning process not only involves educators providing material and students receiving it, but it is also a complex social relationship. Social interactivity between educators and students, students with their classmates, and between the school and parents is an important factor in determining educational success. For example, a teacher's democratic communication style can enhance students' motivation to learn, while an authoritarian communication style can create distance and discomfort. The analysis of educational sociology helps to understand how these forms of interaction affect students' achievement and character (L. Rahmawati, 2021). The sociology of education also highlights the role of educational institutions in the social structure. Schools are not only places to acquire knowledge, but also important means of teaching social values and norms. Educational institutions are often considered secondary agents of socialization after the family, where children are introduced to formal rules, discipline, and certain social roles. In this context, schools also function as arenas for shaping students' social identities, both in terms of nationality, religion, and culture. This strategic role makes educational institutions significantly contribute to the formation of a civilized and cultured society (Suwandi, 2022).

Another area of study is the relationship between education and family. The family is the first social institution that forms the foundation of a child's behavior, values, and habits. Family support, whether in the form of attention, guidance, or economic conditions, greatly affects a child's success in education. Educational sociology examines how differences in family backgrounds, such as socioeconomic status, parents' education levels, and parenting styles, influence the access to and quality of education a child receives. These inequalities often become one of the causes of disparities in academic achievement among students (M. Putri & Saputra, 2023).

Besides family, the relationship between education and society also becomes an important focus. Education is not an activity that takes place in a vacuum, but is influenced by the surrounding social conditions. Societies that uphold educational values tend to have higher school participation rates compared to societies that still regard education as secondary. The sociology of education helps explain how norms, culture, and local traditions influence society's perception of education. For example, in some areas there is still a

perception that girls do not need to pursue higher education, leading to decreased school participation (Wibowo, 2020).

The scope of educational sociology also includes the relationship between education and the state and political system. The state plays a crucial role in determining the direction of education through policies, curricula, and regulations. In this context, education is not neutral; it often reflects the ideology adopted by a country. For example, the national curriculum is designed to instill national values while supporting economic development. Educational sociology examines how these policies impact social life, including whether they create equality or reinforce social inequalities (Hakim, 2021).

Another study is the relationship between education and social mobility. Education is often considered a means to improve a person's socio-economic status. However, in reality, education does not always succeed in providing upward mobility for all individuals. Economic, social, and cultural factors can limit a person's opportunities to fully benefit from education. From a sociological perspective, it can be seen how education can serve as an instrument of social mobility while also acting as a tool for reproducing inequality if access is not equitable. This has become one of the important themes within the scope of educational sociology studies (Nasution, 2022).

The scope of the sociology of education also includes school culture. Each school has a unique culture, consisting of values, habits, unwritten rules, and symbols that develop within it. This school culture affects the behavior patterns of students and teachers and creates a collective identity. For example, a school that emphasizes a culture of discipline and hard work will produce students with different characters compared to a school that emphasizes creativity and freedom. Educational sociology analysis can help understand how school culture is formed, maintained, and influences student development (Herlina & Fauzan, 2023).

Social issues in education are also part of the scope of this study. Gender inequality, ethnic discrimination, disparities in access between urban and rural areas, as well as the influence of globalization are some of the issues that need to be understood through the perspective of educational sociology. For instance, globalization brings new challenges in the form of international education standards that are often difficult for schools in underdeveloped areas to meet. This creates a widening gap. By examining these issues, educational sociology can provide insights to build an education system that is increasingly inclusive and adaptive to the progress of the times (Mardiana, 2024).

Perkembangan teknologi digital juga menjadi bagian dari ruang lingkup kajian sosiologi pendidikan. Digital transformation in education has changed the way teachers and students interact, learning methods, and access to information. However, digitalization also creates a new gap, namely the digital divide between students who have access to technology and those who do not. The sociology of education examines the social impact of this phenomenon, including how technology shapes interaction patterns, expands or limits learning opportunities, and affects the identity of the younger generation. Thus, the scope

of the sociology of education now increasingly includes the digital world (Yusuf, 2025).

