

Unit 8

Education and Socialization

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to comprehend the:

- meaning and process of socialization;
- manner in which family as an agent of socialization influences children's response to school experiences;
- implications of peer group socialization on school processes; and
- relationship between caste, socialization and education.

8.1 Introduction

Children in society differ from each other in terms of their gender, family, social environment, class, caste and racial backgrounds. They are exposed to different child rearing practices that are known to have an indelible impact on their personality and cognitive abilities. These differences among children influence and are themselves influenced by classroom processes in a manner which reinforces differences among them facilitating learning among students from a favourable background and at the same time, inhibiting learning among those from a relatively disadvantaged background. Here we discuss the processes of education and socialization in traditional families. In this unit we seek to understand the manner in which differential socialization practices and patterns in a society shape people's self-concept and personality, thereby leading to differential educational experiences in schools. The differences which the students carry from their homes to the classrooms have an important bearing on their performance and achievement levels in education. In the next Unit we will explore how education brings about social change and how social change influences education.

8.2 Understanding Socialization

Socialization is a term which one often comes across in the writings on sociology of education. What exactly does it mean? Socialization is a process, whereby people acquire the attitudes, values and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture. Eskimo children, for example, learn to enjoy eating the raw intestines of birds and fish, while Chinese children learn to relish the stomach tissue of pigs. Just reading about these things may make us a little uncomfortable because unlike these people, we have not been

socialized to appreciate such food. Again, girls in India are socialized to walk, eat, talk and behave in a specific manner. They are encouraged to be quiet, docile, gentle and submissive. Boys on the other hand, are rewarded for their independent and assertive behaviour. So socialization is all about being in tune with what society expects from us depending on our age, gender, and social background.

Socialization occurs through human interaction. We learn a great deal from our family members, best friends, teachers and all those for whom we nurture affection and respect other. We also learn, though to a limited extent, from the people on the street, characters, portrayals, and depictions of characters in films and magazines and other sources. By interacting with people, as well as through our own observations, we learn how to behave 'properly' and what to expect from others if we follow (or challenge) society's norms and values. Socialization affects the overall cultural practices of a society, and also shapes the perception that we develop of ourselves. In other words, socialization refers to the process whereby the 'biological child' acquires a specific 'cultural identity', and learns to respond to such an identity. The basic agencies of socialization in contemporary societies are the family, peer group and the school. It is through these agencies and in particular through their relationship with each other, that the various orderings of society are made manifest.

Just as we learn a game by playing it, so we learn life by engaging in it; we are socialized in the course of participating in social processes ourselves. If we are not tutored in manners, for example we learn 'appropriate' manners through the mistakes that we make and the disapproval that others display. Education (here referring to instruction) is only one part of the socialization process; it is not, and can never be, the whole of that process. Socialization has wide ranging implications. People may be socialized into groups of which they already are members or into groups to which they wish to become attached. It is not a process, which takes place merely in early childhood, it takes place throughout life. In short, socialization refers to the social learning process in all its complexity. The specific knowledge, skills and dispositions required to make a child, 'a more or less able member of the society' may be defined somewhat differently by different analysts. There would be little disagreement, however, that cognitive skills and the skill to build and maintain social relations are central to this process. Families contribute to the motivation and cognitive skills exhibited by their children not only when they enter the educational system but throughout their school experience. It is equally apparent that the kinds of experience a child has with the peer group significantly affect cognitive and social skills, and academic motivation.

8.3 Socialization and Formal Education

Both socialization and education involve selective learning, which implies systematic reinforcement of certain behaviour patterns and roles as also the inhibition of others. Socialization consists of progressive learning of a series of roles. Distinctions between the process of socialization and education can be hypothesized on a general basis. Socialization is mostly an unconscious, subjective process, rooted in the primary or basic institutions of society, while education is a conscious endeavour which is purposive in nature and connected with secondary institutions of socialization. The contrast between industrial and pre-industrial societies serves to bring out the changing place of education within the socialization process. In the pre-industrial societies, the vast bulk of learning was done through socialization and not through formal education. The individual learnt largely by participation in work, the family, religion and so on although some instructions were imparted during such an activity. In some cases, education was also imparted in the form of apprenticeship, i.e., the individual learnt by the side of the practitioner.

In an highly industrialized society the situation is different. Not only do individuals receive a deliberate and definite set of instruction for a long period of time continuously and consistently, not only do they receive specialized instruction in a particular task or occupation, they also receive a broad and general education in several of basic skills (reading, writing and counting) and they are instructed on matters not directly relevant to any occupation. Such instruction is not given by a practitioner, but by a person, whose occupation is a specialized one: a person whose occupation is to educate.

In an industrial society education is differentiated from other aspects of socialization to a greater extent than in a non-industrialized society. In a sociological sense, the term differentiation refers to the extent to which one activity, role, institution, or organization is separated from others. Education prepares people for increasingly specialized roles. The higher the level of education a person receives, the more specialized that education becomes. A child's education is geared to providing basic familiarity with literacy skills. In each subsequent year, the focus of education in schools narrows down to particular themes and subject areas. In secondary school, a child specializes in two or three subjects, sometimes only in specific domains within these subjects. At the University, level this specialization increases to an extent that the most educated person receives a doctorate (considered the highest degree) for knowing more about an even smaller portion of a subject.

In the informal process of socialization, the social skills and values learnt through interaction with family members, peer and other social groups are those that are largely useful in mundane life. They enable an individual to deal with a range of people and situations, which he/she is likely to encounter in his/her life. Though we have spoken of formal education as being differentiated from other forms of socialization, there is considerable overlap in the influence of the various aspects of socialization. Since learning in all its forms is primarily a social phenomenon (where interaction with others is the main method of transmitting information), it is not surprising that the learning of technical skills also involves the learning of values and social skills. The fact that children learn values and social skills from teachers and the peer group at school as well as from family member and friends implies that these agents of socialization could be competing with each other in exercising influence over the child. If family members and friends emphasize values that are different from those that the child learns at school, then the child may face special problems in adapting to both school and home. Throughout our lives, we are exposed to conflicting and complementary influences. If we put education within the broader perspective of socialization, it would be possible to understand the problems that often emerge in the course of schooling. Education cannot be isolated from its social context primarily because it is only one among the many influences that determine what a child learns even at school.

In most contemporary societies, education is imparted through a large and highly complex formal organization. This organization is a formal one because it has a set of clearly established goals, a definite structure and procedures for reaching specific goals. Education is thus not only deliberate instruction, but organized instruction as well. A student does not merely respond to the formal knowledge presented by the teacher, lecturer and textbook. He/She also responds to the informal patterns of relations and expectations that develop within the student body and between a teacher and a student. It is this interaction between formal and informal aspects of education that distinguishes education (which is organized) from other aspects of socialization.

Reflection and Action 8.1

Bring out the major differences between the processes of socialization and formal education.

8.4 Education as a Social System

In the context of education, 'social system' refers to the internal organization and processes of education analyzed as a coherent unit which is distinguishable from other aspects of society. Education cannot be divorced from its social setting because those engaged in education are also the ones who carry with them the symbols and orientations that identify them as members belonging to distinct sections of society. Children bring with them a certain culture. They have learnt certain patterns of speech, certain habits and certain orientations to life from their family and neighborhood. Children do not drop their accent or style of dress soon after entering a school. These are often subtle yet deeply ingrained. Social background is relevant to the analysis of the relationship between education and socialization because it orients a child to enter into certain patterns of association, or to have certain responses to the school. Social background, however, is not the only factor. Peer relationships are equally important.

Children develop a set of relations among themselves and their teachers in school. Factors that contribute to the manner in which these relations develop are, the division of school into classes, extra-curricular activities in school, grading of pupils between and within classes, the attitudes of teachers, the values emphasized by headmasters and teachers, and the social background of pupils. These factors place a pupil in a set of social relations that establish him/her in a particular position in the school. It may encourage a child to succeed in accordance with the set goals of the school. This position may also contribute to a child's failure. Any educational organization that ranks and differentiates students is likely to raise 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. Irrespective of their intelligence in comparison with children in other classes or other schools, those who do not rise high are likely to be treated by other pupils and teachers as slow or stupid. Unfortunately, over a period of time the pupils come to believe this leading to considerable decline in self-esteem.

Let us now discuss those factors outside the school which significantly affect a child's performance in school.

8.5 Family, Socialization and Education

The family is an institution most closely associated with the process of socialization. Obviously, one of its primary functions is the care and rearing of children. We undergo the process of socialization first as infants living in families and later as we grow up, attend school, and office. It is here that we develop a sense of 'self' and personal identity.

In this section, we focus on the process by which failures (during both pre-school and school years) influence a child's responses to school experiences. In an extensive body of literature on family relations, it has been reported that particular types of parent child-interaction patterns (in particular, inductive control) appear to be most conducive to the development of socially competent behaviour in children.

Box 8.1: Family in relation to the School Class

"The school age child, of course, continues to live in the parental household and to be highly dependent emotionally as well as instrumentally, on his parents. But he is now spending several hours a day away from home subject to a discipline and a reward system which are essentially independent of that administered by the parents. Moreover, the range of this independence gradually increases. As he grows older, he is permitted to range further territorially with neither parental nor school supervision, and to do an increasing range of things. He often gets an allowance for

personal spending and begins to earn some money of his own. Generally, however, the emotional problem of dependence - independence continues to be a very salient one through this period, frequently with manifestations by the child of compulsive independence" (Parsons [orig. 1959] 1985:59).

Socially competent behaviour encompasses a range of socially valued behaviours and characteristics, including cognitive development, internal locus of control, instrumental competence and conformity to parental standards. The confluence model of intellectual development (Zajonc and Markus 1975) adds a contextual dimension to the basic socialization theory. It is argued that intelligence in children is increased to the extent that they are able to interact with persons more mature than themselves. Thus, the younger siblings a child has, the more the child interacts with less mature persons. Consequently, less intellectual development may be expected. The reverse of this is also true. The child's intellect is seen as a function of the average of the intellect of his/her family members. Since this view emphasizes the importance of verbal interaction it would be expected that verbal intelligence would be affected more than non-verbal intelligence.

Another factor which influences the child's experience in school is more direct, involving parents' visits to the school, explanations of the child's experience at school, help in completing child's homework and so on. Epstein (1983) followed older children from VIII to IX grade in order to assess the effect(s) of the nature of social relations they encounter at home and in the school. Both home and school experiences were assessed on the basis of the degree of the child's participation in decision-making. Those in which there is greater participation by the child were viewed as more democratic. It was reported that democratic patterns in both family and school increase the degree of independence shown by students; are associated with greater positive attitude towards school; and are associated with higher school grades. It is clear that families influence the educational process in two ways, (i) they provide the kind of interpersonal stimulation that leads to development in the child of characteristics that are functional in a school setting; and (ii) they guide, coach, explain, encourage and intercede on behalf of their children in reference to the school experience. They clearly help children to 'acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their (schools) society'.

8.6 Social Class, Socialization and Education

There is no denying that it is very difficult to separate social class from family as a factor in influencing socialization. All the factors discussed in this Unit—family, peer group, gender, class, race and caste — are interrelated and interact with each one other in a number of ways. The social class to which a student belongs has an important bearing on the patterns of child rearing, language and socialization, and in turn, education in school and beyond it. Hence, the issue of social class and its relationship with family socialization and its implications on the schooling process needs to be understood in detail. One writer who has persistently pointed out the importance of social class in understanding educational opportunity, educational attainment and patterns of inequality is A.H. Halsey (1961). He has argued that liberal policy makers "failed to notice that the major determinants of educational attainment were not schoolmasters but social situations, not curriculum but motivation, not formal access to the school but support in the family and the community".

