ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟ ମୁକ୍ତ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ସମ୍ବଲପୁର
Odisha State Open University
Sambalpur

BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS) IN
SOCIOLOGY
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE
COURSE - II

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Sociology of Education

Bachelor of Arts

SOCIOLOGY (BASO)

DSE-02

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

BLOCK-1

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

UNIT 1:	**MEANING & CONCEPT OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION**
UNIT 2:	**INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOCIOLOGY**
UNIT 3:	**LITERACY AND EDUCATION**
UNIT 4:	**EDUCATION AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCT**

DSE-02:   SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

BLOCK-2:   SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

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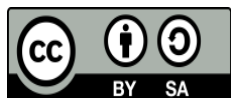
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Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur

Material Production

Dr.Manas Ranjan Pujari
Registrar
Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur

Printed by :

BLOCK: 2   SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

The present Block discusses the sociology of education. Unit 1 gives an understanding of the meaning and concept of education. Unit 2 describes the interrelationship between education and society. Unit 3 analyses the concepts of literacy and education and the differences in between them. Unit 4 focuses on education as a social construct.

UNIT-1   MEANING AND CONCEPT OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Structure

1.1.   INTRODUCTION

Education does not happen in isolation. It is a social process that takes place through organized interaction between different individuals within the social system involving different social institutions, such as family, schools, college, etc. An individual has the very little scope of learning or being educated all by himself. He/she has to depend on others who help him/her for lifelong learning and education. Hence, society as a whole plays a vital role in the process of education of every individual. On the other hand, an educated individual contributes to the development of society. This mutual relationship between society and the educational process forms the subject matter of the sociology of education.

As a student of Sociology, you must be aware of the basic concept of sociology and must have understood what sociology is all about. Here again, you are invited to gain a

deeper understanding of sociology in relation to education. In this Unit, you will get to know about the meaning of sociology of education, its definition, its basic concepts, characteristics and scope of sociology of education in the Indian context.

1.2   LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to impart basic fundamental knowledge on the meaning and concept of sociology of education in easy-to-understand ways. After studying this unit, the students will be able:

- To conceptualize the meaning and concept of sociology of education
- To explain how educational sociology and sociology of education struggle for their existence
- To describe the scope of sociology of education
- To elaborate the objective, needs and importance of sociology of education
- To discuss the relationship between education and sociology

1.3.   MEANING AND OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Before getting into the discussion of the meaning of sociology of education, we must be clear about the literal meaning of both sociology and education separately which will later help you to grasp the combined concept of sociology of education in a better way.

The English word "Sociology" has been formulated by deriving and combining ideas from two different root words from different languages. The first one is the Latin word "socius" which means "companion". The second one is the Greek word "logos" which means "study" or "science". Hence, the combination of the above two words literally means the study of companionship, togetherness or social relations. Broadly speaking, the term sociology refers to the science or study of the origin, development, organization, and functioning of human society. It is the science of fundamental laws of social behaviour, relations, institutions, etc. In other words, sociology is the systematic study of society and social interactions to understand individuals, groups and institutions.

The word 'education' is derived from the Latin term 'educare' which means bringing up, leading forth or raising up. It implies that education as a process seeks to develop the innate or the inner potentialities of humans for their own development and for the development of the society they live in. Education is further defined as a process to develop the knowledge, skill and character of an individual to transform or change him or her into a complete human being with all essential skills and abilities to live an effective and fulfilling life in society. Thus, in simple terms, it can be concluded that education aims to develop the inner potential of the students to change them into a perfect and rational human being ready to meet the requirement of society.

Coming to the exact point of the present discussion, sociology of education can be understood as the systematic study that deals with the dynamic interactions and interrelationship between education and sociology. The subject matter of the sociology of education tries to find answers to the questions as to how different component parts of the social system, such as social interactions, social institutions, associations, social groups, conflicts, religions, caste etc. influence the process of education and educational system within a social system. On the other side, it also tries to understand how education exerts different impacts on the process of development of society. In the simplest sense of the term sociology of education can be defined as the scientific analysis of the social processes and social patterns involved in the educational system.

Definitions:

For a deeper understanding of the concept of sociology of education, some of the most popular definitions delineated by renowned scholars in the field of sociology of education can be discussed as under:

According to Good "Educational Sociology is the scientific study of how people live in social groups, especially including the study of education that is obtained by the living in the social groups, and education that is needed by the members to live efficiently in social groups." In this definition, Good emphasizes that the process of education takes place in social groups rather than individually. He also highlighted the importance of education for living an effective social life.

In the words of **Corwin**, "Sociology of education is the study of how social institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcomes."

As **Marshall** puts it, "In the sociology of education we are very much concerned with the public schooling system of modern industrial societies including the expansion of higher further, adult and continuing education."

In **Ottaway**'s words "Educational Sociology starts with the assumption that education is an activity which goes on in society and the society, in turn, determines the nature of education". In this definition, the author has indicated that the sociology of education leads us to understand that education is a social activity and the nature of education is greatly determined by social processes.

According to **George Payne,** "Educational Sociology is the scientific study of the relation between education and society". Alike other educational sociologists, Payne has highlighted the interrelationship between education and society in clear terms.

Brookover and **Gotlieb** consider, "Education as a combination of social acts and that sociology is the analysis of human interaction." The educational process goes on both in formal and informal situations. Sociological analysis might be assumed to lead the development of scientific generalizations about human relations in the educational system.

After careful review of all the above definitions, it can be summarised that sociology of education is a part of the scientific study of sociology that primarily deals with social factors and social processes involved in the educational system. It is concerned with the relationships, activities and reactions of the teachers, students and others involved in the process of education in the classroom and outside. It emphasizes sociological problems in the realm of education. It also studies education as an agent of transmission of patterns of culture down to the next generation. Sociology of education is also interested in analyzing the role of factors such as caste, class, gender, religion and region in determining educational access and utilization. Earlier, sociology of education and educational sociology were used interchangeably, but in the current times, sociology of education has been adopted as a specialized and separate branch of study under the discipline of sociology of education. Hence the

definitions of educational sociology and sociology of education are used interchangeably and in overlapping ways.

1.4. EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY VERSUS SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Though very often the phrases educational sociology and sociology of education are used interchangeably to refer to the same concept in sociology, they are well identified by social scientists as different concepts. Though many of the scholars, policymakers and academicians fail to recognize it and very often try to understand the two concepts, i.e. educational sociology and Sociology in close relationship to each other, the more refined understanding of the concepts goes on to show that Educational sociology is different from the sociology of education. In a specific sense, the scope of Sociology of Education is premised within the purview of the application of ideas and principles of sociology in the process of educational practices. This concept, though a part of sociology attempts to relate principles of sociology to the institutions of education as a separate societal unit. The content of the sociology of education, therefore, tried to integrate many general concepts falling within the purview of sociology, such as the society itself; the social processes like accommodation, assimilation, cultural lag, sub-culture, status, etc with the process of education. It also takes into account other considerations the polity and economy that can have a significant impact on the process of education. Sociology of education as an emerging discipline seeks also to include the studies on the social forces and determinants that affect educational and cultural change; the social institutions like the family, peer group, the school and the religious institutions involved in the educational process. It also gives due emphasis to understand school as a micro-society. As a micro-society, the school is viewed as a formal system that invariably witnesses social processes such as authority, selection, the organization of learning and streaming all of which are the functional needs of a school. In doing so, the supporters of the idea of sociology of education the sociologists often utilize any one of historical correlation or the functionalist approaches. These are demonstrated in the particular perspective used for the study of a given problem.