The scope of study in the sociology of education encompasses various aspects, ranging from social interactions in education, the role of educational institutions in the social structure, the relationship of education with family, society, and the state, social mobility, school culture, to global issues such as inequality and digitalization. This broad scope shows that education is a complex social phenomenon, so understanding it requires a comprehensive sociological approach. Awareness of this broad scope is important to ensure that educational practices can be designed more fairly, relevantly, and responsively to the challenges of modern society (Dewi, 2023).<sup>2</sup> The Urgency of the Sociology of Education in Life

Educational sociology in modern life has increasing urgency in line with dynamic and complex social changes. Education is no longer seen merely as a means of obtaining knowledge but also as a strategic force in shaping social orders that are more adaptive to the times. Through the perspective of educational sociology, education is understood as a social process that includes interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions in shaping identity, values, and social structures. In this context, the urgency of educational sociology lies in its ability to explain how education functions as an agent of change relevant to the challenges of modernity (R. Hidayat, 2021). Modern life is characterized by technological developments, globalization, and high social mobility. These changes create new challenges for the world of education, especially regarding access gaps, and quality of learning, as well as the influence of global culture on local values. Educational sociology helps explain this dynamic by positioning education as a space of social interaction that reflects the tension between tradition and modernity. Education becomes a field where global values meet local culture, and the role of educational sociology is to understand and guide this integration process so as not to damage national identity (D. Rahmawati, 2022). Education in modern society is also confronted with the phenomenon of social stratification. Access to quality education is often determined by economic status and social background. This creates disparities in broader social opportunities, such as employment and class mobility. Through educational sociology analysis, it can be explained that schools are not only academic institutions but also arenas of social reproduction where existing social structures are maintained or even reinforced. Therefore, the urgency of educational sociology is to provide a critical understanding of how the education system can be more inclusive in reducing social inequality (Syafuddin, 2023). Modernization also demands that education becomes a driving force for social transformation. Education must be able to produce individuals who are not only technically skilled but also possess high social awareness. Educational sociology emphasizes that the success of education is not solely measured by academic achievement, but also by the extent to which education is able to instill values of solidarity, justice, and social care. In other words, the urgency of educational sociology is to ensure that education can shape a generation that is critical and responsible for the social problems around them (P. Wijaya, 2020).

In the digital era, educational sociology also plays an important role in understanding the impact of technology on the educational process. The digitalization of education brings great opportunities, such as unlimited learning access through the internet, but it also creates new gaps for groups that do not have adequate access to technology. Educational sociology analysis is needed to examine how these digital gaps affect the equality of learning opportunities. With a comprehensive understanding, educational policies can be directed so that the use of technology truly supports the equal distribution of education quality (Pratama, 2021).

The urgency of educational sociology is also evident in efforts to maintain social integration amid the plurality of modern society. Today's society is increasingly diverse in terms of religion, culture, and ethnicity. Education serves as a primary instrument in developing tolerance and social cohesion. Through the approach of educational sociology, it can be studied how schools as social institutions play a strategic role in shaping multicultural awareness among students. Without this approach, education tends to focus solely on the transfer of knowledge and neglects its important function in fostering social harmony (Hasanah, 2022).

In addition to social integration, the challenges of globalization also demand that education be able to prepare a generation capable of competing internationally without losing cultural identity. Educational sociology highlights the importance of balancing globally-based competency education with the instillation of local values. Education should not fall into global homogenization that ignores local wisdom; rather, it should be a platform where national identity is maintained while being contextualized in an increasingly connected world. The urgency of educational sociology here is to provide direction for education so that it is not only globally adaptive but also remains rooted in the nation's values (Munandar, 2023).

Educational sociology in modern life also serves as a means of critical reflection on the educational policies implemented by the government. Every educational policy, whether in curriculum, evaluation systems, or equitable access, always has broad social impacts. By using the perspective of educational sociology, these policies can be evaluated not only in terms of academic effectiveness but also their implications for social justice, distribution of opportunities, and the quality of community life. Thus, the urgency of educational sociology is to provide critical input to ensure that educational policies truly favor the wider society (Rohman, 2024).