In this context, an understanding of the terms, 'material disadvantage' and 'cultural disadvantage' becomes extremely significant. In a classic longitudinal study, Douglas (1964) made reference to the importance of the material conditions of the home from which children came, particularly the importance

of housing, which included the size and number of rooms, the degree of overcrowding, the sharing of beds and position of other household amenities, which, it was explained, were associated with lower ability and attainment. It was also argued that the impact of family size on attainment was such that there was a decline in measured ability with each increase in family size. Indeed, it was found that this was related more to manual working class homes than to middle class homes. Among the middle class children, boys from a family of four or more were considered to be disadvantaged. Several other material factors such as health, conditions of work and unemployment have been pointed out by researchers as having a definite impact on educational attainment.

A concept introduced in the 1960s was that of 'cultural deprivation' which was used to explain failure of pupils in schools (Reissman 1962). Children, who were culturally deprived came from homes where there were not only material disadvantages but also cultural disadvantages in terms of the attitudes and values that were transmitted to them. Douglas (1964) found that parental encouragement was the most important single factor that accounted for the improvement of a child's test scores between the ages 8-11 years. This was confirmed by the Plowden Committee (Central Advisory Council for Education, London, 1967), when it found associations between social classes and the initiative, interest, support and encouragement given by parents to children's schoolwork. In addition, they confirmed that a more favourable attitude was likely to be associated with higher social class.

John and Elizabeth Newson's work (1963) on studies of child rearing established that social class was the most important variable in understanding the way in which mothers behaved towards their babies. In subsequent studies, they followed children from the pre-school to the primary school. They found that the parental interest could be examined through the home and school links and through the general cultural interests of the parents. In particular, a contest between trends in the professional groups and the semi-skilled and the unskilled manual workers was revealed. Children belonging to lower class groups were less likely to be helped with reading and were less likely to have their knowledge extended. They also discussed the role of cultural interests such as visits to the cinema, theatre and to museums as well as the importance of parents using books, and newspapers with their children. Such an explanation bears definite links with the work of Bernstein (1971) and Bourdieu (1973), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have examined the way in which culture is transmitted from parents to children in different social class groups. On the basis of research concerning cinema, theatre and music attendance and the use of books, Bourdieu discusses the processes of 'cultural reproduction'. He argues that education demands a linguistic and cultural competence that is not automatically provided by schools. Accordingly, children whose families are able to transmit elements of 'high' culture through family upbringing and schools are at an advantage. For Bourdieu, those families that control economic capital also manage to acquire control over cultural capital, which ensures that their children obtain the necessary qualifications through schools.

Bernstein has discussed two types of family role structures the 'positional family' and the 'person-centered family'. In the positional family there is a clear separation of roles and a 'closed' communication, while in the latter, the importance of the child in relation to other members of the family is perceived and there is an 'open' system of communication. Clearly in the person-oriented family, importance is attached to communication and language, which has also been used to explain the relative advantages of different social class groups in education. He suggests that the exercise of authority within the working class family does not give rise to the well-ordered universe of the middle class. The exercise of authority is not related to a stable system of rewards and punishments but is often arbitrary. At the same time, authority rests with

individuals who use discretion and not reason in exercising it. A child who challenges authority and refuses to perform a task is told, "Do it because I am telling you". In the middle class family, the relationship with authority figure (i.e. the person(s) who exercises authority) is often mediated by the use of reasoned principles.

Often at school, the middle class child is clearly at an advantage as his/her level of curiosity is high. Since he/she is trained to think about and plan for the future, he/she is able to make the most in school where the focus is on linking the present to a distant future. The social structure of the school creates a framework that he/she is able to accept, respond to, and exploit. The child belonging to the working class is bewildered and defenseless in such a situation and is not able to make the methods and goals of the school personally meaningful.

Box 8.2: The Impact of Education on Poverty: The U.S. Experience

"Schools tailor their academic and social atmospheres to encourage and develop self-concepts and aspiration levels suited to the youngsters they serve and the jobs they will hold. In this manner they maintain the hierarchical economic structure based on social class.

Predominantly working class schools, for instance, emphasize the importance of following rules, offer curricula which train students for blue collar and grey collar jobs, and usually have the least academically oriented faculties. Schools in the well-to-do suburbs, on the other hand, use relatively open teaching systems in which teachers are less authoritarian, less rule-bound. Students take "harder" course, are offered more electives, participate more in school planning, and are prepared for positions where they will have less direct supervision and will have to be motivated by a more corporate form of "team spirit" and more subtle authority relationships"(Bowles, Gintis, and Simmons 1985 : 109).

8.7 Linguistic Development, Social Class and Education

Language affects a child's experiences in school in many ways. What are the sociological factors which affect linguistic performance within the family? Bernstein's theory of linguistic development is based on the idea that for the speaker, certain forms involve a loss or an acquisition of both cognitive and social skills which are strategic for educational and occupational success. These forms of language are culturally and not individually determined. He suggests that the two main social classes occurring at the two extremes are characterized by two different modes of speech which arise from their grossly different environment. The lower working classes are more or less restricted to what Bernstein at first called a 'public language'. There is a tendency to select from a number of traditional phrases and stereotyped responses.

The middle class children, on the other hand, are brought up in an environment which places great value on verbalization and conceptualization. This is reflected in their mode of speech which is 'formal language'. Later Bernstein used the terms 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' in place of public language and formal language. A person belonging to the working class is not able to express his/her own response to situations adequately because he/she draws upon the standardized sayings of his/her community (e.g. proverbs) quite heavily. Neither is he/she able to express fine and nuanced distinction between feelings, relationships and so on (because he/she has a restricted vocabulary). In contrast, the middle class person is able to make explicit the details and variations of his/her own personal experience. You may recall Bernstein's explanation of restricted code and elaborated code provided in Unit 4.

Box 8.3: Speech differences between classes: an example

Consider the two following stories which Peter Hawkins, Assistant Research Officer in the Sociological Research unit, University of London, constructed as a result of his analysis of the speech of five-year old children of the middle class and working class. The children were presented a series of four pictures. The first picture showed some boys playing football, in the second one, the ball was shown going out through the window of a house; in the third looking out of the window a man making an ominous gesture; the fourth picture showed the children moving away. Here are the two stories.

- 1) Three boys are playing football, one boy kicks the ball and it goes through the window, the ball breaks the window and the boys look at it. A man comes out and shouts at them because they have run away and then a lady looks out of her window and she tells the boys off.
- 2) They are playing football and he kicks it and it breaks the window. They are looking at it and he comes out and shouts at them because they have broken it so they run away and then she looks out and she tells them off.

With the first story, the reader does not need to have the four pictures, which were used as the basis of the story, in the second story the reader would require the pictures in order to make sense of the story. The first story is free of the context, which generated it, whereas the second story is much more closely tied to the context. As a result, the meanings of the second story are explicit.

The speech of the first child generates universalistic meanings in the sense that the meanings are freed from the social context so are understandable by all, whereas the speech of the second child generates particular meanings in the sense, that the meanings are closely tied to the context and would be fully understood by others only if they had access to the context which originally generated the speech.

In middle class families, communication between mother and child is often primarily verbal. The child must learn to recognize that small changes in word position and sentence structure signal important changes in the meaning and content of what is being said. The necessity to verbalize, which is then forced upon the child exposes him/her to a whole range of potential learning which is denied to the lower middle class child precisely because of the linguistic mode in use within the middle class family. The different functions performed by languages for each social class lead to difference perception of the world around them. For the working class and especially the lower working class child, the emphasis is on the 'here' and 'now' and on descriptions of objects in the environment rather than on their relationships.

Most teachers belong to middle class families, hence communicate with their pupils through formal language using elaborated speech forms. The child from the working class is usually unfamiliar with such language. He/she understands and communicates in patterns of speech in school that are unsuited to the educational process. His/her own speech patterns are likely to be received critically by teachers. Irrespective of his/her alertness or creativity, he/she starts school with the handicap of having to learn new speech patterns. Though intending no disrespect, they may appear disrespectful to the teacher who is used to the fineness of the formal language. "Give us this....." for example, is the expression of working class children equivalent to "Please, may I have....." A teacher who does not understand is likely to reprimand the child for being disrespectful.

8.8 Peer Group, Socialization and Education

As a child grows older, the family becomes somewhat less important in his/her social development. Indeed the peer group increasingly assumes the role of, what George Herbert Mead referred to as “significant others”. Within the peer group, young people associate with others who are approximately their own age and who often enjoy a similar social status. In a study of sixth, seventh and eighth grade girls, Donna Eder (1985) observed that, at any time, most girls interact primarily with members of a single peer group. In the school, the child deals with teachers and classmates on a regular basis. The organization of schools ensures that a child spends a large part of his/her waking hours in close association with a group of children approximately of similar age and intellectual development. There are two kinds of investigations into the importance of peers in the educational process, those focusing on the interpersonal processes, and those concerned with social relationships within the classroom. The focus is on choice of friends, and sociometric position as factors associated with academic performance and attitudes toward school. Rather than viewing the peer group as a whole, these studies examine differentiation and patterns of interpersonal relations within it.

A consistent finding is that friends tend to be more similar on attitudes towards school, educational ambitions and even academic performance than are random pairs within the classroom. Most friendship choices are made within one's own classroom rather than among children of different classrooms. If students move from one classroom to another for different lessons on different subjects, they are likely to be together. Often, limited sets of students spend most of their school hours together. The fact that peer relations of adolescents are so heavily concerned with non-academic issues could lead to skepticism about the educational relevance of the peer group itself during the period of children's development. The interrelatedness of adolescents' activities and the probable effects of non-academic activities on the educational process also need to be considered. Certainly, extracurricular engagements (both in school and outside it) often affect the individual's interest in and ability to perform adequately in school.

Coleman (1966) studied the effect of individuals attending a school with a particular kind of student body on performance. His study demonstrated that black students who attended schools in which most students were white had higher levels of academic performance than those who attended schools in which most students were black. McDill (1969) has shown that variations in 'educational climate' (defined in terms of the degree of emphasis on intellectual matters) in high schools influence both academic performance and educational plans of students. They also show that the degree of parental involvement and commitment to the school is the single best explanation of school climate. Such analysis seems to link family and peer influences, as well as school structural factors in ways which maybe difficult to disentangle but which also testify to the significance of all three.

8.9 Gender, Socialization and Education

Girls and boys have different socialization experiences. By the time they enter nursery school, most of them have a fair understanding of their gender identity which is largely acquired from parents, siblings, television and other socialization agents. The term, 'gender role' refers to expectations regarding proper behaviour, attitudes, and activities of males and females. 'Toughness' for example has been traditionally identified as a trait of men while 'tenderness' has been viewed as a trait of women. As the primary agents of socialization, parents play a critical role in guiding children into gender roles that deem them appropriate in a society. Other adults, older siblings, the mass media and religious and educational institutions also have a noticeable impact on a child's socialization into gender identity.