On the other hand, educational sociology is that part of sociology that studies the problems of the relationship between society and education. It sought to utilize the findings of sociological researches in planning and executing educational plans. The main aim of educational sociology was to study social interaction within the perimeter of the discipline of sociology and to support education through the conscious use of these concepts in educational fields. Francis Brown considered that "All education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race." He defined educational sociology "as that discipline which applied the general principles and findings of sociology to the process of education." Unlike Sociology of Education, Educational sociology recognizes education as a social fact, a process and an institution, having a social function and being determined directly and indirectly by different social factors. Educational Sociology threw light on the importance of the interactions of different elements of the society with an individual involved in educational practices as a student, teacher, or educational administrator. It emphasized the progress of society through the medium of education. The problems of schooling and instructions were looked upon as problems of society. Educational sociology tried to answer the questions as to what type of education should be given to children. What should be the curriculum? Why do children become delinquent? It threw light on those institutions and organizations and on those social interactions that were important in the educational process. It also used educational interactions that helped in the development of the personality of the individual so that he becomes a better social being. It was realized that though educational sociology made everyone realize the social nature of education, formulated ideals by which educational planning was guided, used the theoretical knowledge gathered by researches conducted by either sociologists or educational sociologists, there appeared to be confusion as to what the proper dimensions of educational sociology should be.

There was strong debate among the sociologists about the scope of educational sociology. There were differences of opinion regarding what types of researches are to be classified under the head of educational sociology. This led to the thinking that there should be a separate branch of knowledge that can be designated as the sociology of education. Soon educational sociology became a thing of the past. After a prolonged

intellectual struggle, in 1963, "The Journal of Educational Sociology" was transformed into "The Journal of Sociology of Education." Since then, the sociology of education has been recognized as a special branch of study within the discipline of Sociology. In the new light, Sociology of Education is defined as the scientific study of the social processes and social patterns involved in the educational system.

1.5. OBJECTIVES OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

The main aim of sociology of education is to study how social institutions and social processes influence the process of education within a social milieu. Sociology of education, according to George S. Herrington has four specific objectives. The specific objectives as Herrington postulates, deal with the various aspects of the total social milieu as well as the means, the methods, the curriculum and the agencies of education. The achievement of these objectives is essential for the achievement of the larger aims of education. As interpreted by sociologists of education, the specific objectives are:

- To study the role of schools in the communities and the social factors and processes influencing the school system
- To understand democratic ideologies, cultural, economic and social trends that influence formal and informal agencies of education
- To measure the social process and their effects upon individuals involved in the education system
- To socialize curriculum by designing it according to felt social needs and aspirations of the people
- To encourage research and critical thinking; and adopt the results thus obtained, in order to achieve the social goals

1.6. SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Scope of sociology of education refers to the total area where the subject matter of the sociology of education can be applied. It includes all the social elements that can be brought into the purview of education. The scope of sociology of education embraces

vast areas in the field of education where social relationship, social interdependence, cooperation, social interaction, collective efforts find expression or can be experienced. The following areas of social elements can be encompassed within the scope of sociology of education:

1. Sociology of education is primarily concerned with such general concepts such as society in the broadest sense, culture, community, class, environment, socialization, internalization, accommodation, assimilation, cultural lag, subculture, status, role and so forth that come to play or help in the process of education.

2. It includes the study of educational inequality perpetuated by most common social problems, such as racism, communalism, casteism and gender discrimination, etc.

3. Sociology of education tries to understand the educational situations taking into account various spatial and culture-specific problems and prospects in their contexts. For example, educational situations in rural, urban and tribal areas, educational differences in various parts of the country and different countries of the world, with special references to respective races, cultures, socio-economic status, etc.

4. It is further involved in the study of patterns of interaction of education with different social groups classified on the basis of cultural background, socio-economic status, social role structure and relate these to the process of the micro-society of the school including authority, selection, and the organization of learning, streaming, curriculum and so forth.

5. The subject matter of the sociology of education also includes an understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of different educational approaches in teaching students with different levels of intelligence associated with different social factors.

6. It also encompasses the study of the effects of various social agencies like family, school, neighborhood, peer groups, social media, religious institutions and other social mechanisms on the academic performance of the students.

7. It includes the study of the relationship between social class, culture, language, parental education, occupation and the academic achievement of the students

8. The subject matter of the sociology of education also includes different social processes like social interaction, cooperation, competition, conflict, etc. within the system of education.

1.7. NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Every society has its own set of dynamic and ever-changing socio-cultural needs. Invariably, each society requires an educational intervention to meet these needs. The most common needs in modern industrial and globalized society are conservation of resources, environmental protection, global citizenship, etc. Therefore education caters towards the meeting of these needs. The content and methods of education change in response to the changing needs of society. Hence, there is a need for studying the sociology of education. Sociology of education as the super-concern of both sociology and education disciplines bears significant importance which can be discussed as under:

- Sociology of education as a special branch of study provides a basic understanding of the function of school, teachers and their contribution to society, social progress and development

- It also helps to gain knowledge and understanding on the effects of social elements on the working process of school as a miniature social system.

- It helps to gain a basic understanding of the relationship between the educational curriculum and the socio-cultural and economic needs of the society.

- It helps to acquire knowledge on democratic values and principles prevailing in society and guides educational planning and policymaking in line with those values and principles.

- Sociology of education enriches the students with a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and promotes a sense of responsibility for protecting and preserving that heritage.

- Education is essential for the development of society through the formulation of various rules and regulations and understanding of culture and traditions.

- Sociology of education needed to study the importance of human relationships both within and outside the educational agencies and helps for promotion of social adjustment among students and teachers.

- It promotes understanding of the effect of social groups, their interrelation and dynamics on the process of education.

1.8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOCIOLOGY

Emile Durkheim was the pioneer of integrating sociological thinking with the discipline of education. He was the first person who indicated the need for a sociological approach to education. For the first time, he recognized education to be essentially social in nature. For him "Result from the theory of education relates more clearly to sociology than any other science." He also emphasized that "education is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic and ever-changing process." Sociology of education is also sometimes used synonymously as educational sociology. It is a branch of study that studies education sociologically and recognizes education as a social fact, a process and an institution, having a social function and is being determined by many social factors to a great extent. It is clear from the above facts that Sociology of Education could come to its existence only because education is viewed as a social process.

a) Generic relationship between Sociology and Education

Going deep into understanding, you will find that twin concepts Sociology and Education that form the main constituents of the branch of the study of Sociology of Education are the two very closely knitted branches of knowledge, concerned essentially with an individual and his life in the society. Due to their common

characteristics shared in a number of ways, in the process of social development Education and Sociology are mutually interrelated and interdependent disciplines sharing many things in common. The subject matter and method of studies involved in both the disciplines are so closely intertwined that very often they happen to overlap each other to a great extent. All societies have their own ways and means of transmitting their belief, values, cultures and traditions to their younger generations through the process known as education. Education as a social process continues to operate as an effective means of meeting the above social needs since ancient times. The function of education is not limited to the only transmission of the past cultural heritage. It is also meant to help in shaping and reshaping the modes of living in society. Proper education can go a long way towards promoting new socio-cultural social patterns in the important areas of human development, such as employment, healthcare, leisure time activities, community service and family life, etc. The advent of modern education has ushered a new dimension to human life by reshaping human attitude and behavior and reactions in line with the modern scientific society that emphasizes scientific temperament and logic in every aspect of human development. The vital and inseparable relationship between education and sociology can be better understood through the discussion in the following lines:

- Sociology is the study of society, its elements and various social processes and education stands to be an essential part of any social system.