Another equally important urgency is the role of the sociology of education in fostering critical awareness among society regarding the role of education itself. In modern life, people are often trapped in the pragmatic view that education merely serves as a pathway to obtaining a job. The sociology of education exists to remind us that education is essentially a humanization process that shapes individuals to live meaningfully within society. Education is not merely a tool for economic mobility but also a means to uphold human values and civilization (M. Sari, 2020).

The urgency of educational sociology in modern life can be summarized as an effort to make education a social force oriented towards justice, solidarity, and humanity. Education must be understood as a space of dialectics between the individual and society, between the local and the global, and between tradition and modernity. Educational sociology provides an analytical framework to view education not only as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a social practice that determines the direction of civilization. Therefore, the more complex the challenges of modern life, the greater the urgency of educational sociology in guiding the educational process so that it remains relevant and meaningful for human life (Fauzi, 2021).

### **3. The Dynamics of Educational Equality in the Perspective of Contemporary Sociology**

Contemporary educational sociology analysis reveals that the issue of educational equity in education is experiencing increasing complexity in the modern era (Rahmat et al., 2025). Educational equity is no longer simply understood as equal access, but rather encompasses a multifaceted dimension including the distribution of resources, learning opportunities, and equitable educational outcomes (Suna & Özer, 2021). Socioeconomic achievement gaps remain a significant structural challenge, where students from high socioeconomic status families consistently demonstrate better academic performance compared to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Smith & Gümüş, 2022). This phenomenon indicates that the education system, although designed with the principle of meritocracy, in practice tends to reproduce pre-existing social inequalities (Cabral-Gouveia et al., 2023).

Mechanisms of reproducing inequality in education operate through three main pathways identified in contemporary research. First, the effect on inequality in learning outcomes occurs when manifestations of different teaching or school factors result in varying levels of inequality in learning outcomes (Cao et al., 2025; Dipendra et al., 2025). Second, differentially effective learning opportunities arise when the same learning opportunities produce different learning outcomes for students from diverse family backgrounds (Ramsook et al., 2020; Venker et al., 2021). Third, different learning opportunities occur when students from different family backgrounds systematically experience different learning opportunities at school (Cai et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2021). Understanding these mechanisms becomes crucial for the sociology of education in developing effective intervention strategies to reduce educational gaps. Educational inequality in Indonesia is still driven by economic, geographical, and human resource disparities between regions (Pugu & Elmiwati, 2025). Differences in the allocation of educational resources, teacher competencies, and access to technology widen the quality gap between urban schools and those in suburban and rural areas (D. Y. Putri et al., 2025). Although national policies such as "Merdeka Belajar" have begun to show positive effects on increasing school participation rates and reducing illiteracy, uneven implementation means that educational attainment for marginalized groups still lags significantly (Calista et al., 2025). Efforts to enhance teacher capacity and equitable resource distribution must be intensified so that the education system is more responsive to students' needs from various social backgrounds (T. N. Sari & Jasiah, 2025). Digital

transformation in education during the pandemic has actually highlighted how serious the issues of access and digital literacy gaps are in Indonesia (Imaduddin & Firdaus, 2025). The effects of the digital divide on online learning implementation, where students in less developed areas and from low-income families are almost three times more vulnerable to academic setbacks (Miras et al., 2023). The hierarchical relationship between device access, digital literacy, usage patterns, and academic achievement shows that online learning interventions are only effective if supported by active and critical communication and digital content skills (Christanti et al., 2024). Addressing the digital divide in education must focus on strengthening digital literacy comprehensively and supporting community-based digital solutions so that educational outcomes become more equitable (Yaqin et al., 2023).

#### **4. Social Capital and Educational Transformation in the Digital Era**

The concept of social capital in educational sociology has undergone significant redefinition in the face of digital transformation and contemporary social structure changes (Mikiewicz, 2021). Social capital in the context of education refers to resources embedded in social networks that can be accessed and utilized by educational actors to achieve specific goals. Recent research identifies two main conceptualizations of social capital: individual social capital, which focuses on individual-based social networks, and collective social capital, which emphasizes norms, trust, and shared values within a community (Auer et al., 2020). In the educational context, individual social capital has been shown to have a significant influence on educational aspirations, teacher resilience, and the professional development of educators (Coppe et al., 2022)..