Students spend more than six hours a day in classes and school related activities. Therefore, teachers and schools become important sources of information on appropriate behaviour for boys and girls. Children learn by observing and imitating adult roles including the roles of teachers and administrators. They observe the ratio of males to females and the authority structure in the educational hierarchy and learn appropriate behaviour for main gender through positive and negative sanctions. Social learning theory explains that gender images are transmitted through books, television programmes and children's toys. Of these three areas, it is the sexism in books that has received most attention. In particular, Lobban (1975) has examined the extent to which reading schemes in the infant and junior school transmit sexist images through the characters used, the illustrations and the portraits of males and females and the use of stereotypes.

Children's toys play a major role in gender socialization. Boys' toys — chemistry sets, doctor kits, telescopes and microscopes etc. — encourage manipulation of the environment and are generally more career oriented and more expensive than girls' toys. Parents are generally very conscious of buying toys that are appropriate for the gender of their children. By the time young children reach nursery school they have learnt to play with the appropriate toys for their sexes. Delamont (1980) has provided an analysis of toy catalogues that illustrates how the girls' toys emphasize passive domestic roles, while the boys' toys emphasize action, adventure and career growth. In turn, the images of girls presented through television and other media lay emphasis on subordination and passivity. McRobbie (1978) confirmed this in an analysis of the schools girls' magazine, *Jackie* in which stories reinforce the idea of a girl being subordinate to a boy. Sexism in textbooks too has received a great deal of attention. Books are a major source of messages about sex roles. Content analysis of texts is based on a study of illustrations, positive and negative images of men and women, stereotypes, and many other factors related to the portrayal of sex roles in the societal systems. While classrooms may be co-educational, many activities within the classroom are gender-linked. It has been found that girls do not receive the same attention as boys do. Boys are encouraged to solve problems while girls are provided the answers readily. Girls are often asked to water the plants while boys are asked to clean the blackboards. Children line up for activities by gender. Even imposition of discipline and quantity of time a teacher spent with children have a bearing on gender differences. Studies establish that boys are disciplined more harshly than girls, but they also receive more time and praise from the teachers. Interestingly, teachers' expectations are based on students' gender, class, and race.

Why do boys perform better than girls in mathematics most of the time? Most researchers explain that the difference in mathematical ability results from differential socialization and differential experiences of boys and girls. These commence in the primary school itself. Boys are encouraged to be independent thinkers and develop creative ways of dealing with mathematics rather than following rigid norms of mathematics formulae. Though much has been made of the difference in mathematics score between girls and boys on standard tests, these differences are not significant and need to be considered in the light of social and cultural factors that ban girls from participation in achievement in mathematics and science. Cross cultural studies of differences in parental support, teacher expectations, study habits and values, beliefs that affect achievement indicate that girls in some countries do excel in mathematics.

Davin (1979) found that schools imposed the family form of the bourgeoisie with a male breadwinner and a dependent wife and children - a view that influenced the pattern of girls' schooling. Purvis and Hales (1983) identified two models of femininity that were used in schools, the 'perfect wife and mother' for children belonging the middle class, and the 'good woman' for children belonging to the working class. In the school curriculum, a set of

assumptions about women and marriage were included with the result that they were able to perpetuate an education system that does not open up new opportunities for most girls. In a similar vein, Miriam David (1985) has illustrated how courses on family life and parent education within the youth training scheme and other post-school programmes emphasize education for motherhood. Such evidence from the 19th and 20th centuries has been used to illustrate the way in which education maintains relationships, particularly gender relationships in society.

Box 8.4: Gender differences in educational opportunities

The following account is based on data from Kenya, Ghana, Egypt, the Philippines, Mexico and Pakistan.

“Many educational systems are characterized by pervasive sex-linked streaming, with the result that girls are not offered the same curriculum, standards and program option as boys. The nature of this streaming rarely derives from traditional sex roles but, instead, reflects modern trends and practices. Prevocational and vocational programs usually track females into homemaking or domestic science courses, whereas males are taught skills that may lead to remunerative employment. When females are offered career training courses, as in Mexico, they are usually encouraged to choose terminal vocational programs that prepare them for a limited range of sex-stereotyped jobs such as secretarial and clerical work. The typical over presentation of families in humanities and arts at the secondary and tertiary educational levels and their concomitant under-representation in sciences, engineering and related fields often effects the distribution of science faculties and teachers and/or the admissions policies of the relevant institutions” (Smock 1985:192-93).

The Puritans in the United States discouraged literacy for women, except reading the Bible that would ensure their salvation. After the American Revolution, it became a responsibility of women to teach young children and pass on moral standards. Limited education came to be acceptable, perhaps even encouraged in the male dominated society. Societies are dependent on schools to pass along crucial beliefs and values, models sex role behaviour and expectations among boys and girls. In particular, this occurs formally through courses and texts used in the curriculum or through the structure that assigns privileges and tasks by sex. In many societies, however, expectations are passed on through the informal or ‘hidden curriculum’ and counseling. Sex roles in schools mirror those in society. Our behaviour and expectations from each sex are greatly affected by sexual stereotypes. Stereotypes about male and female characteristics are consistently held by members of a society. Girls are docile, gentle, cooperative, affectionate and nurturing while boys are aggressive, curious, and competitive and ambitious. Evidence of these stereotypes is apparent around the world. Statistics on literacy rates for men and women exemplify the different societal expectations. Without education women cannot participate fully in the economic and political spheres of society, yet access to literacy and education remains a major problem for them.

There are more women teachers at the elementary/ primary school level but fewer heads of schools. The pattern of the ‘the higher the fewer’ (i.e., the higher the position bringing with it power and responsibility, the fewer are women who hold such positions). continues at the university level. Socialization has influenced women not to compete for administrative responsibility. Organizational and institutional barriers during recruitment, selection, placement, evaluation and other processes confront women who aspire for enviable positions in organizations. At several levels, women face obstacles in achieving higher positions in male dominated institutions. Girls are systematically discouraged to pursue studies that would enhance their prospects for well

paying jobs. Often girls achieve higher grades throughout their school education, yet they are coerced to prepare themselves for undertaking stereotyped jobs (e.g., teaching in schools) many of which do not fetch returns that come with positions high as in the fields of science and technology and engineering.

It has been found that girls often surpass boys in elementary school in terms of performance and achievement. Girls' performance generally declines by middle school. The twin reasons that seem apparent are (i) the bodily changes that accompany adolescence which diverts their attention greatly; and (ii) rising expectations from them that pertain to being nurturant and adept in performing household chores rather than performing well in school. By the time girls are seniors, their plans and values for future participation in the work force closely parallel the actual sex differences in occupations. Women encounter challenges in adult life as well, and are often not adequately rewarded for their intellectual achievements.

Reflection and Action 8.2

Visit a secondary school near your home and find out the aspirations of boys and girls in terms of their careers.

8.10 Caste, Socialization and Education

Much of the literature on caste and race, like gender, in education focuses in various ways on under achievement or the under-representation of particular group(s) in critical areas of school curriculum. It is important to examine the main trends in the educational performance of ethnic minority pupils (especially black pupils) compared with indigenous pupils in both primary and secondary schools and in turn, their access to higher education. Much of the evidence on primary education comes from surveys conducted by Alan Little and his associates (1981) in the Inner London Education Authority in the 1960s. These studies compare the performance of white and black children at the end of their primary schooling. Little found that the children of new commonwealth immigrants had a reading age that was one year higher than their counterparts in domestic land.

Caste as ascriptive criteria of social stratification is a feature which is predominant in the Indian society. Although some parallels can be drawn with race, with regard to the overall process of discrimination and deprivation, no one-to-one correspondence can be sought between the two. The relationship between caste and education is complex. In the Indian society during the ancient times, there were organized institutions of formal education both in the fields of esoteric-sacred knowledge and exoteric-secular knowledge (Singh 1967). Education was elite-based and revolved around the canons of philosophy and religious thought that were easily accessible to the people of upper castes. Knowledge was treated to be perennial, sacred and charismatic and education was considered to be a process of self-purification and self-fulfillment. Some forms of knowledge were highly practical (e.g. the sciences of medicine, architecture, erotics, dramatics etc). Yet the process of education was intimately integrated with the hierarchical concept of caste, *varna* and of human nature. In a general sense knowledge was considered to be the prerogative of the twice-born. Thus in the Hindu elite tradition, education as a process was selective and closed to most of the sections of society. The teacher had complete autonomy over the pupil. His authority emanated from religious principles of life rather than the secular.

According to Singh, religion, caste and the extended family in India had been the chief socio-cultural institutions which kept the traditional process of socialization and education going. Here, the literati served as the ideals of the highest learning, social status and honour. They were also the traditional

power elite but the possibilities of attaining membership of this group were not only empirically closed (due to the wide gap in socio-economic status etc.) but also closed by the norms of culture and religion. Hierarchy, hereditary specialization, and inter-caste relations of affinity and distance were the chief characteristics of caste. The socialization of the Hindu child in the peasant society right from the beginning was a process of internalization of the lores, legends, and stereotyped norms of culture supporting the hierarchical social structure and the institutionalized inequality of the caste system.

Within this pattern of culture, each caste perhaps developed separate cultural themes, which entered into the process of socialization and formal education. These themes were, however, linked with the hereditary occupation of the caste. In the socialization of a Rajput child, for instance, emphasis was laid on 'personal dignity', a high sense of honour, courage and aggression. At the same time, among high caste Hindus, an extremely authoritarian and reserved attitude towards children leading to high dependency characteristics has been found by psychologists. Although similar studies about child rearing practices and dominant psycho-cultural themes for the lower and the intermediate castes are not available, it is legitimate to hypothesize that the differential background of social status and power and occupational values prevailing among these caste groups had developed corresponding dominant orientations towards self-image and values of authority in each hierarchy of caste. These differences emanated entirely from the cultural, occupational and economic background in which these caste groups existed and saved their children.

Among the twice-born castes, tradition laid down a period for adolescents to study with the guru, which in practice had a ritualistic significance, or may be it was operative in the hoary past. For the lower intermediate castes in India, the family was the chief seat not only of socialization but also of formal education. Learning of roles was hereditary and the household being also the place of work, all arts, skills and crafts were learnt under the patronage of the elder kinsmen. Age and ascribed status, thus, had a tremendous structural significance in the process of socialization as under formal education. In contemporary times, significant changes have taken place as far as access to educational institutions, or aspirations for different occupations, is concerned but there are studies which reveal how students from a particular depressed caste or tribal background suffer in schools as there are hidden or latent biases in the way the teachers teach and interact with them. Textbooks are written either avoiding or distorting their experiences and world-view and the way the school is organized.

8.11 Conclusion

After reading this Unit, you would have come to realize that education is permeated by influences from family and community. It is highly susceptible to pressures from the dominant social groups in society. Education thus preserves, and often increases, social biases present in society. Different socialization experiences of students have significant implications on the kind of personalities or self which children develop, the attitudes, skills and knowledge, they acquire, which in turn affects their achievement level in school. There are certain factors in their socialization, which are conducive to learning in school, whereas there are others, which place the students at a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* school and inhibit learning. To belong to a particular type of family, social class, caste or gender group and be exposed to certain types of child rearing practices have specific implications for the kind of persons we develop into and subsequent development of skills, attitudes, knowledge and linguistic forms, which in turn affects our performance in school. It would be naive, therefore, to assume that school functions in isolation of one's family background. Home and school both constantly interact with each other, to determine a student's overall personality, knowledge level, attitude and educational performance.