- Sociology seeks to study the society as a whole and all the parts of the social system and their respective functions, while education is recognized as one of the essential functions of every society.

- Socialized individuals and their interactions and associations are the supreme concern of the study of sociology is whereas; education is an important means for achieving these goals of sociology.

- Education system of a nation is known as the laboratory and workshop of sociological studies

- Sociology seeks to give the right direction to the functions performed by the educational system, while an education system looks up to the principles of sociology to enhance its functioning.

- Sociology explores the guiding laws and principles of social interactions and social institutions which are adopted by the educational system for the educational development of people in the society.

- Education seeks to preserve and transmit the social and cultural heritage which is owned by sociology.

- Society and different social situations are the main determinants of educational patterns and contents so that the socio-cultural needs of the society may be fulfilled.

b) Sociology of education and curriculum:

In line with the philosophy of sociology of education, the curriculum is organized such a way that it may help in the achievement of social aims. The curriculums of schools and colleges are designed in conformation to national goals laid down for the development of the nation. Hence, the goals for the social development of the nation are reflected in the curriculums of the schools and colleges. Due to this reason, the makers of educational policy consider it is essential to organize the curriculum carefully and properly in the lines of national priorities. In the word of eminent educationists, "Education is not to be confined to the study of a few subjects alone; it is to be present in any epitomized study of the diversified social life." The following principles associated to the sociology of education should be kept in view while undertaking the construction of an educational curriculum:

- The education curriculum gives due attention to the accomplishment of the social aims of the society.

- The curriculum should be laid down in response to the needs and problems of society. At the same time, it should also pay attention not to ignore the pupils.

- The structure of the curriculum along with instructional methods should be designed in such a way that the curriculum becomes an effective medium to regulate society.

- Through curriculum, the cultural values should be brought to light and through it the high ideals of the society should be transmitted to the new generation.

- The curriculum should be such that it develops an attitude of respect to all vocations. It should develop a sense of dignity of labour among students.

- The stress should be on a futuristic social change rather than bringing immediate change in individuals' behaviour.

- It should be able to develop a problem-solving attitude among the students and they should understand and solve the problem independently.

- There should be the provision of social programs for participation in social life

- The curriculum should be dynamic and flexible. It should change continuously according to changing social objectives.

- Curriculum planning should be based on the problems and needs of society on the immediate concerns, problems and interests of pupils

- The curriculum should reflect the basic cultural values of the society and should be an agent in the transmission of the highest values.

- Curriculum should include subjects like music, art, vocational subjects, physical education, language, physical sciences as well as biological sciences

c) Sociology of education and method of teaching

Sociology of education advocates the use of project methods, socialized techniques, Group discussion and techniques of group dynamics. They also encourage cooperative learning, problem-solving and democratic methods of teaching. Those educational methods are good which gives knowledge to the individual, which will enable the students to adapt and adjust to different social situations. Sociology gives importance to group methods of teaching. Methods that are able to develop democratic attitudes among children and enhance skills in social interaction recognized better methods of teaching. From a sociological point of view, the following methods of teaching recognised as important:

- The method of instruction by which the skill and knowledge acquired in the classroom are actually used by the individual in the adjustment to the social situation

- Method that helps an individual to achieve social correlation by use of knowledge and skill received in the school.

- The method of teaching should be stress the social behaviour outside the class while teaching

- The method of teaching should make use of all possible social resources and social operative force in the social life in order to develop the capacity in every individual for social adjustment.

- The social powers currents in the society should be used in the teaching system for increasing the social co-relationship.

- Sociologists suggest that teaching should be done through cultural and social programs.

- In teaching teacher will develop problem-solving and constructive thinking. For these socialized techniques, project and group methods fulfil most of the conditions.

- Students react better to co-operative learning in which there is sharing in the teaching-learning process. Cooperative group patterns of learning lay emphasis on group interaction.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

The word 'education' is derived from the Latin term 'educare' which means bringing up, leading forth or raising up. It implies that education as a process seeks to develop the innate or the inner potentialities of humans for their own development and for the development of the society they live in. Educational Sociology is the scientific study of how people live in social groups, especially including the study of education that is obtained by the living in the social groups, and education that is needed by the members to live efficiently in social groups.

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UNIT-2 INTERRELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Structure

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In common understanding, society is visualized as the organized system of social relationships of people living in a particular geographic territory, having a sense of belongingness or identity to a particular group and sharing some common interest. From the social point of view, education is seen as a process of development and means of cultural transmission from one generation to another in any given society. It is a social process and cannot take place without social interaction. Hence, education and society are two inseparable concepts.

This Unit focuses on a lucid discussion on the underlying relationship between education and society. In view of the strong, intimate and multi-faceted relationship between education and society, different threads of the relation between the two concepts have been elaborately discussed under the unit. Prior to that, the unit also seeks to discuss at length the basic understanding of the two popular concepts so as to provide the students a better understanding of their mutual relationship.

2.2.   LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to make the student understand the multi-faceted relationship between education and society. Under this unit conscious effort is made to explore many ways which display the different threads of relationship education shares with the society.

After studying this unit, the students are expected to be able:

- To conceptualize the basic concept of society and its characteristics

- To describe meaning, characteristics,

- To explain with a basic level of understanding on the relationship between education and society

2.3.   MEANING AND CONCEPT OF SOCIETY

The term 'society' is derived from the Latin word "Socious" which means togetherness or companionship. In this sense, society denotes the entity in which all the members are connected to each other directly or indirectly and reflects a sense of collectivity and togetherness.

Society is one of the most popular words widely used by people in different contexts. Sometimes it is referred to as a group of identical people living in a geographical area and sharing some common needs. In other ways, it is used to denote to a group of people who share a common identity on the basis of religion, language, occupations, caste, etc. for instance, Society of Jesus, Bodo language development society, Farmer's Welfare Society, The Buddhist Society of India. But these are all limited senses of society. At many times, the term 'society" is used in association with some secondary associations, such as; Indian Sociological Society, The Theosophical Society, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The Society for Protection to Children, etc.

In the broadest sense, Society refers to the complex network of human relationships. In this context, the word society has been defined by many scholars in different but identical ways, some of which can be discussed in the following lines:

MacIver gave the simplest most important definition of the term "society." According to him "Society is the web of relationship which is always changing."