The structure of social capital in education includes structural components and processes that operate at the family and school levels. Family social capital includes parents' expectations for their children's education, the frequency of discussions about college, and parental involvement in school activities (Yunita et al., 2025). School social capital consists of the composition of the student body, school size, parental involvement in school organizations, students' access to teachers outside of class, and the number of organizations in which students participate. Students who perceive that their parents expect them to continue to college and who have more frequent discussions with their parents about higher education exhibit significantly higher educational aspirations (Usman et al., 2024). These findings confirm the crucial role of social capital in shaping individuals' educational trajectories beyond sociodemographic factors (Sadriani, 2025).

#### **5. Cultural Reproduction and Digital Transformation in Education**

Bourdieu-style social reproduction remains highly relevant in the Indonesian context, especially in elite and middle-ranking schools. Differences in the cultural capital possessed by families, including ownership of technology, knowledge, and networks, provide hidden advantages in academic competition, causing the schooling system to tend to reinforce social class polarization (Wicaksono, 2024). Symbolic pedagogy and implicit communication in schools contribute to transmitting the norms and expectations of the dominant class, both explicitly through the curriculum and through informal interactions between

teachers and students (Wooten, 2024). This analysis aligns with findings that distinguish between the 'equalization' and 'reproduction' effects in the education system: as long as access to and use of cultural capital are not massively and structurally intervened, the potential of education as a driver of social mobility remains limited (Payne, 2023).

The digital era has introduced a new dimension in the dynamics of cultural reproduction within the education system, challenging the traditional paradigms of educational sociology (Normand, 2023). Cultural reproduction in the digital context is no longer limited to the transmission of traditional cultural capital such as language, cognitive skills, or value orientations, but also includes digital capital, comprising access to technology, digital literacy, and the ability to navigate virtual spaces (Spilipoulou et al., 2025). Cultural identity in the digital era undergoes a transformation characterized by a more flexible and unrestricted environment, allowing individuals to express themselves more freely, while simultaneously presenting new challenges such as intercultural conflict and dehumanization that can affect emotions and personal identity (R. D. Putri et al., 2024).

Digital transformation in education creates a paradox in cultural reproduction, where digital media such as films, music, and games play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity, while the preservation of cultural identity in online communities is ensured through complex interactions between various elements (Backer & Cairns, 2021). Contemporary educational sociology identifies that the process of digitalization has influenced how individuals understand, communicate, and value cultural identity (Williamson, 2021). Although digital technology offers opportunities to strengthen and expand cultural identities in an increasingly connected global society, new challenges arise related to digital identity security and identity management in ever-evolving environments (Harnadi et al., 2021; Sarvianto, 2020).

## **6. Education Intervention and Justice Programs: A Sociological Perspective**

Contemporary educational sociology research shows that intervention programs such as After-School Programs (ASPs) play a strategic role in reducing educational disparities and promoting equity (Philp & Gill, 2020). ASPs have been proven effective in replacing shadow education as a means to enhance educational equity, with the total school impact reaching 74.06% compared to the total family effect of 25.94% (Lester et al., 2020). These findings indicate that school-based interventions have a greater potential to address educational disparities compared to interventions that rely solely on family cultural capital (Aurini et al., 2020). ASP programs operate through complex mechanisms, combining family cultural capital with school investment to produce more equitable educational outcomes (Olive et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of intervention programs in the context of educational equality is also influenced by teaching factors and the structure of the programs offered. Teachers' academic support and the formation of heterogeneous groups in the classroom have been shown to reduce socioeconomic achievement gaps in academic performance (Radulović et al., 2022). Conversely, open and partly bound all-day school programs tend to reinforce socioeconomic gaps compared

to half-day schools, possibly because students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds participate more frequently in extended-day programs (Wiggin et al., 2021). These findings highlight the importance of program design that is sensitive to equality in the implementation of educational policies (Trinidad, 2024).