So, even though the school may appear to be a fair and neutral institution, it works in consonance with the existing differences among people, not just maintaining but at times enhancing these differences to the disadvantage of the marginalized groups.

8.12 Further Reading

Ballantine, J.H. 1993. *The Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall

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Unit 9

Education and Social Change

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you should be able to understand the:

- meaning and process of social change;
- interplay between education and social and economic development;
- relationship between education, the underprivileged and democracy; and
- relationship between education and social change in Indian society.

9.1 Introduction

The relationship of education with social change is not a simple, unilateral one, as perhaps many would like to believe, for education is not only instrumental in bringing about social change, it is also quite interestingly instrumental in maintaining the status quo. In other words, education plays both a 'conservative' and 'radical' role, i.e., it helps both in 'maintaining' and 'changing' different aspects of the social system.

Social scientists have held diverse positions on the relationship between education and social change. There are some (Althusser 1972) who treat education as the most important 'ideological state apparatus' appropriated by the ruling classes to pursue their own ideas and interests. They maintain that education is an instrument forged by the ruling classes to serve and preserve their own interests and largely to maintain the status quo in the existing economic and political power structure. At the other end, are many social scientists, politicians, educationists and educational planners who consider education as an important instrument of social change, particularly in the context of third world countries. Here, education is treated as effecting economic development and social change. In post-revolutionary Russia, for example schools were assigned the task of destroying old bourgeoisie values and creating new values appropriate to a socialist society. We have seen that the educational system is responsible for encouraging innovation in the material and technological spheres. This may involve training the labour force in these skills, challenging traditional attitudes, or promoting social mobility and allowing new elites to threaten and replace those before them. Some of these expectations are, to a large extent, contradictory. The radical and innovation functions of education are hard to reconcile with its role in the transmission of culture. Also, schools and universities are themselves a part of society subject to pressures from other parts of the social system. In a highly stratified society, for example, it is unrealistic to expect schools to inculcate strongly egalitarian principles. They are likely to function in these societies as important agencies within the stratification system training the young for adult roles. Only where egalitarianism is accepted as part of the dominant value system of a society is it likely either to influence the organization of education or to be part of the moral and social training imparted at school. Developments in the

education system are largely also influenced considerably by economic and technological factors. Education in turn may also influence social and economic change as a consequence of the role it plays in the processes of discovery and dissemination of newly acquired knowledge.

In this Unit we will focus on an analysis of education in the context of social change, but before doing that we will examine the concept and meaning of social change and factors that are instrumental in causing it. We will also discuss the goals and structural pattern of the formal education system.

9.2 Concept of Social Change

Social change has been defined by sociologist Wilbert Moore (1963) as a significant alteration over time in behaviour patterns and culture, including norms and values. It is important to understand how the rate and nature of change brings about alteration in society. In simpler societies, change is unusually slow: tradition, ritual, rites of passage, and social hierarchies—these are some of the basic elements that have held such societies together. These elements weaken in the event of culture contact, and disasters such as wars, disease and famine.

Terms such as 'progress', 'evolution', 'process' and so forth are often used, when understanding the concept of social change. R. M. MacIver and C. H. Page (1950) have discussed and distinguished between these terms. The word, 'process' implies the idea of continuity; 'all that is meant by process is the definite step-by-step manner through which one state or stage merges into another'. Nothing is said here about the quality, of the process. It is simply a way of describing how things happen in society; and also the way in which people adapt to certain elements in their society, or are assimilated to certain forms of activity, or adjust themselves to specific modes of behaviour.

The term evolution implies a scientific concept of development and change, an unrolling or unfolding, a movement in some particular direction. MacIver and Page (1950) consider that societies may be classified as more or less evolved according to the complexity of their differentiation. More evolved simply implies a greater complexity and differentiation within the society; but again, evolution is not merely a quantitative process. For MacIver and Page, 'wherever in the history of society we find an increasing specialization of organs or units within the system or serving the life of the whole, we can speak of social evolution.' The words progress and process are frequently used in popular discussion as interchangeable words, but in the context of social change, at least, progress involves judgment whereas process is simply descriptive of continuity. Value—judgments are relative, and what may constitute social progress for one may represent retrogression, decay or stagnation for another. It all depends on the sort of ideal one has of society itself and the goal at which one is aiming.

W. J. H. Sprott (1967) presents a clear and simplified scheme of social change within a very narrow spectrum. According to him there is, firstly exogenous change which is caused by agencies external to society itself. Such factors as invasion, colonization, settlement, culture contact and disease are highly unpredictable and capable of effecting social disequilibrium and change. Secondly, there is endogenous change, which occurs from within the society. Sprott divides endogenous change into two main types according to their degree of predictability. There is 'episodic change' which is brought about within a society by some event, which could not have been predicted from one's personal knowledge of the state of our society. This applies particularly within the realm of inventions, which may have devastating effects upon the whole fabric and lifestyle of society. In fact the invention in itself (e.g. radar, atomic energy, laser beams) is neutral. It is the use to which one puts an

invention that decides whether society will progress or retrogress; but it will certainly change. There is, however, also 'patterned change' within the society, which permits a more precise prediction. Such prediction is of short-term nature and it depends upon the increase in a society of mutual concern, planning, rationality and an organized programme of social welfare, as well as political and economic consensus.

Most of what has been said here can be reduced to a consideration of change under three main types of factors or conditions: physical and biological; technological; and cultural. A consideration of physical and biological factors involves such problems as the changing size and average age of a population, the varying balance between deaths and births, and the variations in the race, colour and culture in the differing elements of population. Geographical factors, environment, habitats and ecological modifications may also affect society in terms of the occupations people pursue. Technological factors may mean the vast improvement in mechanical devices, in fertilizers and seeds, and in the acceptance of the importance of management, economics, accountancy, and genetics - not as extras or sidelines, but as intrinsic dimensions of agriculture itself. Other technological advances have included the development of physical transportation by means of rail, aeroplane and automobile, and discovery and harnessing of atomic energy.

Reflection and action 9.1

What is social change?

9.3 Goals, Objectives and Structural Patterns of Education

It is true that some of the so-called 'universal' or 'society - oriented' goals of education in a society articulate the thinking of the philosophers and social reformers of the times many of whom project a future in terms of ideal society. This can be illustrated by examples of many western and eastern educational philosophers. At this juncture, you may refer to units 1, 3 and 4. In actual operation it has been shown that, in most countries, the system works (both in its form and content) with a decisive social bias, heavily in favour of the upper or dominant strata of society. At the same time, it provides occupational and social mobility to a small number from the social strata. The educational system is largely conditioned by the prevalent socio-economic and political power structure. Its expansion, growth and development are tuned to the requirements of this social structure; the changes in it are directed by the changes in this structure and particularly by the changes in the economic, social and political distribution of power. An education system which is a social product and part of the entire social system, acquires a collateral relationship with it. This relationship, however, cannot be of one to one correspondence.

Imbalances and incongruities do occur giving rise at times to dissatisfaction and dissent, disharmony, dissonance and even revolt. In other words, along with correspondence and collaterality there are contradictions too. First, the social situation, together with its underlying socio-economic structure and the political power structure are never static. These have their repercussions on the education systems as well. In the course of its development, the education system acquires certain autonomy and its own dynamics of development. It can generate conflict in the over values of different components of a system or over values of one or more components. Finally, education has a dual character. Although the process of education socializes individuals to conform to the norms and values of society, it also has the capacity to generate a spirit of enquiry and question the accepted norms. It

has the potential to encourage people to question the dominant values and norms in society, and to make them rebel against the existent societal constraints.

9.4 Education and Change in Society

It is with reference to the cultural factors of social change that one talks of education from a conventional perspective. Education mediates and maintains the cultural heritage of the society. But, whilst seeking to conserve, education must also ensure that culture lag in society is minimized. This means that there must be some attempt to adjust the old culture to new conditions in order that individuals within a society may keep up with technological change. Patterns of culture and of institutions change rapidly, even though the average member of society may be virtually unaware of the transformations taking place around her.

Schools exist not merely to reflect and mediate the cultural inheritance of a society and current change; they exist also to assist in the promotion of social change and reform. One need only look at such countries as Germany, Russia, India and Pakistan, and the evolving societies of the continents of Africa and South America, to see that education has been, and is being, used as an agent of social change. A great deal, of course, depends here upon the nature of the political system of any particular society.

Durkheim (1956) argued that there was not just one form of education, ideal or actual, but many forms. There were, in fact, many different forms of education. So, society as a whole, and each particular context would determine the type of education that was realized or could be realized. Durkheim explained that education was crucial in terms of preserving a certain degree of homogeneity, and ingraining the essential elements of collective life. He, however, felt that it was also very important to ensure that there was a certain amount of diversity in society, without which any form of co-operation would be impossible.

There is, and must be, an interaction between education and society. It is not just a one-way process in which education is wholly determined by the state or by the demands of society. The institution and structure of education can, in turn, change and modify the social structure. Society at large may dictate the change, through the free election of political parties to power. In turn the programme, form and schedule of education which, to a large extent are directed and controlled by the political and social aims of society at any particular time, may contribute to the change. A study of comparative education will adequately reveal the fact that the ideologies, the political ideals, and the social aims of countries like China, the USA and the USSR, France, Germany and England, are reflected in their educational systems. Education, however, does not merely reflect society, it serves to bring change in it too.

Karl Mannheim (1960) also explored the problem of social change and social progress in relation to education. He explained that there was a lack of awareness in social affairs as well as a lack of comprehensive sociological orientation. The leaders of the nation, including teachers, should be educated in a way which would enable them to understand the meaning of change. Mannheim argued that in the present situation no teaching was sound unless it trained people to be conscious of the social situation in which they find themselves, and to be able after careful deliberation to make their choices and take decisions. Education, some philosophers believe, must therefore be for mobility, for flexibility of thought and action, for producing individuals with a high general level of culture so that they adapt to changing economic and social conditions

According to Kamat (1985) there are four positions regarding education and social change (i) Education is for itself and has nothing to do with social change; (ii) Education is determined completely by social factors and can therefore, play no role in changing society. It follows social change; (iii) Education is an autonomous or relatively autonomous factor and therefore can and does induce social change; (iv) Educational change and social change must take place simultaneously (Kamat 1985: 172). There are a few who maintain that either education and social change bear the no link with each other or that education has no role to perform in changing society.

If social change refers to fundamental structural changes in society, it is clear that the socio-economic factor and the political factor rather than education have primary importance in the process of social change. Education can facilitate the process of social change as a necessary and a vital collateral factor. It often contributes to igniting, accelerating and sustaining the process by disseminating and cultivating knowledge, information, skills and values appropriate to the changing socio-economic and political structure. Moreover in a rapidly changing situation, for example in a post revolutionary period, when fundamental structural changes are taking place rapidly, education can undoubtedly operate as a powerful means to demolish the cultural and ideological superstructure and to build in its place an altogether new structure appropriate to the situation which would be in harmony with the newborn society. In some countries, a whole new system of education evolved replacing the old system after revolutionary socio-economic and political structural changes. For example, after the British conquest of India a system of modern education was introduced under the aegis of the British rulers.