According to Ginsberg, "A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations or modes of behaviour which mark them off from others, who do not enter into those relations or who differ from them in behaviour."

According to G.D.H. Cole, "Society is the complex of organized associations and institutions within the community".

According to F.H. Giddings, "Society is the union itself, the organization, the sum of formal relations in which associating individuals are bound together".

According to T.Parsons, "Society may be defined as the total complex of human relationship in so far as they grow out of action in terms of means and relationship, intrinsic or symbolic."

According to MacIver and Page, "Society is a system of usages and procedures, authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and of liberties".

According to Leacock, "Society includes not only the political relations by which men are bound together but the whole range of human relations and collective activities."

A close view of the above definitions leads us to understand that sociologists have defined society with two angles, such as:

1. A network of relationships between people or between groups in abstract terms.

2. A collection of people or an organization of individuals in concrete terms

To sum up society is the complex network of human relationships that reflects the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals, groups and associations through different points of contact at various levels. Society is self-sufficient to meet the different sets of needs of individuals from birth till death.

2.4. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE SOCIETY

1. Society consists of people

People are the essential constituents of society. Society cannot be imagined without people. For instance, there can be no educational institution without students and teachers. Similarly, without people there can be no interaction, no social relationships, no social life and ultimately no society at all.

2. Society is permanent in nature:

Permanence is an important characteristic of society. It is not a temporary organization or association like Teachers Association, Tribal Welfare Society and many others that cease to exist for various reasons. Society continues to exist even after the death of individual members and continues to reproduce and replace the individual components with new ones.

3. Society is dynamic:

No society is static and stagnant. Every society is governed by the rule of dynamism, change and constant progress or decay. It is said that change is the only constant thing associated with society. Every society changes continuously. With the passage of time, old customs, traditions, folkways, mores, values and institutions lose their relevance and get changed and replaced with the new customs and values, etc. It is evident that society changes from its traditional nature to modern nature. Hence change or dynamism is one of the most important characteristics of society.

4. It is abstract in nature:

As and when society is viewed as a web of social relationships, it is abstract because we cannot see or touch as we can do so on physical entities. According to MacIver "we may see the people but cannot see society or social structure, but only its external aspects". Social relationships are invisible and abstract. We can just realize them but cannot see or touch them. Therefore, society is abstract. In the words of Reuter, just as life is not a thing but a process of living, so society is not a

thing but a process of associating. Thus, society as a complex net of relationships is an abstract concept.

5.   It is an organized system

Society is an organized system of different but coherent component parts. All the parts of society, such as individuals, families, institutions, associations, etc. are interlinked through structuring and coordinating so as to ensure smooth functioning of the complex social system.

6.   Society stands on Likeness

The likeness is one of the foundational characteristics of every society**.** This essential condition exists among those who look like one another to some degree, likely in body and in mind. Likeness also refers to similarities among different people. It is observed that people in the society have similarities with regards to their needs, works, values, aims, ideals, outlook towards life, and so on. Such similarities lead to likenesses among people with the sense of we-feeling and help them for a life with harmony.

7.   **It is enriched with differences**:

Along with likeness differences is another important characteristic of society. Because society involves differences and it depends on them as much as on likeness. That is why MacIver opines that primary likeness and secondary differences create the greatest of all institutions, the division of labour, because differences are complementary to likeness, therefore social relationship. Supporters of the idea of social differences argue that society cannot progress merely with likeness or like-minded people. If all the people are alike in all respect, society cannot be interdependence leading to little chance for reciprocity and relationship. Family as the first society based on biological differences and differences in aptitude, interest and capacity. Though differences are necessary, social differences by themselves do not create society. Hence differences are sub-ordinate to likeness.

8.   **Society is a blend of Cooperation and Conflict:**

The interplay of co-operation and conflict is another important characteristic of society. Because famous sociologist MacIver once remarked that "Society is cooperation crossed by conflict". Co-operation is an essential component for the formation of society. Without co-operation, there can be no society. People can't maintain a happy and fulfilling life without co-operation. Co-operation avoids mutual destructiveness and results in successful collective living.

Alike co-operation, conflict is also necessary for society. It acts as a cementing factor for strengthening social relations. In a healthy and well developed society both co-operation and conflict co-exist. Society runs with the help of these two mutually responsive processes. Conflict makes co-operation meaningful and both are necessary for society.

9. Society as a stratified system:

Society provides a system of stratification on the basis of status, class, gender, caste, etc. that each individual shares an identical position in the social structure and has a relatively stable and recognizable position in the society.

2.5. Meaning and Concept of Education

Nelson Mandela once rightly said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Education is the key to human development. A good education not only transforms a human from an animal to a cultured and skilled perfect human being but also changes society as a whole into a better place to live. It is one of the most important dividends for the social development of a nation. Hence, education has been given the first place in the process of social development by all the societies of the world in modern times.

Though the word "education" is perhaps, the most widely used word in modern society; it is not that easy to understand or to explain the word. Etymologically, education' has been derived from the Latin term 'Educatum' which means the act of teaching or training. Some scholars in the field of education say that it has come from another Latin word "educare" which means 'to bring up' or 'to raise'. According to a few others, the words 'education' has originated from other Latin terms 'Educate'

which means 'to lead forth' or 'to come out'. All these meanings indicate that education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual. Further, the word 'Education' is derived from two words 'e' and 'duco', 'e' means from inside and 'duco' means to develop. The two words combined together give the meaning to make something grow or develop from within. Hence, the meaning of education literally covers many ideas associated with bringing up, raising, leading, teaching and training an individual so as to bring about his cognitive, social and psychological development.

Some of the most popular definitions formulated by some renowned sociologists and philosophers can be cited here for a better understanding of the concept of education:

a) Definitions of education by Western Scholars:

According to **Plato**, "Education develops in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of".

Aristotle said "Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty."

In the words of **Rousseau**, "Education is the child's development from within."

According to **Pestalozzi** "Education is the harmonious and progressive development of all the innate powers and faculties of man- physical, intellectual and moral."

S. S. Mackenzie defined education in the narrow sense and said, "Education may be taken to mean any consciously directed effort to develop and cultivate our powers."

According to **Drever** "Education is a process in which and by which knowledge, character and behavior of the young are shaped and moulded."

In the words of **Dumvile,** *"*Education in its widest sense includes all the influences, which at upon an individual during his passage from cradle to the grave."

John Dewey defined education "as the process of the reconstruction of experience, giving it a more socialized value through the medium of increased individual efficiency."

b) **Definitions of Education based on Indian Thoughts:**

According to Rig Veda: "Education is that which makes a man self-reliant and selfless."

Kautilya said, "Education means training for the country and love for the nation."

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi "By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind, and spirit."

According to Tagore "Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love, making this truth its own and giving expression to it."

According to Vivekananda "Education means the manifestation of the divine perfection, already existing in man."

Zakir Hussain "Education is the work of the whole life. It begins from the time of birth and continues till the last moment of death."

A.S. Altekar gave a comprehensive definition of education. He said, "Education has always been regarded in India as a source of illumination and power which transforms and ennobles our nature by the progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties."

