Unit 8
Education and Socialization

Contents

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

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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 over-crowding, 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 Passerson (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 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 white 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 feminity 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

Burgess, R.G.1986. *Sociology, Education and Schools.* London: Batsford

Chitins (eds), *Papers on Sociology of Education in India.* New Delhi: NCERT