The liberating and renovating characteristics of education get enhanced by counter-posing an alternative ideology which is in accordance with the emerging social situation. This entails challenging the existing ideology. It would be a hyperbole to say that education is the main instrument or the single most important factor of social change. Statements such as this are made for rhetorical purposes, sometimes even to confuse the common people, particularly when they are delivered by politicians. Often, they reflect (i) an incorrect understanding of the role of education; (ii) an incorrect assumption that a far-reaching structural transformation is already taking place and that education therefore should come forward to play its crucial role in consummating the transformation; and (iii) an essentially social reformist and welfare perspective with no bid for a far reaching structural transformation. Education is expected to play its role in the furtherance of economic growth and social change within the present socio-economic structural framework.

The role of education as a factor of social development is defined by the twin facts that education is permeated by the social biases of society and that those who seek education are social actors who retain the orientations of their specific position in a society. It is for these reasons that education is controlled by the dominant groups of society who lay down the priorities in a society. Education is an independent factor in society only to the extent that its organizational forms provide buffer from direct control from the outside and to some extent that the effect of education cannot be planned or anticipated. In essence, education has a bearing on social concerns; educational change follows social change. More importantly, education conditions development, but is itself a product of prior social and economic changes in society. It is an independent factor in social and economic development generating intended and unintended consequences and conflicts of values and goals. Naturally the relations between education and developments are not mutually exclusive.

Education can be planned to produce social change. We know, for example, that literacy does stimulate economic and social development. Large-scale

literacy programmes are important tools in the development of many countries. Yet, education is permeated by the existing social structure, which limits the extent of planned change and often produces consequences unintended by the educational planners. Educational innovation is more likely to produce a desired change if innovation in education is co-coordinated with changing other parts of the social structure. This is to say that effective planning cannot be piecemeal. An illustration of what this implies is given by current attempts to improve elementary education, which are carried out by increasing facilities, the numbers of teachers and offering financial incentives to families. The intention is to effect a planned change in educational standards, which has positive consequences for social and economic development. The planned educational change is usually not coordinated with changing the social context that has depressed educational standards. In most developing countries, there is an enormous unsatisfied demand for education because it is perceived as the gateway to an improved social position. The outcome is the rise in the number of literate people in society for whom few jobs available. In its turn, the fact that there are few opportunities in many of these societies for occupational and social mobility through education discourages the poor people from obtaining education. Because the poor people have for so long been outside the decision making process in their countries they do not feel part of the society. They are not likely to value the goals of development that have never brought them benefits. Consequently, parents are not motivated enough to encourage their children to seek basic education or undertake higher studies. Children do not see any real material benefits that education brings. Educational change in such societies cannot proceed effectively without changing other aspects of their social structure.

Where education is a condition of social and economic change, it is more likely to produce intended consequences. This happens because educational change follows other changes in society; the social context is thus favourable to social change. We must remember that even when the above warnings are taken into account the best laid plans of people are likely to go astray. Unintended consequences always emerge because we cannot estimate the precise relationship between the many components of change. The study of unintended consequences is thus an important and continuing part of the sociologist's contribution to understanding and planning social change. This is not to say that unintended consequences essentially challenge social and economic development.

The contribution of education to development is thus dynamic and multifaceted. Partly because they are organized, educational systems are able to secure some of their intended aims even when they come into conflict with the aims of those who control society. Given the length and complexity of the educational process, it is impossible for outside authorities to exercise a sufficiently detailed control to plug the infusion of undesirable ideas or information. Further, the length of an individual's exposure to education and the centrality of educational qualifications for jobs in modern society make education a crucial sector for bringing about planned social change. Also, the unintended consequences and conflicts that arise in the educational process are important and unplanned sources of change in all societies. At the most basic level, they allow a large numbers of people the time to think and to read with relative freedom from the constraints of job, family or government and ensure a constant critical re-examination of society.

Reflection and Action 9.2

Speak to at least five elderly people and find out how, in their opinion, education brings about social change.

Let us now look at the relationship between education and a few other indicators of social change.

a) Education and Economic Development

There has long been a widespread understanding in academic and government circles that education is the main determinant of economic growth. Especially, in the post-World War II period, the relationship of education to economic development received serious attention in national and international forums. Education was conceived as one of the more important factors in economic growth. This belief also provided a justification for the massive expansion of education and allocation of large funds for the education sector. It was soon discovered that education only strengthened old inequalities and created new ones, on the one hand, and perpetuated the existing outdated internal politico-economic power structures on the other. This means that the causes of underdevelopment lie in structural factors and not so much in educational backwardness.

Education was thought to be the main instrument of social change, especially cultural rather than structural change in the social sphere. Education, it was realized, by and large works to maintain the existent social situation and support the ideas and values of the privileged social classes and their economic, social and political interests. To reiterate, it seems that however imperative it is for the educational process to keep pace with the demands made by economic and technical development on the labour force, there is a very real sense in which educational expansion is a consequence rather than a cause of economic development. It may also be argued that to concentrate upon the relationships between education and occupation is to overlook the significance of changes in attitudes and values. From this point of view, education is seen as introducing the developing society to new needs and expectations. In short, education helps to wean the developing society away from the old and lead towards the new social order, it inspires a belief in progress, in efficiency, in achievement and in rationality. At the same time, education may be seen as creating the conditions for political as well as economic development by laying the foundations of a democratic form of government.

b) Education and Democracy

It is believed that the higher the education level of a country, the more likely is it to be a democracy. Within countries, moreover, there is an even stronger relationship between education and democratic attitudes. Lipset's (1960) studies show that the higher one's education, the more likely one is to believe in democratic values and support democratic practices. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that there is no necessary connection between education and democracy. World War II Germany and Japan were examples of nations, which combined a high level of literacy with a totalitarian form of government. China is still another example, with a high literacy rate but a communist form of government. The content of education is a significant factor in this context. Most totalitarian regimes attempt to use their schools to inculcate conformity and submissiveness and uncritical loyalty to the state. In the Soviet Union, for example, the emphasis in schools had been on the indoctrination of conformity and obedience as also in love for the Soviet system. The atmosphere was pervaded with a spirit of discipline and hierarchy. Teachers were warned not to coax students but to demand obedience, for only in this way would students develop the desired moral qualities. The influence of education upon political attitudes is much more complex than has sometimes been supposed, and although it maybe correct to argue that a high level of education is necessary for effective participation in democratic government, there is no guarantee that education and democratic attitudes are necessarily related.

Box 9.1: Democratic Ideal of Education

“It is not enough to see to it that education is not actively used as an instrument to make easier the exploitation of one class by another. School facilities must be secured of such amplitude and efficiency as will in fact and not simply in name discount the effects of economic inequalities, and secure to all the wards of the nation equality of equipment for their future careers. Accomplishment of this end demands not only adequate administrative provision of school facilities, and such supplementation of family resources as will enable youth to take advantage of them, but also such modification of traditional ideals of culture, traditional subjects of study and traditional methods of teaching and discipline as will retain all the youth under educational influences until they are equipped to be masters of their own economic and social careers. The ideal may seem remote of execution, but the democratic ideal of education is a farcical yet tragic delusion except as the ideal more and more dominates our public system of education” (Dewey 1976:98).

9.5 Education and Social Change in India

One of the dominant themes in educational reforms in both the 19th and 20th centuries has been the extension of educational opportunities to wider sections of the community. In general, this has taken the form of free schooling, scholarships and maintenance of grants for needy students, with the objective of providing equal education opportunity for all classes in the community. However, the provision of formal equality does little to eliminate educational privilege. Whatever changes we make in our selection mechanisms, or in the scope of our educational provision, many children because of their family background are unable to take advantage of the opportunities. Accordingly, attention is now being turned not simply to the removal of formal barriers to equality, but to the provision of special privileges for those who would otherwise be handicapped in terms of educational achievement.

Such provision is not new. The fact that a hungry child cannot learn was officially recognized at the beginning of the last century. The provision of school milk and meals and school health facilities became the established features of the British education scene. Yet it has taken a long time to see beyond the purely physical needs and to grasp the concept of what has come to be understood as, ‘cultural deprivation.’ Moreover, although the idea of equal educational provision for all classes in the community is now accepted, it has by no means been translated into everyday practice. Even today children from slum homes are all too often educated in slum schools that are quite untypical of schools elsewhere. Yet increasingly, it is being believed that for these children, even equality is not enough. Therefore, the need for positive discrimination was emphasized in favour of slum schools. It is argued that schools in deprived areas should be given priority in many respects —raise the standard of schooling and infrastructural facilities. The justification is that the homes and neighbourhood from which many of the children come provide little scope and stimulus for learning. The schools must provide an environment that compensates for the deprivation. Some people argue that compensatory education cannot in itself solve problems of health, housing and discrimination and that these must be tackled by agencies outside school. None of these arguments attack compensatory education. While acknowledging that formal equality of opportunity is an inadequate basis for an egalitarian policy, underline the interdependence of education with other aspects of the social structure.

Box 9.2: Education and the Disprivileged

“To the extent the previously disprivileged are brought within the ambit of institutionalized education there are three modalities of articulation between the system of privileges and the education system: (a) education reproduces and perpetuates inequalities between the privileged and the disprivileged, or (b) education enables a part of the disprivileged to attain upward social mobility without affecting privileges as a system, or (c) education plays an adversarial and even subversive role, challenging privileges or inequality as a system. The first mode preserves homeostasis, the second subverses homeostasis through co-optation of the upward mobile, the third proposes metastasis or a subversion of the regime of privileges” (Bhattacharya 2002: 19).

Kamat (1985) conceptualized the relationship between education and social change in India in three stages. In the first stage, he talks about the early British period to the end of the 19th century. In this period, the colonial socio-economic and political structure was established in India. However it also played a kind of liberating role in breaking down traditional norms and values, which were in consonance with the older feudal, socio-economic politic and were a hindrance to itself. It also sowed the seeds of new norms and values — of a bourgeoisie society and modern nationalism. This liberating influence was internalized and worked in two directions:

- i) Towards a close scrutiny of the indigenous social systems and culture leading to powerful movements of social and religious reform and protests movements like Satya Shodak Samaj
- ii) Towards the process of self-discovery, self-assessment in the context of the new situation, leading to the creation of an alternative center of social cohesion, the anti-imperialist movement for national liberation.

In the period between the two world wars, education assumed a mass character. Occupational and social mobility occurred among segments of population that were hitherto unnoticed. So far education had spread mainly to the upper caste and urban upper strata in society. Now it began to percolate to sections lower in the social hierarchy, the middle castes and middle strata. This carried the process of nationalism and social awakening still further, to the working class in the towns and to the peasantry in the countryside. The process considerably strengthened the movement for national liberation as well as the movement for social change. Meanwhile, the growth of the colonial system of education was developing serious contradictions within itself and also *vis-à-vis* the colonial socio-economic structure. This provided added edge to the principal contradiction between the British imperialism and the Indian people. This contradiction was reflected in large-scale unemployment among the educated on the one hand and the liberating influence in the strength and militancy of the powerful student and youth movement on the other.

In the third stage, i.e. from post-Independence period up to the mid-sixties, the process of social and political awakening has taken further strides. Its two aspects, conformity and liberation, are also operating. At the same time, the contradiction within the education system i.e., in relation to the development, socio-economic structure have also sharpened.