As presented by the **University Education Commission** "Education, according to Indian tradition, is not merely a means to earn a living, nor it is only a nursery of thought or a school for citizenship. It is an initiation into the life of the spirit, a training of human souls in pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. It is a second birth '*dvityam janma*'

Indian Education Commission (1964-66) states that education ought to be related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people so as to be a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation.

A careful study of all the above definitions both in western and Indian perspectives leads us to understand that education, in the narrower sense, is regarded as equivalent to training and instruction within a defined system involving schools, colleges and other informal agencies. It consists of the "specific influences" consciously designed in a school or in a college or in an institution to bring about the overall growth and development of the students. Further, education in the wider sense is a life-long process. It begins with the birth of a child and ends with his death. It is a pervasive and continuous process. All the nations of the world have their own system of education. Education is not limited to the classroom only; it is also not limited to a particular period of life.

2.6. CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATION

Some of the common characteristics of education can be discussed under the following lines:

☐ **Education is a social process:** The process of education takes place only in a social environment and without it, no one can acquire educational experiences. As we know, social interaction is the most important component of education and it can only be perceived in a social environment. Education aims to impart the students with the desirable social skills to adjust to the requirement of the society they live in.

☐ **Education is development:** Education as a process revolves around human development. It is directly or indirectly involved in the all-around development of an individual. The aim of education is the development of an individual to the fullest extent to become a more complete human being equipped with all knowledge, skills and abilities for a better social life.

☐ **Education at the root of creativity:** A real education drives human minds for creativity. It gives new experiences to individuals and helps them to explore and create new things to meet the changing needs of society.

☐ **Education is an Art:** Education is an art in the sense that it shapes, moulds and develops the inherent qualities of the students in a beautiful way. The activity performed by a teacher is also an Art. Therefore, the teacher helps

the students in developing a socially desirable and healthy personality under his guidance.

☐ **Education is the reconstruction of experience:** Man acquires different experiences in different situations. In due course of time, some of these were excluded and some were converted and new experiences fill the empty spaces. In human life, this conversion and reconstruction of experiences are termed education.

☐ **Education plays a significant role in social conservation:** Every society has its own rites and rituals, ethics, morality, language, culture, beliefs, etc. Education helps society to conserve them.

☐ **Education brings about desirable change in human behaviour:** Education brings a change of human behaviour in the desired way. Good and ethical behaviour makes us good people and helps in our development.

☐ **Education is the power to make adjustments in new situations:** Education is dynamic power. It gives the students the strength to solve the difficult problems that they have faced in their everyday life.

2.7.   SCOPE OF EDUCATION

The scope of education implies the areas which can be included in the study of education. It also refers to the extent to which the concept of education can be applied to diverse fields. In that context, the scope of education as a dynamic and progressive subject is expanding to larger areas of social and human development in recent decades. Some of the fields of study that can be included in the scope of education are:

☐ **Educational Philosophy:**

Philosophy constitutes an integral part of the study of education. It deals with the fundamental laws and logical explanation of ideas governing the wider field of study of education. Educational Philosophy provides guiding principles in education which are implemented in the area of study of education.

☐ **Educational Sociology:**

Educational system e.g. school is a miniature society. The teacher is a social engineer who attempts to bring about social change through her students and their parents with whom the teacher has constant interaction. Educational Sociology promotes the understanding of how public institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcomes. It is mostly concerned with the public schooling systems of modern industrial societies, including the expansion of higher, further, adult, and continuing education.

 Method of Teaching:

In ancient times, the pupils were passive listeners but now they actively participate with the teacher in the process of education. Hence, in modern society, much focus is given to the method of teaching to make education a more effective process of human development. Therefore, the method of teaching is considered one of the important areas of study of education.

 Educational Psychology:

Educational psychology is the branch of psychology concerned with the scientific study of human learning. It has been integrated with the scope of education to deal with the psychological and cognitive aspects involved in the process of the educational development of an individual.

 History of Education:

History of education helps us to learn from past experiences in the field of education. It records the stages in the development of education in relation to different aspects and the role of revolutionary teachers and philosophers who have contributed to shaping the education system of the entire world and helps us to revisit and redesign the educational planning taking a cue from past experiences.

 Comparative Education:

Comparative education is another important area encompassed in the scope of study of education. This area deals with the comparison of education systems and educational policies of different countries with a view to facilitating the

educational comparison of the structure, operation, aims, methods, practices of different countries.
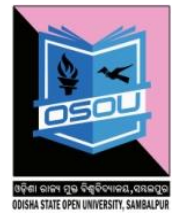
☐ **Educational Management:**

Educational management refers to the administration of the education system in which a group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures to execute an education system. It forms another important sub-field included within the purview of education.

☐ **Educational Technology:**

Educational technology is an emerging field being associated with the field of education in the modern world with technological advancement. It deals with the use of both physical hardware, software, and educational theoretic to facilitate learning and improve performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources for educational development

2.8. FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

The functions of education are very wide and pervasive in society. It is difficult to capture them in any specific and limited context. Some of the most important functions of education can be precisely discussed hereunder:

☐ **Socialising Function:**

One of the principal objectives of education is to complete the socialization process. With the emergence of nuclear families, the role of schools and other institutions in the socialization process has increased considerably. The school trains the child to develop honesty, consideration for others and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. The socialization process also enables the child to co-operate with others and to grow as a good citizen by respecting the laws framed by society. Socialization is achieved through textbooks and learning experiences intended to develop social skills in the context of social requirements.

Development of Personality:

The personality of individual members in society shares some common features of the culture. Along with the process of transmitting culture, education also contributes to the formation of social personality. Formation of social personality helps man to adjust with his environment and flourish himself in co-operation with others.

 Transmission of Culture:

All societies are proud to uphold or highlight their cultural heritage and ascertain that the culture is preserved and transmitted through the social organization to future generations. All types of education and all agencies of education have to carry out the function of cultural transmission in an earnest way by teaching the elements of culture like literature, history, art, philosophy, etc.

 Preparation for job market and livelihood:

Now a day, this is regarded as the first and foremost function of education by a large section of people. This function is related to the practical aim of education and receiving more attention due to the diversified needs of society. Education should prepare students not only to foresee the future occupational position but also enable them to attain it in an impressive way. The relevance of this function is evident from the importance we are giving to vocational training.

 Reformation of attitude:

In the developmental process, the child may have incorporated some undesirable attitudes, beliefs and disbelief, localities, prejudices, jealousy, hatred, etc. It is the duty of the education to reform the undesirable attitudes and other negative aspects by means of removing the wrong beliefs, illogical prejudices and unreasoned localities from the child's mind. A collective effort

by the school and home will bring out spectacular results in the matter of reforming attitudes.

☐ **Improvement of social status:**

It is understood that an individual's status in society is determined by the amount and type or kind of education he has received. In the current situation, the kind of knowledge one is gaining is important than the amount. For example, a graduate nurse or a diploma nurse can flourish anywhere in the world compared to a person holding a Ph.D. in a traditional subject.

☐ **Promotion of economic development**:

Economy and education always enjoy a bilateral relationship for example the number of well-functioning hospitals is directly related to the number of qualified and competent nurses passing out from the nursing institutes. More patients will be admitted to a hospital that is providing quality nursing care. This will lead to more money transactions and ultimately results in the economic development of the nearby areas of the hospital.