### **7. Theoretical and Methodological Challenges in Contemporary Educational Sociology**

The effectiveness of intervention programs in the context of educational equality is also influenced by teaching factors and the structure of the programs offered. Teachers' academic support and the formation of heterogeneous groups in the classroom have been shown to reduce socioeconomic achievement gaps in academic performance (Radulović et al., 2022). Conversely, open and partly bound all-day school programs tend to reinforce socioeconomic gaps compared to half-day schools, possibly because students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds participate more frequently in extended-day programs (Wiggin et al., 2021). These findings highlight the importance of program design that is sensitive to equality in the implementation of educational policies (Trinidad, 2024).

### **8. Theoretical and Methodological Challenges in Contemporary Educational Sociology**

Other methodological challenges arise in the context of digital education research, where traditional data collection and analysis methods may not fully capture the nuances of social interactions occurring in virtual spaces (Prokazina, 2024). Digital ethnography, virtual participant observation, and computational social science approaches are becoming increasingly important in the methodological toolkit of educational sociology (Boronski & Hassan, 2020). Integrating technology with the processes of knowing and learning as a cultural transformation requires the formulation and implementation of innovative research strategies (Young, 2020). This indicates that educational sociology not only needs to adapt its research objects but also the way of conducting its studies to remain relevant with the times.

### **9. Implications and Improvement Strategies**

Globalization has created new challenges for the sociology of education in understanding how national education systems interact with international education standards, values, and practices (Anton & Jamilah, 2024). Educational globalization creates tension between the homogenization of the global curriculum and the need to maintain local cultural identity and traditional values. In the Indonesian context, the challenges of multiculturalism in education become increasingly complex due to the pressure to adopt international education standards while still accommodating the ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity that characterizes Indonesian society (Ariya & Ismail, 2025). In this regard, the sociology of education plays an important role in analyzing how multicultural education policies can be effectively implemented without creating social fragmentation or the dominance of certain cultures (Simon & Downes, 2020).

Strengthening multicultural education has also become an important aspect in contemporary educational sociology literature. Multicultural education strives to build social integration in pluralistic societies, foster tolerant attitudes, and mitigate identity-based conflict potential (Gollnick & Chinn, 2021). Educational sociology also highlights the importance of curriculum renewal, the development of teacher competencies in the context of diversity, and efforts to transform post-pandemic education policies to be more just, inclusive, and adaptive to socio-cultural changes and global digital challenges (Afkarina et al., 2024).

The functionalist perspective in the sociology of education, rooted in the thought of Émile Durkheim, has undergone reformulation to respond to the complexities of modern society characterized by high social differentiation and increasingly sophisticated specialization (Malik & Malik, 2022). Contemporary functionalist theory emphasizes the role of education in developing human capital and facilitating an efficient division of labor in a knowledge-based economy (Ballantine et al., 2021). However, criticisms of the functionalist approach indicate that this theory tends to overlook structural conflicts and the reproduction of inequalities inherent in the education system, thus requiring integration with critical perspectives to provide a more comprehensive analysis (Nickerson, 2024).

Contemporary educational sociology faces various emerging issues that require innovative theoretical and methodological frameworks, including the impact of climate change on education, education in the post-truth era, the influence of artificial intelligence on learning, and the challenges of inclusive education for marginalized groups (Calhoun et al., 2022; Romero, 2020). Social acceptance of digital transformation in education is a major challenge involving complex negotiations among various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, parents, and students (Carter, 2024). Future educational sociology needs to develop theoretical sensitivity to the intersectionality of social identities, post-pandemic recovery dynamics in education, and the implications of demographic changes on the education system in order to remain relevant in understanding and guiding sustainable educational transformation (Beckert & Suckert, 2021; Suckert, 2022).

The Indonesian education problem map demands improvement strategies that not only focus on equalizing physical and digital access, but also strengthen social and cultural capital within school communities (Vega et al., 2025). International and national study recommendations highlight the need for collaboration among the government, schools, communities, and the business sector to develop interventions based on digital literacy, personal mentorship, and local resource empowerment (Sholichah et al., 2025). Enhancing learning quality through teacher training, strengthening community participation, and educational technology innovation is the main key to making education transformation in Indonesia more inclusive and effective in the long term (Widiastuti, 2025).