9.6 Conclusion

According to Olive Banks (1968), the precise relationship of the education system to social and economic change is extremely complex and it is almost impossible to draw conclusions that are not misleading. The concept of education as producing or impeding social change is enormously complicated

by the fact that the education system is a part of the society, which is itself changing. Consequently the real issue is that of the inter-relationship between educational institutions and other aspects of the society. Moreover, it is this inter-relationship which makes it so difficult to use the educational system to produce conscious or planned social change. The education system cannot be seen in isolation from its social context. The realization that educational reform is not a universal panacea should not, however, lead us to minimize the importance of knowledge about the educational institutions in society. This simply means that the relationship between education and social change is very complex and no simple generalizations can be drawn regarding them.

9.7 Further Reading

Moore, W.E, 1963. *Social Change*. Prentice-Hall

Banks, O., 1968. *The Sociology of Education: Reader in Sociology*. London: Batsford

Dewey, J. 1976. *Democracy and Education*. New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers



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Unit 10

Education and Social Mobility

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Learning objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to comprehend the:

- relationship between education, social mobility and nature of stratified society;
- concept of equality of educational opportunity and its evolution; and
- theoretical perspectives regarding the relationship between education and social mobility.

10.1 Introduction

Education, it is widely assumed, plays a positive role in enhancing a person's chances of social mobility. Why would one study otherwise? There is no doubt that education shares an important relationship with social mobility. It would not only be overly simplistic but also fallacious, however, to assume that education ignores social differences among individuals and gives everyone an equal chance to climb the ladder of social stratification. As students of sociology of education we need to understand the dynamics involved in the relationship between education and social mobility. In this Unit we begin with social mobility and strategies of educational selection. Having done that we will delve into the theoretical perspective. Towards the end we will look into the relationship between education and social mobility in the Indian context.

10.2 Concept of Social Mobility

As you are aware from the reading of Unit 26 (Block 7) of the core course on Sociological Theories and Concepts (MSO-001), the term social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one position of a society's stratification system to another. Sociologists use the terms open class system and closed class system to distinguish between two ideal types of class societies in terms of social mobility. An open system implies that the position of each individual is influenced by the person's achieved status. Achieved status is a social position attained by a person largely through his or her own effort. In an open class system, competition among members of society is encouraged. At the other extreme of the social mobility system is the closed system, in which there is little or no possibility of individual mobility. Slavery and the

caste system of stratification are examples of closed systems. In such societies, social placement is based on ascribed characteristics, such as race and family background, which cannot be easily changed. Ascribed status is a social position assigned to a person by society without regard for the person's unique characteristics and talents.

As with other ideal types, the extremes of open and closed systems do not actually exist as pure forms, for example, in caste societies, mobility is occasionally possible through hypergamy — a woman's marriage to a man of a higher caste. In the relatively open class system of the United States, children from affluent families retain many privileges and advantages. Hence, any class system should properly be regarded as being open or closed in varying degrees.

Here the key questions concern the way in which achieved status is obtained and the degree of movement that can take place across generations. It is in these circumstances that social mobility becomes important, as sociologists examine the way in which individuals compete for unequal positions. In studying social mobility, sociologists compare the actual degree of social mobility with the ideal of free movement through equal opportunity. As a consequence, the social position that an individual achieves may bear no relationship to the positions he acquired at birth. Movement up or down the social scale is based on merit.

Contemporary sociologists distinguish between horizontal and vertical social mobility. Horizontal mobility refers to the movement of a person from one social position to another of the same rank, for example, a lecturer from Gargi College leaves Gargi to join as a lecturer in Kamla Nehru College. Most sociological analysis, however, focuses on vertical mobility. Vertical mobility refers to the movement of a person from one social position to another of a different rank. It involves either upward (teacher to Principal) or downward (chief manager to clerk) mobility in a society's stratification system.

One way of examining vertical social mobility is to contrast inter-generational and intra-generational mobility. Inter-generational mobility involves changes in the social position of children relative to their parents. Thus, a plumber whose father was a physician provides an example of downward inter-generational mobility. A film star whose parents were both factory workers illustrates upward inter-generational mobility. Intra-generational mobility involves changes in a person's social position within his or her adult life. A nurse who studies to become a doctor has experienced upward intra-generational mobility. A man who becomes a taxi driver after his firm becomes bankrupt has undergone downward intra-generational mobility. Another type of vertical mobility is stratum or structural mobility. These terms refer to the movement of a specific group, class, or occupation relative to others in the stratification system. For example, historical circumstances or labour market changes may lead to the rise or decline of an occupational group within the social hierarchy. Military officers and strategists are likely to be regarded highly in times of war or foreign policy crises. Some time back, the demand for persons with a professional degree in business administration greatly shot up in India and a whole lot of management institutes mushroomed all over the country. As a result, we can say that management graduates as a group experienced structural mobility.

10.3 Social Mobility and Strategies of Educational Selection

Turner (1961) distinguishes between two modes of social ascent: sponsored mobility and context mobility. His analysis of modes of social ascent with their accompanying strategies of educational selection is a careful framework for

studying education as a process of selection. Sponsored mobility refers to an education system in which elite recruits are chosen by the established elite or their agents. Elite status is assigned on the basis of some criterion of supposed merit and cannot be acquired by any degree of effort or strategy. Upward mobility is like entry into a private club where each candidate must be sponsored by one or more of the members. Sponsored mobility is characterized by early selection, followed by a clear differentiation of those singled out from the rest, usually in separate institutions. The process that follows has the nature of a special preparation for elite status including inculcation of special skills as also indoctrination the code of behaviour and the value system of the elite group. This is typical of cases where the system of elementary education for children of the poor is distinct from the system of education for the middle class.

Contest mobility refers to a system in which elite status is a reward in an open contest and is achieved by the aspirants' own efforts. In these circumstances, there would be open access to all institutions that are of equivalent status. Here, there is no sharp separation between students taking particular courses and where there is relatively open access to institutions of higher education. Control over selection relies upon assessment, examination and testing procedures. Contest mobility is like a race or other sporting event, in which all compete on equal terms for a limited number of prizes. Its chief characteristic is a fear of premature judgment and not only is early selection avoided, but any open selection is as far as possible avoided altogether. Although in theory, all those who complete the school — leaving diploma are eligible for higher education, in practice the competition is so keen that the entire spectrum of higher education can be highly selective. The institutions themselves have their own entrance examinations and there are variations in standards, despite theoretical equality of status. These modes of social ascent are based on ideal types using examples drawn from Britain and America respectively over almost 30 years. Their application therefore, rests on the kind of changes that have occurred within specific education systems.

Another model that has attracted some attention is the one outlined by Boudon (1974:79) who explored the relationship between intelligence, scholastic attainment, social background and aspirations. On the basis of his analysis, he proposes a two - tier theory of attainment based on 'primary' effects of social background which are similar to intelligence and school achievement and 'secondary' effects which apply when children of equal intelligence and achievement have to choose between different kinds of curricula. Black, upper class students choose courses that lead to the same social status as their parents. Indeed, he maintains that a large degree of mobility takes place despite the bias of the education system in favour of the middle class and the fact that the hiring process gives the advantage to those who are more qualified. Given the competition that exists for places in the education system and the occupation system, however, there is no guarantee that the children from more privileged groups would be favoured. Indeed, he shows how children of high status are demoted and low status children promoted. As a consequence, Boudon's theory helps to explain why there is a degree of randomness in occupational attainment, why education does not seem to affect mobility and why patterns of social ascent appear to remain stable across generations.

Reflection and Action 10.1

Discuss the relationship between social mobility and strategies of educational selection.

10.4 Equality of Educational Opportunity

In connection with his large-scale project on equality of educational opportunity, James Coleman (1968) considered five different positions in this regard. Broadly speaking, there were those positions that were concerned with 'inputs' into schools and those that focused on the 'effects' of schooling. As indicated by Coleman, a key problem concerns whether equality implies equality of input or equality of output. He suggested, however, that neither inputs nor outputs are viable. He concludes that equality of educational opportunity is not a meaningful term. In the USA, the expression 'equality of educational opportunity' has, first meant the provision of free education up to the entry into the labour market; second, it has referred to the provision of a common curriculum for all children regardless of their social background; third, it has referred to the provision of education for children from diverse social backgrounds in the same school; fourth, it means providing for equality within a locality.

On this basis, equality of educational opportunity demands that all pupils be exposed to the same curriculum in similar schools through equal inputs. The evidence in the Coleman report showed that there was relative equality of education inputs but inequality of results. Accordingly, it is argued, if equality of educational opportunity is to be realized in the USA, it is not sufficient to remove legal disabilities on blacks, women and other disadvantaged groups instead provision has to be made to give them the same effective chance as given to white male members of the population.

The term 'equality of educational opportunity' was also considered problematic in Britain. In particular, two problems were highlighted. The first concerns the way in which educational opportunities are achieved, while the second concerns what is meant by equal educational opportunity. After Halsey (1972), a great deal of sociological research and writing in Britain has been concerned with different aspects of equality of educational opportunity, some of which has had direct implications for social and educational policy. In particular, Halsey identifies three trends in this work. First, a period in which research was concerned with access, lasting from about the turn of the century until the end of the 1950s when discussion was in terms of equality of access to education to all the children regardless of their gender, social class, religion, ethnic group or region of origin. The second phase occurred throughout the 1960s when its scope chiefly consisted of equality of achievement. On this basis, equality of educational opportunity comes about if the proportion of people from different social, economic and ethnic categories at all levels of education is more or less the same as the proportion of these people in the population. Hence, positive discrimination in the form of compensatory education was suggested the main aim of which was to reduce education disadvantage and reduce the gap in educational achievement. This problem was tackled in the USA through Project Head Start programme, which was established to break the cycle of poverty by assisting pre-school children. In Britain, the Plowden Committee recommended the establishment of education priority areas where schools would be given greater resources and where attempts would be made to initiate change. Bernstein (1970) however, argued that compensatory education carried with it the implication that something was lacking in the family and the child. Halsey argued that equality of educational opportunity is essentially a discussion about education for whom (access) and to do what (outcomes). The third phase was concerned with the reappraisal of the function of education in contemporary societies.

The concept of equality of educational opportunity has undergone significant change over the decades. The core of the idea, however, remains that all the children should have an equal chance to succeed (or fail) in a common school system. What has undergone a change, however, is the understanding of the concept of equal chance itself. Over time this concept has become more

inclusive in terms of its implications. The scope of 'who is included' has widened to encompass blacks, women and other minorities, as well as white men. The emphasis has shifted from the provision of formal or legal equal educational opportunities to the requirement that educational institutions take active or affirmative steps to ensure equal treatment of different groups. Underlying this shift of emphasis as Coleman has argued, is the emergence of a conception of equality of educational opportunity, as 'equality of results', where educational institutions begin to be held partly accountable for gross differences in the attendance or success rates of different groups and are expected to take measures to reduce those differences.

Until about 1950, equality of educational opportunity had a relatively simple and restricted meaning. It referred to the right then enjoyed by all except the black Americans to attend the same publicly supported comprehensive schools and to compete on formally equal terms with all other students, regardless of their class or ethnic background. Such rights, American educators pointed out, were not enjoyed by European students to anywhere near the same degree. In much of Europe, separate schools for the academically able were the rule, and in practice this meant a higher concentration of upper middle class students in the college preparatory schools.