☐ **Foster democratic values**

In participant democracy, the ordinary citizen is aware of his rights and duties and participates actively in the democratic process. Literacy is essential to nurture participant democracy and literature is the product of education. Thus, education fosters participant democracy

2.9. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Many studies by sociologists have found that there is a strong and unbreakable relationship between society and education. It is established that the concepts of society and education cannot be separated from each other. It is even difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the two concepts. This is because whatever happens to any part of the education of a society, definitely affects the society and its component parts. Conversely, situations in the social system certainly affect the educational system and its process.

Looking at the concept of education from the societal point of view, it can be explained as the nourishment of an individual and help him to attain the natural capacity for productive social life. Through this process, the individual becomes capable of effectively participating in the process of social development. This could be done through the training, rearing and upbringing of such individuals by using both traditional and modern ways to become acceptable members of the society in which they live.

In modern society, school as an organized system has assumed a very significant place in the training of individuals because of the complexities of life in modern times. These complexities of life as seen in a highly industrialized and computerized global village have forced upon the adult members of the society the deliberate transmission of cultural values and modern technology to the younger members of the society in an efficient and systematic manner. In other words, the school gives much to the society by training the young members of the society to acquire necessary skills and knowledge which enable them to contribute their quota to the overall development of the society.

Durkbeim (1956) was one of the earliest social scientists of the world to appreciate the relationship between education and society. He saw education as a social phenomenon through which society assumes its own continuity by socializing the young in its own image. The components of the educational system that constitute perfectly defined facts and which have the same reality as another social fact are interrelated.

According to **John Dewey**, "School is primarily a social institution." Education being a social process is simply that form of community life in which all agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race to use power for social ends. UNESCO stresses in one of its publications that the function of educational institutions is to help men and women to live happier lives in adjustment to the changing social environment. It will also assist them to achieve social and economic progress which will enable them to take their place in modern work and to live together in a peaceful society.

The inseparable relationship between education and society can better be understood analyzing the underlying connections between education and the essential components of society.

Education and individual

Individuals from the basic component of the society. Without individuals society cannot be imagined. Further, education is indispensable for every individual to live a productive and effective life in society. As the saying goes, education is power. Education helps an individual to gain acceptable behaviour in society, to lift his social status, to enhance his income and to live a desirable life in society. Besides, a well-educated individual is always a gem for society. He contributes to the protection and development of the society he lives in. Thus, the relationship between society and education is mediated and sustained by individuals.

Education and Culture

Culture is one of the important parts of society. Every society has its unique culture that regulates the behaviour patterns of individuals in the society. Culture enriches the social life of people in society. As we have seen earlier, one of the major concerns of education is to transmit socially desirable culture from one generation to the other. The function of transmission of culture helps the society to maintain its continuity. For example education regarding values of marriage as a culture helps continue the social institution of family and other intergenerational associations. At times education also helps to avoid harmful cultural practices like child marriage, human sacrifice, etc., and blocks the transmission of such practices. In the same vein, the contents and methods of education are also changed according to the cultural needs of the society. Thus, the relationship between education and culture strengthens the relationship between education and society.

Education and community

Community is an integral part of society. It is a subset of society. When all the communities of the society are developed, the society is said to be developed. Education is essential for the development of a community. Studies reveal that the community which is educationally underdeveloped is bound to lag behind in the development of other aspects of development. For instance, in India, the tribal

community is known to be the most backward community educationally. Hence, it also lags behind in terms of the development of other aspects of human development like health, livelihood, living standard, etc. On the other hand, educational methods and content for tribal education are designed in view of the needs of the tribal people. Thus, the relationship between education and community manifests the relationship between education and society.

Education and economy

The economy is the lifeline of individuals in society. It is through economic development that a society grows in other aspects. It is needless to say that education plays a vital role in the economic development of an individual. A good education helps an individual to have a better income which further helps that individual to contribute to the economic development of the society. On the other hand, an economically well-off individual can avail better education for himself and for his family. Besides, a wealthy society can invest more money to develop a better educational system for its people. This manifests the cordial interrelationship between society and education through the economic component of the society.

Education and social change

Change is inherent in every society. There is no society without change. Education is the driving force and great determinant of social change. It is expected to change the existing attitudes and values among people and build in them a desire for progress. Education can help in increasing contemporary knowledge and through the dissemination of data on current facts; scientific ideas can spread among people through education. Besides, education can resist undesirable changes in society. Social change on the other can affect the change in the education system. For instance, in view of the growing dependence on technology, the curriculum of school education in India is being modified to contain lessons on technological advancement like STEM education at the secondary level. Thus the relationship between education and social change reflects the relationship between education and society.

Education and social equality

Education is well recognized as the great equalizer of society. It helps to remove social inequalities in various aspects and helps to establish a more egalitarian social order in

society. Through education, people from lower rungs of the society gain social mobility and gain their social status at par with developed people. Education changes beliefs and values of people against the forces of social inequality. Usually, people with proper education are less likely to give themselves to the credence of social inequality based on class, caste, colour, gender, etc. On the other hand, the educational system of egalitarian society gives emphasis on imparting the values like liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, etc. Thus, the close association between education and social equality reflects the relationship between education and society as a whole.

Education and social development

Education and social development have a strong positive relationship between them. Education opens the doors for every aspect of development. An educated person is able to recognize his capacities for his own development and for the development of society. He also recognizes his duties and responsibilities as a member of society and does his bit to contribute to the wellbeing and welfare of the people in the society thereby bringing positive changes to his family, community and the larger society. On top of that, by the transmission of latest and updated elements of culture, economy, science and technology down to the younger generation of the society, education plays a very vital role in the aver all development of the society.

2.10   LET US SUM UP

Society is visualized as the organized system of social relationships of people living in a particular geographic territory, having a sense of belongingness or identity to a particular group and sharing some common interest. From the social point of view, education is seen as a process of development and means of cultural transmission from one generation to another in any given society. It is a social process and cannot take place without social interaction. Hence, education and society are two inseparable concepts.

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UNIT-3   LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Structure

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy and education are two very closely associated concepts widely used in the lexicon of social development all over the world. In modern society, literacy is considered an essential pre-condition for the development of individuals and therefore the society at large. Many people use the term "literacy" synonymously with education but in reality, literacy cannot be understood with one and same meaning with education. Though literacy shares some common features with education, it is different from education in quite many ways which will be discussed in this unit in detail. Along with differences, the unit also deals with the underlying interrelationship between literacy and education at length.

Since you have already gained some familiarity with the basic concept of education from the study of the previous unit, in this unit, we will look into the meaning of literacy and some of the basic concepts related to literacy and then move on to the discussion on the interrelationship between education and literacy.