## CONCLUSIONS

The sociology of education remains a discipline that is highly relevant for understanding the complex relationship between educational processes and social structures in modern society, especially in the era of digital transformation and dynamic multiculturalism. This study emphasizes that education is not merely a transmission of knowledge, but also a space for the reproduction and transformation of values, norms, and societal culture. Education plays a role not only in individual development but also in reinforcing or changing existing social structures, including the mechanisms of reproducing social inequalities through cultural and social capital.

Findings in this literature review show that the issue of educational equality remains a major challenge, where socio-economic disparities significantly affect access, opportunities, and educational outcomes. The mechanisms of reproducing inequality occur through various channels, ranging from the quality of teaching, learning opportunities, to differences in family access and social capital. Therefore, the sociology of education must continue to identify subtle mechanisms that reinforce injustice in the education system and seek strategies to address them.

Studies on social capital in the context of education emphasize the importance of social networks, norms, and collective values in shaping students' aspirations and educational success. Family and school social capital greatly influence the provision of essential emotional, academic, and social support for student development. Digital transformation opens new dimensions for social capital but simultaneously widens the gap through the emergence of the digital divide, which requires special attention in education policy. Furthermore, cultural reproduction in the digital era shows that cultural identity undergoes significant changes due to interactions with technology and digital media. This process creates both opportunities and new challenges in maintaining cultural diversity and building inclusive identities in educational spaces. Digital transformation requires innovative theoretical and practical approaches so that education can respond to social needs Contemporary without sacrificing local cultural values and social inclusivity. The importance of school-based intervention programs, such as After-School Programs, is highlighted as an effective mechanism to reduce educational gaps. These programs can offset disparities in family cultural capital and provide more equitable learning opportunities. However, program design must be sensitive to social and economic contexts so as not to exacerbate existing gaps.

This study also highlights conceptual and methodological challenges in contemporary educational sociology research, particularly related to the understanding of social capital and the digitalization processes in education. Qualitative research approaches, digital ethnography, and other innovative methods are highly recommended to capture the complexity of educational experiences full of social and technological dynamics. The validity and relevance of educational sociology research heavily depend on adapting theories and methodologies to rapidly changing contexts.

Overall, this article reinforces the position of educational sociology as a key discipline for analyzing and providing solutions to complex and multidimensional educational problems in the modern era. Social, cultural, and technological transformations demand that educational sociology serve not only as a static analytical tool but also as a dynamic instrument in supporting equitable and inclusive educational reforms.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Education Policy:** The government and education stakeholders need to develop proactive policies to reduce educational disparities, particularly by strengthening support for vulnerable groups through school intervention programs such as After-School Programs and the utilization of social capital in local communities. Policies should also address the challenges of digital transformation by ensuring equitable access to technology and digital literacy.
2. **Curriculum Development and Multicultural Education:** Integrating multicultural values and digital literacy into the curriculum is crucial so that education can serve as a means of strengthening cultural identity while connecting to the global community. Education should be designed to be inclusive, respecting diversity and preventing the dominance of any particular culture.
3. **Further Research:** In-depth qualitative research is needed using innovative methods such as digital ethnography to capture the subjective experiences of students and educators in an ever-changing educational environment. Research must also focus on the relationship between social and digital capital in educational success as well as the mechanisms of reproducing inequality in local contexts.
4. **Strengthening Educator Capacity:** Training and professional development programs for educators should include sociological aspects related to social capital, digital dynamics, and cultural sensitivity so that educators can play an effective role in modern and diverse educational contexts.
5. **Evaluation of Intervention Programs:** Governments and educational institutions need to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of educational intervention programs from a sociological perspective, ensuring that their design and implementation truly address the challenges of equity and educational inclusivity.
6. **Multi-stakeholder Collaboration:** The success of educational reform requires collaboration between the government, schools, families, civil society, and the technology sector to integrate social, cultural, and technological resources in order to create an education system that is responsive to complex social needs.
7. **Development of Theory and Methodology:** Academics are encouraged to continuously develop theoretical frameworks and educational sociology methodologies that are adaptive to changes in social, technological, and cultural trends so that educational sociology studies remain relevant both theoretically and practically.

## FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so that further research is needed on the topic of Relevance and Transformation of Educational Sociology: A Review of the Relationship Between Education and Social Structure to perfect this research to increase insight for readers and writers.

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