The twenty years following the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954 saw a steadily broadening of equality of educational opportunity. The court ruled that the maintenance of separate school system for black and white students was unconstitutional because such segregated schools were inherently unequal. Not only the meaning of equality of educational opportunity but the criteria on which it was based also broke new ground. Testimony established that segregated schools attended by blacks were inferior in their facilities and resources to schools attended by white students. In the ruling that segregated schools were unequal because they were inferior schools the Court opened the way to a much broader conception of equality of educational opportunity, one that stressed the communities' or the school's response to provide some rough equivalence of effective opportunity for all students and not merely the responsibility to make some opportunities available. Scholarships and financial aid programmes were implemented, enabling a larger number of poor and working class students to attend college. The courts also moved to a more activist conception of equality of educational opportunity during the 1960s. It meant that black and other minority students should have real rather than merely formal opportunities to attend the same schools as white students.

It was during the seventies rather than the sixties that the most radical changes occurred in the concept of equality of educational opportunity. First, the term became still more inclusive in the groups to which it was thought to apply – attention was now paid to the handicapped and women. Separate colleges for male students also came under attack. Toward the end of the decade, a majority of previously all male or all female colleges had opened their doors to at least some members of the opposite sex. There was also controversy about the denial of equal opportunity implicit in the greater subsidies given to boys' school sports rather than to girls' sports.

At the same time, a radical shift occurred in the criteria that were used to assess whether equality of educational opportunity existed. During the mid 1970s, an increasing number of liberal and radical critics defined it as the existence of roughly proportional education outcomes for all groups, or as Coleman put it, as 'equality of results'. In this position, schools were held responsible for ensuring that blacks, women or other minority groups moved towards parity with white males across a whole range of educational outcomes. Differences in these outcomes from under-representation of whites in the

physical sciences to the over-representation of blacks among high school drop-outs tended to be taken as evidence of inequality of education opportunity.

There is no simple answer to the question: do schools provide equality of educational opportunity? If we were to use as a criterion the activist definitions of the 1970s, then the answer would be an unequivocal no. Large differences still exist between the relative successes of different groups in education. For example, lower class black students in particular are much more likely to drop out of high school and to fail simple tests of literacy than white students. Adopting the pre-1960s criteria, however will yield positive results. There is no doubt that there are far more formal opportunities available to disadvantaged students now than existed a few years ago. However, sociologists are interested in the degree to which changes in schooling have changed the relative chances of different social classes and ethnic groups. The general issue is whether schools continue to reinforce or reproduce existing patterns of inequality among groups or whether schools have helped create a society that is open to individual talent and effort regardless of social background. As education opportunities have expanded, has the relationship between education success and social class declined, as the functional paradigm would predict, or has it remained strong as conflict theorists assert?

10.5 Equality of Social Access: Myth or Reality

To what extent does schooling provide equal access to social groups from varying social, economic, linguistic, regional and religious backgrounds? The question here is not simply regarding access to educational institutions but the experiences that one undergoes in school, which determines the educational performance of such students. Theoretically speaking, even though, private schools maybe open to children from various ethnic backgrounds, the very fact that they have a high fee structure restricts the entry of a large number of students to such schools. The hierarchy of educational institutions ensures the maintenance of socio-economic differences between groups in society.

Blacks, women, lower caste or class groups, even after they enter the same school, have experiences which place them at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* their more advantaged counterparts. When secondary education is of different types, working class children can be shown to be less likely to enter the more academic schools and once there, to be more likely to leave early. There are also considerable social class differences in access to the universities. In the US, the pattern of class differences is much the same as in Europe, in spite of differences in the organization of secondary education. Dropping out of school before high school graduation is more characteristic of low-status families, measured in terms of income level and of the father's occupation. In Poland too, the children of the intelligentsia have a much greater chance of entering higher education than the children of workers and peasants' in spite of a system which allows extra points for social background. There is also considerable differentiation by choice of subjects. Thus the children of peasants are likely to enter a college of agriculture and the children of industrial workers a technical university. The teacher training colleges and academies of theology also recruit heavily from the children of working class and the peasantry.

Apart from these differences between social classes which seem to persist in different societies, there are also widespread variations between regions, particularly between urban and rural areas. There are also regional differences between countries, ethnic minorities and between sexes. Women's enrollment in schools and colleges is lower as compared to men. In Europe, universities are still largely a male preserve. There are however large variations between countries, dependent partly on the position of women in the employment market, partly, as in comparison between Britain and the United States. In the

USSR, for example, men and women enter higher education in roughly equal numbers. There is some evidence that women tend to predominate in certain kinds of higher education rather than others. They are, for example, less likely to pursue post-graduate education and less likely to study science. They also join teaching and nursing professions in large numbers. Socio-economic background and gender interrelate with each other. Studies reveal that the disparity between the sexes widens, as one goes down the social scale, until at the extreme of the scale, an unskilled manual worker's daughter has a chance of only one in 500 or 600 of entering a university — a chance a 100 times lower than if she had been into a professional family.

Some theorists suggest that the solution for such problems lies in the reservation system, in which the proportion of children from various social backgrounds — women, blacks (for example, reservation of seats in educational institutions for lower caste children in India) — is fixed. But this does not, in itself solve the problems of the student who is not adequately prepared for higher education or is poorly motivated so that unless the institutions involved are involved to accept a double standard they must provide remedial teaching or face a high wastage rate.

According to Boudon (1973), inequality of educational opportunity is showing a slow but consistent decline. However, the value of higher education in terms of social mobility is depressed by the very process, which brings working class and other disadvantaged students into it in large numbers. At the same time, such students tend to be concentrated in shorter courses, or less prestigious institutions. As many observers have pointed out, a society based on strictly meritocratic principles would not necessarily be a more equal society. A rigid class structure is not compatible with a considerable measure of individual mobility and both Jencks and Boudon have argued, although in different ways that the way to equality of economic opportunity is through a more equal society rather than through equality of education opportunity.

10.6 Schooling and Equality of Educational Opportunity

One of the more important controversies in sociology of education is one regarding the consequence of the schooling revolution and its effects on equality of opportunity. In the United States, school has been long seen as a great equalizer, as perhaps the single most important institution that works to erase the handicaps of birth and create a society truly open to the talented. More educational opportunities, it has long been argued, are the key to create a meritocratic society, a society where talent and effort rather than privilege and social origins would determine an individual's status. Such arguments, stated in more formal and precise terms are part of the functional paradigm, and they continue to enjoy wide support, despite mounting evidence that the expansion of educational opportunities in recent decades has not had the dramatically meritocratic effects envisaged by the theory.

Much of this work and writing has been concerned with two linked concepts: meritocracy and equality of opportunity. In a meritocracy, individuals are rewarded on the basis of merit, as it is argued that the educational system allocates them to positions on the basis of ability. In a meritocracy, economic, social and political rewards are distributed according to performance in intellectual accomplishments. Those who do best in the educational system are allotted the most powerful, prestigious and best-paid positions in the occupational structure.

This means, that selection takes place through the educational system, which provides an avenue of social and economic mobility. Here, individuals are selected for positions in the economic and social hierarchies according to

educational criteria. On this basis, social origins do not determine educational success, so that those born into a wealthy family are not automatically destined for a high status.

10.7 Meritocracy and the Functional Paradigm

A central argument of the functional paradigm is that the development of mass education helps create a more meritocratic society, a society where effort and talent rather than birth or privilege determine status. There are two reasons why this should be so. First, as modern societies have become more complex and more dependent on a highly trained and skilled labour force, educational achievement would have increasingly powerful effects on an individual's adult status. Second, because success in school depends on universalistic criteria such as performance in tests and examinations, the ability of privileged parents to pass on their status to their children should be reduced when schooling becomes the principal criterion for allocating adult status.

From the functional paradigm, therefore, we can deduce three propositions.

- 1) The co-relation between educational and occupational status will increase over time.
- 2) The co-relation between parents' social status and the social status of their children will diminish over time.
- 3) The co-relation between parents' social status and the educational achievements of their children will diminish over time.

The apparent failure of the expansion of education to reduce the advantages enjoyed by children of privileged parents has led to two simple but very different explanations. Both are seriously misleading, but because of their simplicity and popularity, they warrant treatment before more complex and satisfactory theories are examined.

Box 10.2: Concept of Meritocracy: Critical assessment

The concept of meritocracy is not without problems.

- i) It tends to assume that social inequality is inevitable.
- ii) It focuses on placement in the occupational structure; it overlooks the significance of elites and the role of the propertied class.
- iii) A meritocracy is a society with structured social inequality in which individuals have an equal opportunity to obtain unequal power and reward. On this basis, privilege and disadvantage are not eradicated as the educational system provides a different set of criteria to allocate people to social positions.

10.8 Neo-Marxist Paradigm

The second straightforward explanation came from the neo-Marxist sociologists. The functional paradigm received a significant challenge during the late sixties and seventies from more radical and conflict-oriented theories. Their argument claims that the rhetoric of equality of opportunity has concealed a great deal of systematic discrimination by schools and employers against disadvantaged youth. The picture that these theorists present is one of a society where inheritance status is very high indeed and of schools that routinely assign low caste status to slow tracks and discourage them from pursuing educational careers that might lead to upward mobility.

According to the neo-Marxist critique, schools have betrayed the promise of equality of educational opportunity. They also believe that schools within the

confines of capitalist society at least can have no other consequence than the maintenance of existing differences in life chances between privileged and disadvantaged groups. The rhetoric of equal opportunity from this perspective serves to conceal a process by which schools today, as in the past, reproduce class divisions and persuade large parts of the population that they lack the skills and aptitudes needed for high status populations. In all modern societies, conflict theorists point out, there is a struggle for a limited number of scarce and desirable high-status positions, a contrast in which the children of those who already have such status have great advantages. And since schooling has now largely replaced other more traditional avenues of mobility in modern society, it is naïve, conflict theorists suggest, to believe that high-status groups will not use their greater resources to reserve the lion's share of the most valued educational qualifications for their own children. The problem with this theory is that the data on social mobility indicates that rates of upward and downward movement were quite high throughout this century and perhaps the twentieth century as well.

10.9 Status Competition Theory

The status competition theory places great stress on how the process of competition between groups leads to a rapid expansion of educational credentials that maybe only tangentially related to the real skills to do a particular job. The expansion of schooling increases the available educational attainment of low-status groups and it provides skills and qualifications that in the past would have entitled them to claim desirable jobs. But such expansion also increases everyone's educational achievement and high and middle status groups have more of opportunities than low status groups. What matters in determining the chances of any particular group to obtain desirable jobs therefore is not the absolute level of its qualifications which may the theory suggests, be more than adequately satisfactory to perform the jobs in question, but its relative educational qualifications in comparison with other groups.

Increasingly educational opportunities may create the illusion of progress towards more general opportunities for disadvantaged groups but because high-status groups have always had greater resources to obtain more schooling to restore their competitive position, the relative chances of low-status students will remain virtually constant despite constantly increasing level of education. The implication of this theory is that educational opportunities will lead to increasing general opportunities only if there are deliberate and conscious strategies that increase the relative position of a particular group in its possession of education credentials that are currently most significant for desirable occupations. Only through affirmative action, the theory seems to imply, will low-status students be able to catch up with more privileged students.

Thus, working class groups are in a no more favourable position than they were in the past. Such groups may have the illusion of relative progress in that the current generation has far more schooling than past generations but their position in the competition for desirable high-status occupations remains no better than it was before the expansion of higher education. The growth of education opportunities in the last several decades has not been significant or trivial, but these increasing education opportunities have not yet been translated into clear improvements in the relative chances of low-status youth to obtain high-status jobs. Part of the reason for this is that education credentials alone are not the whole story. Working class youth and college degrees are not as likely to get good jobs as middle or upper class youth. But there is little question that a major reason for the continuing difficulties that working class youth face is also that on the average they do less well in school than other students.