3.2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through the contents of the unit, you are expected to be able:

- To understand the meaning and concept of literacy including the functional literacy and modern concept of literacy.
- To identify and understand the typology of literacy
- To explain the importance of literacy
- To examine understand the relationship between education and literacy

3.3. MEANING AND CONCEPT OF LITERACY

In the simplest sense of the term, literacy can be understood as the ability of a person to read, write, and speak with a basic level of understanding. It also includes basic skills in numeracy. It is the minimum requirement for effective communication and the initial stage of the transaction of basic minimum knowledge. It is the foundation for getting into the world of education. It helps a person to communicate effectively and make sense of the world around him or her and to effectively participate in the process of his own development and the development of society as a whole. A literate person is likely to take written knowledge and information from books, letter and other texts gain knowledge and acts accordingly to live a better life in society. He/she is better able to manage his day-to-day affairs through more appropriate and informed decisions for himself and for others. On the other hand, an illiterate person falls short in performing basic tasks of the literate world and lies at the losing end of social life.

It is very difficult to define literacy in a single sentence or two, as it is one of the most dynamic subjects, changing with the need of society with the passage of time. The context of literacy also varies among countries and different cultures. Nevertheless, we can examine some of the popular definitions in order to have a better understanding of the concept of literacy:

According to **Nickle (2007**), Literacy may refer to the ability to read and write, but also to application-oriented basic knowledge that develops during the whole lifetime, not only during school years."

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has given a more comprehensive definition of literacy. It has defined literacy as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

The **National Literacy Mission** defines literacy "as acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to apply them to one's day-to-day life."

Literacy is an essential precondition for further education. It also plays a vital role in the development of an individual and society at large. It has been considered a fundamental human right because it forms the basis for any individual's ability to learn. It is essential for social and human development and provides individuals the skills and empowers them to transform their lives, in turn, an improved standard of health and ability to earn a higher income. Hence, efforts are being made through numerous schemes, campaigns and programmes to spread literacy among the people. Schools for children and many other informal systems for adults are in place to bring maximum people to the fold of literacy.

a) Functional Literacy

Formal literacy has increased over the last decades. According to 2011, more than 72 percent of the total population of India is literate. Kerala being at the top rank among the Indian states has around 94 percent, literate people. Bihar being at the bottom rank in the literacy rate among Indian states has only 63 percent of literate people. In the global context, more than 85 percent of the world population are literates. Few countries like South Korea have 100 percent literacy and some of the Sub-Saharan countries lie at the bottom in terms of the percentage of literate people. For instance, while in sub-Saharan Africa there are still 29.8 million children who do not have access to education, this number represents a one-quarter decrease from 2000. In contrast, in Europe, only 0.7 million children had never attended school in 2011 (UNESCO, 2013).

However, it has been found that despite improvements in traditional literacy, many people still have problems understanding simple formal texts. In many cases people are not able to perform common activities that demand basic level skills in literacy, such as writing an application, opening a bank account, filling bank cheques, understanding medical advice, reading the ingredients of food products, etc. In such cases, people are considered functionally illiterate. This is a problem because, in today's society, functional literacy plays a significant role in everyday life. On the other hand, lack of functional literacy leads to fewer educational and employment opportunities and hinders living a successful life. Hence, the achievement of functional literacy was emphasized during the last decades of the 19th century. Thus, in view of the functional aspects of literacy, the meaning and concept of literacy have seen a significant change. In order to help you in better understanding the concept of functional literacy, some definitions can be cited hereunder:

Sticht (1975) defines functional literacy as the "Possession of those literacy skills needed to successfully perform some reading task imposed by an external agent between the reader and a goal the reader wishes to obtain."

According to **Graubard (1983)** "Functional literacy is the ability to read and write sufficiently to be adapted to society, or to communicate with others in order to serve their interests, economic or other, or to participate in democratic life."

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** **(2019)** defined functional literacy as "the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

According to the Right to Read Advisory Council, "a literate person is one who has acquired the essential knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and computation required for effective functioning in society, and whose attainment in such skills makes it possible for him to develop new aptitudes and to participate actively in the life of his times."

The National Literacy Mission has prescribed a precise set of criteria for functional literacy. According to it the achievement of functional literacy implies:

(i)   Self-reliance in 3 R's, i.e Reading wRiting and aRithmetic,

(ii)   Awareness of the causes of deprivation and the ability to move towards amelioration of their condition by participating in the process of development,

(iii)   Acquiring skills to improve economic status and general well being, and

(iv)   Imbibing values such as national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norms

It can be summarised that functional literacy refers to the capacity of a person to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development. A person is functionally literate if he/she can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his/her group and community and also which enables them to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and the community's development. Possessing literacy has many benefits for individuals, families, communities, and the nation. On the other hand, a person without functional literacy has limited opportunities in every area of life.

b) Modern Concept of Literacy

Literacy is basically understood as one's ability to read and write. However, this traditional definition of literacy is no longer valid for the modern world. The concept of literacy as discussed earlier has evolved or changed with the changing needs of society. In order to take part in the functioning of modern society, an individual needs to fulfill the basic requirements of functional literacy with a higher level of skills for effective participation in the social process. Today, the term literacy includes the ability to use numbers, language, images, computers, and other fundamental means to understand, communicate, and acquire useful knowledge in different spheres of life.

According to the recent **UNESCO** definition, literacy is the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts".

As the **International Literacy Association** puts it "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context"

In the modern world context where science and technology have touched upon almost every aspect of life, literacy is represented as having updated skills to successfully and effectively take part in everyday life, while making economic and social contributions to the functioning of modern society. One is considered literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing, and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development and for participation in the life of his country.

The literacy skills that adults learned in the 20th century in order to read, write and communicate effectively are no longer the only skills required to be literate in the 21st century. In the age when multimedia, hypertext, blogs, and wikis are getting common, merely reading writing and doing some simple mathematics does not qualify an individual to be functionally literate in the real sense. It is essential therefore to acquire a wide range of skills in addition to just reading and writing if one wants to be literate in the modern world.

3.4. TYPES OF LITERACY

As discussed above, the functional and modern perspectives of literacy emphasize literacy to make it an ability that leads a literate person to successfully perform some literary tasks to improve his life and to contribute to the development of his community. One has to go beyond the traditional tasks of reading and writing in order to be called literate in the present context. It implies that one has to gain literacy in

many fields beyond reading and writing. Now, it is necessary to acquire knowledge on the different kinds of literacy on-demand in modern society.

In order to gain functional efficiency in modern society, an individual or society should emphasize improving skills in the following types of literacy:

i.   Basic Literacy

Basic literacy is closely related to what we know as traditional literacy which involves basic minimum learning and refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in 3 'R's, namely: Reading, writing and arithmetic with a certain level of understanding. So far India has been following these criteria in the census for computing literacy rate in our country.

ii.   Functional Literacy

As we have seen earlier, functional literacy is the one that enables an individual to effectively use his basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic in improving his life and contribute to the development of his community. In fact, functional literacy goes beyond the limits of basic literacy and helps an individual to live a more productive life which was not possible under basic literacy.

