



Contact Email for November 2018

What you need to learn to be an Applied Sociologist

The 19th century produced three new disciplines that dealt with aspects of life and society. Sociology, Psychology and Economics, the last 2 have massive organisations outside academia as well as inside. Sociology, at least in Australia, never wanted to grow an organisation of sociologists practicing outside academia. They told themselves they wanted to keep the subject pure. One conference when we were SAANZ, we had a guest speaker from the UK, who told us he was very proud that his University would only allow sociology to be studied by Ph.D. students because it was too dangerous for undergraduates.

What has happened in Australia has been that it only encourages those who might go on to study for a Ph.D. When I ask young graduates in the community about sociology, they tell me it is the most boring subject they had to study.

Which means there are no graduates eager to get out and set up a Sociology Business on the High Street. The consequence is that when governments decided that universities had to be profitable, Sociology was one of the easy departments to reduce, because it was not seen as being profitable, nor did its graduates produce jobs.

What will make it difficult to introduce an applied curriculum is that you have got to teach people that what you do with your sociology outside of a University is very different to the way you approach things in a university.

When you write a report you do not follow the requirements of academia, they want to see plenty of citations, quotes and comments on previous work on the subject, and so on. The applied sociologist has been employed by someone in the business world or the public service. They have given you the opportunity to solve a problem for them. What they want from you is your assessment of the problem and one or more ways of solving it. They don't want citations, or quotes from other people. They have employed you, to write the report which will solve their problem. This may also involve telling them about one or more other problems which they didn't know or didn't want to know about.

However, what it also means is that you know your sociology to the extent that you don't have to look up what this or that popular scholar has said. You still keep an eye on the academic research. However, you have to explain from your study of the problem, how you, from your knowledge of sociology and other things in general, how you would solve the problem. It is your work, built up on how you understand your sociology and your experience and knowledge of the world. That is what being a professional is all about. You don't need to show who you have read, you will get no credit for quotations, they will only get in the way.

Universities tell their students to take no notice of research done outside of academia. However, they need to look at what happens to the forged data that originates in academia and real data that they don't want to hear about. But they don't want to talk about that.

Applied sociology is not an aberration; it is the only way forward, to help humanity live together, work together. We are needed in the community, every community so get out there and make sociology as strong and as powerful as Psychology and Economics so that you can show how communities can begin to work and live together in harmony.

Alan Scott, *Continuing Education Officer*