10.10 Case Studies on Social Mobility

There have been several studies in Britain on social mobility, but out of all these studies, two have attracted most interest. The major one is the Glass study of 1949. The Glass team looked at a sample of 10,000 men who were 18 and over and lived in England, Scotland or Wales in 1949. Among the data collected were the respondents' age, marital status, schools attended, qualifications obtained and details of their own and their father's occupation. Such data were used to address two major questions. First, how open was British society? Second, was there equality of opportunity for those of equal talents? In addressing these questions, Glass looked at inter-generational mobility by comparing the occupational status of fathers and sons to examine the extent to which sons follow the occupation of their fathers. On the basis of this study, Glass (1954) found that there was a high degree of self-recruitment at the two ends of the social scale. Secondly, most mobility was short range as individuals moved mainly between lower white collar and skilled manual positions in both directions. Finally, that the middle of the occupational hierarchy was a buffer zone so that movement between manual and non-manual occupations was short range. Regarding inter-generational mobility, Glass found that less than a third of the men were in the same job as their fathers. Glass's data shows that inequality is not fixed at birth and there is a fair degree of fluidity of circulation. Although children from high status may be downwardly mobile compared, with their fathers, they may still have a better chance than their working class peers of getting to higher level jobs.

The second is the Oxford mobility study and was conducted by Goldthorpe and his associates (Goldthorpe with Llewellyn and Payne 1980). It consisted of a small sample of 10,000 adult men aged 20-64 who were residents in England and Wales in 1972. Here, the respondents were required to provide data on their own occupational and educational biographies as well as those of their fathers, mothers, wives, brothers and friends. This study involved an examination of the impact of the post war reform and economic change on the degree of openness in British society. Furthermore, the team also wished to examine the impact of post-reform education policy and the degree of movement between generations of individuals from the same family. The focus was therefore on patterns of intergenerational mobility. The Glass team used a status classification based on the occupational prestige to categorize respondents, while the Oxford team used a seven-fold classification based on social class. These seven classes were grouped into three broader categories as follows:

- 1) Classes I and II of professionals, administrators and managers are a service class.
- 2) Classes III, IV and V of clerical, self-employed artisans and supervisors are an intermediate class.
- 3) Classes VI, VII of manual workers and vice versa.

The main trends that can be derived from this evidence concern patterns of social mobility among men. First, there has been a considerable pattern of self-recruitment (follow in father's footsteps). Second, there has been upward mobility as the upper socio-economic groups have recruited individuals from those of manual origins. This has been a consequence of a growth in professional, administrative, managerial occupations as shown by the census data from 1951 onwards. The fact that these positions have been filled by the sons of manual and non-manual workers undermines the ideas that there is a buffer zone or that there is any closure of the upper status groups. Women have been excluded from studies of social mobility and no comparable studies to those that have been reviewed have been conducted among women.

10.11 Relationship between Education and Social Mobility in Indian Society

M. S. A. Rao (1967) systematically charted out the course of the relationship between education and social mobility in India from pre-British days till the introduction of the modern system of education. According to him, in pre-British India and during the earlier phases of British rule, education was generally the monopoly of upper castes, although in some regions like Kerala, middle and low castes also had access to it. Vedic learning was confined to *savarnas*, and even among Brahmins, only a section of the people had the right to study the Vedas and practice priesthood. The study of the Quran was open to all Muslims although Maulvis had the right to interpret and expound it in their own way. Similarly, among the Buddhists, education was open to all the followers of the religion. Certain literary professions such as medicine (Ayurveda) and astrology were also open to castes other than Brahmins. Members of castes that engaged in trade learnt accounting and book - keeping. In the courts of kings there were scribes who specialized in the art of writing and keeping records; in villages there were accountants who maintained land registers and revenue records. Other skills necessary to pursue occupations such as smithy, house building, chariot building, manufacture of weapons and fireworks, weaving, embroidery, leather work, pottery, barbering, laundering were passed on in the line of father or mother. Such a mode of acquiring skills restricted the choice of occupation. But certain occupations such as cultivation, trade and commerce were open to many castes.

According to Rao (ibid), in most cases, a caste frequently followed more than one occupation. The incidence of occupational mobility was more evident in cities than in villages. Just as formal education leading to certain professions such as medicine and astrology raised the status of some castes (in a limited way), mobility of castes to higher status positions entitled them to literary education. Ahirs, a caste of small peasants and milk sellers, for example, rose to political power in Rewari and claimed the status of Yadavas (Kshatriyas). They were then entitled to literary education, as it was an aspect of high caste status. Since these two processes were not common, literary education was not a significant factor in following an occupation of one's own choice. Oral communication and hereditary status played a far greater role in preparing an individual for earning a livelihood and these were determined to a greater extent by birth in a caste. Further, literary education was more open to males than to females.

With the introduction of the modern system of education, both the meaning and content of education underwent significant changes. It became less religious and many new branches of learning were introduced. The printing press revolutionized the education system in that the emphasis shifted from personal, oral communication to impersonal communication of ideas through books, journals and other media. It brought the sacred scriptures within the reach of many castes that were not allowed by custom to read them. English education was also the medium for the spread of modern science and ideas of equality and liberty.

The western system of education was gradually thrown open to all castes, religious groups and to women. Formal education became the basis of exploiting new economic opportunities which were, to a large extent, caste-free. Education opportunities helped one to acquire the necessary skills outside caste. Occupation thus became a relatively independent element of social status. The development of professions along with the salaried occupations led to the growth of the middle caste. This newly educated middle class in India could cut across different castes but frequently the advantages of English education accrued to upper castes because of the initial advantage of their high status.

The British adopted a policy of reservation of low paid administrative posts for members of low castes. The awareness of economic and other advantages of English education gradually spread to the lower rungs of the caste hierarchy, and there was a widespread effort on their part to seek new education. In independent India also, the policy of reservation was continued for backward castes, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe by the government to give educational and other privileges to them. One of the major changes that the new system of education introduced was a gradual dissociation of occupation from caste. While occupations in the traditional caste system were rated in terms of ritual purity and pollution, they are today rated, to some extent, in terms of the incomes they produce.

The western type of education has also made possible the upward mobility of individuals and groups in the framework of westernization, where membership of caste is not a decisive factor. Individuals get their children educated in public schools and convents, follow modern occupations, which are more remunerative and adopt a westernized style of life. Both the mechanisms of social mobility — sanskritization and westernization — are not mutually exclusive. People participate in both these and try to make the best of both the worlds. To reiterate, sanskritization is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently 'twice born' caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community. Westernization, on the other hand, refers to changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels — technology, institutions, ideology and values. The western system of education was also responsible for the spread of egalitarian ideas and modern, scientific rationality. These ideas became the guiding spirit behind the national movement in the fight for equality of opportunities, a source of inspiration for social reforms, and a challenge to traditional values, which supported the caste system.

Box 10.2: Are opportunities for education in contemporary India open to all?

There exists a hierarchy of educational institutions with respect to the standard and quality of education imparted by them to the students. At the one end there are public schools equipped with the most modern facilities and a highly qualified staff, and at the other, there are ill-equipped schools. On one hand, we have schools like G. D. Goenka in New Delhi with air conditioned classrooms and buses and skin sensor taps, with the best and state of the art infrastructure, which caters to the rich sections of society. On the other hand, we have several local, municipal schools with not just poor infrastructure and basic aids like blackboard and chalk, but even insufficient teachers. A similar disparity of standards exists between certain colleges and university departments and between one university and another. Not to speak of the differences between metropolitan, urban schools and village schools.

There is a rough correlation between the hierarchy of educational institutions and the social background of students and the teachers. Students from upper strata tend to join public schools and convents and those from lower ones are to be found in greater numbers in the Municipal District Board and government schools. There is a marked contrast in the quality of education imparted by these schools. The former provide a social environment for the children, which is to some extent congruent with the western style of life that obtains in their homes. *Education here is expensive and only students belonging to upper classes and higher income groups are able to exploit it. They are also*

in an advantageous position to seek admission to engineering and medical colleges, which sell seats in the name of donations. Also these rich students can also engage private tutors at the school, college and university levels. Occasionally, teachers employed in schools and colleges run tutorial classes and maintain high standards of teaching in the latter to attract students to their private colleges. However, educational opportunities are open to all those who seek to take advantage of them, without being bound by limitations of caste or religion.

It must be noted that caste associations have their educational institutions but they give preferential treatment in the matter of admission to students of the same caste. Members of the same caste are recruited as teachers. Caste enterprise and preferential state policies affect the system of education in their own way. Some schools started by sectarian associations promote high standards in education while others contribute to a general deterioration of standards. Such teachers are largely responsible for the maintenance of these; their recruitment on the basis of caste and religious considerations at the expense of merit and objective criteria is bound to adversely affect the education system and the development of human values.

When students from lower strata get highly educated, they not only qualify themselves to get more remunerative jobs, thereby raising the economic level of the family, but also contribute to the heightening of its prestige seeking alliance from castes which either have a higher ritual status or reputed ancestry, also helps untouchable castes shed the stigma of belonging to a low caste. Education has become a source of prestige and a symbol of higher social status. It has also brought about significant change(s) in the traditional social status of women.

Social mobility in the larger framework of students supported by themselves, i.e., self-help students concern more significantly the situation of intra-generational mobility. Those who are already employed to educate themselves further greatly benefit from the establishment of morning and evening colleges, correspondence courses and the professional and certificate courses leading to a degree or diploma, and the provision by some universities of admitting external students. These avenues of formal adult education act as an independent channel of social mobility. The pattern of mobility here is characterized by greater spontaneity and purposive motivation than those in the case of students supported by their parents. Individuals are able to work their way through higher education and move up the ladder of stratification during the span of their careers.

Reflection and Action 10.2

Collect at least five case studies of individuals who have enhanced their social and economic position in society by improving their educational attainment. Discuss with other learners at the study centre.

10.12 Conclusion

The relationship between education and social mobility is complex and dynamic. After reading this unit, you would have realized that it is extremely difficult to draw generalizations that would be of universal relevance. While there is no doubt about the fact that education makes an important contribution towards social mobility of individuals and groups, there are several factors that sometimes significantly alter the direction and fate of such a relationship. In a society which is rigidly stratified, it becomes very difficult for the formal institution of education to remain unaffected or unbiased. Under those circumstances, it ends up maintaining the status quo and reinforcing the socio-economic or

cultural divide between people. In many cases, the stigma of belonging to lower castes, for example dalits, may remain even after attaining the highest educational status. At the same time, however, there have been occasions, when schools have been able to rise above those prejudices and give a fair chance to people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, to overcome their handicaps and move up the social ladder.

10.13 Further Reading

Boudon, R., 1997. "Education and mobility: A structural model". In J. Karabel, J & A. H. Halsey (eds.). *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York: OUP

Christofer, J. 1993. *The limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*. USA : Allyn and Bacon

Rao, M.S.A. 1967. "Education, stratification and social mobility". In Gore, Desai and Chitnis (eds.). *Papers on the Sociology of Education in India*. New Delhi: NCERT



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