UNESCO stated the objectives of functional literacy in the following lines:

- ☐ To enable the learner to perform his work role. Literacy must be work-based and create attitudes and interests and impart skills and information, which will help the person to do efficiently whatever work he is engaged in;
- ☐ To perform his or her role as a citizen i.e. it must enable an individual to understand the vital national problems and participate effectively in the social and political life of the nation and;
- ☐ To enable one to enhance his skills and education either on his own or through other available avenues of informal education

iii.   Scientific Literacy

Scientific literacy refers to an individual's ability to use the basic knowledge of science in his everyday life. In this literacy, the learners need to be made aware of a practical understanding of science that is relevant to the needs of the people and

maybe termed as functional scientific literacy. The emphasis is placed on the application of scientific knowledge to improve living conditions and other aspects of daily life. The learners are taught fundamentals of science suiting their intellectual capacity, needs and interests which may be brought into use in daily life. Scientific literacy may include knowledge in physical and mental health and its factors; home environment, state of water, sources of water, methods of making potable water, etc. which are essential for daily life.

iv.   Health Literacy

Health literacy represents the ability to access, understand, appraise and communicate information and knowledge regarding health-related issues associated with everyday life. This literacy enables an individual to understand healthcare information, particularly for making medical decisions or lifestyle choices about nutrition, exercise, sleep, and other factors that affect physical and mental well-being. Lack of such literacy in health proves to be very dangerous in many people adversely affects their lives and that of others.

v.   Digital literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to critically use information technology, navigate through various online forums and devices, understand how technology works, and be able to creatively and inventively manipulate technology to solve problems. It goes hand in hand with media literacy. Basically, being digitally literate means being able to use technology to solve problems and to express yourself. Contrary to popular belief, young people are not necessarily digitally literate just because they are competent in using technology - it depends on what they use it for.

vi.   Financial literacy

Financial literacy refers to the knowledge and understanding of basic financial concepts which help an individual to make informed, confident and effective decisions regarding money and its management. It involves basic knowledge regarding, income, expenditure, saving, loan, investment, etc. which are vital for the economic wellbeing of an individual and the society at large. An individual with financial illiteracy fails to

effectively manage the economic affairs of his household and falls into the vicious cycle of poverty and fails to live a productive life.

vii.   Civic Literacy

Civic literacy refers to the ability of an individual for good and effective citizenship. It helps an individual to make an informed decision regarding leadership and voting rights. Civic literacy involves knowledge about both duties and rights of an individual within his social environment. People with civic illiteracy may emphasize rights and not duties which may be detrimental for social development. A balance is of course necessary. Civic literacy means a shared understanding of the approach to life of a group of people. It enhances democratic values that contribute to better civic life and to social development.

viii.   Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy is the ability to understand all of the subtle nuances that come along with living or working in a particular society. It consists of understanding the language, methods, assumptions, and unstated ideas that make up a way to behave and communicate. It's specific to each culture, even the particular cultures that develop in a workplace or school, and most people are only literate in their own culture. The benefit to having a good understanding of cultural literacy is knowing how to avoid harmful cultural elements like blind beliefs, superstitions, social taboos, discriminations and misunderstandings and communicate well with people of other cultures. It helps to mitigate the cultural barriers of social development.

3.5.   IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY

Literacy is considered a fundamental indicator of the development of a society. It contributes to all the aspects of a good human life. Lacking basic reading and writing skills is a tremendous disadvantage. Literacy not only enriches an individual's life, but it creates opportunities for people to develop skills that will help them provide for themselves and their families. People with literacy skills can get higher education and in return will contribute to the economy and community.

The nation's foundation is built upon people's education. So if the people can't do basic stuff like reading and writing, the country is doomed. That is why many

countries start to classify literacy as a human right. The country needs to nurture the next generation and improve their literacy because this is essential to the country's future and also essential to the people's prosperity.

It is difficult to express the significance of literacy in limited points due to its enormous impact on all aspects of human life. The importance of literacy can be summarised in the following points:

1. **Literacy is the foundation for education**

It forms the basis for furthering the education of an Individual. Every individual has to acquire skills in literacy so as to set out for education. One cannot imagine his education without minimum ability to read, write and calculate in the modern context. Students who are poor in these literacy skills are more likely to drop out of school. Literacy helps an individual to receive and retain any sort of information and knowledge that are significant for his lifelong learning. Without sound literacy skills, one cannot prosper in educational development.

2. **Literacy Improves Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is the respect one has for himself. Self-esteem and self-concept are important for the development of an individual. People who have acquired basic skills in literacy in the early years always enjoy more advantages in broader education. That apart, adults having literacy skills also enjoy a higher level of confidence in the everyday life and are imbibed with higher self-esteem which helps them to take on the challenges of life with positive strength and progress in life.

3. **It improves the overall quality of life**

Literate people have well-developed minds and a better understanding of things. They are better at handling finances, healthcare, and managing their overall life. They also possess higher skills and can secure better jobs that provide them security and higher socio-economic status. Educated and literate people are also able to make plans and backups by scanning various healthcare schemes available. Therefore, it is safe to assume that literate people have a better quality of life.

4.   Literacy improves health

Numerous studies in the field of health have found that there are positive correlations between adult literacy and lower infant mortality rates. It is also found that showed that people who attended a literacy program were more likely to seek medical help for themselves and their children whenever needed. They were also more likely to adopt more preventive health measures, like immunization. Similarly, literate people gather information and knowledge from different sources like books, leaflets, posters and other electronic sources regarding health and take precautionary measures for their health which improves their physical and mental wellbeing.

5.   It helps to reduce poverty

Literacy is a powerful tool against poverty. Lacking basic reading and writing skills is a tremendous disadvantage. It prevents an individual from performing his life tasks efficiently. On the other hand, literacy not only enriches an individual's life by enhancing his capabilities, but it creates income opportunities that will help himself and his family to come out of poverty.

Mass illiteracy is one of the major reasons for the economic backwardness of most nations. It comes with a heavy price for national development. Most people without literacy skills live unproductive or less productive life and create barriers in different forms in the development of society.

6.   It promotes Gender Equality

The former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon once said, "Every literate woman marks a victory over poverty". True to the above statement literate women bring multi-faceted benefits to their families. They can be better companions to men in managing families and other institutions, literate mothers are more likely to give due emphasis on their children's education, and they can efficiently take part in the process of development of the society. Literate men can understand the value of women in the family and society and give them due to place for their empowerment. Literacy plays a significant role in reducing gender inequality.

7.   It promotes democratic values

When citizens are literate, they are more able to follow local politics and be informed of the issues that matter to their communities. They are also more likely to vote and find other ways of participating in their local democracy. They are aware of their duties and responsibilities of civic life and contribute to the peaceful co-existence of different communities within a larger social system.

To sum up, the discussion on the importance of literacy is the essential prerequisite and foundation stone for the development of an individual. From a collective perspective, it is equally essential for the all-around development of a community. A literate community is a dynamic community that exchanges ideas, engage in dialogue is more innovative and productive. The sharing of ideas, perspectives and concerns also leads to greater levels of mutual understanding and ultimately inclusive growth development of all the members.

3.6.   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND LITERACY

In common parlance, education and literacy are very intimately related to each other. Very often, these two terms are used interchangeably to refer to education. Interestingly, literacy is used as an important and primary indicator of the educational development of a country. But, in essence, these are two different concepts bearing different developmental objectives. In simple words, literacy refers to the ability to read and write and do simple calculations to efficiently perform the tasks of day-to-day life in a given society, whereas education refers to the process of acquisition of knowledge to bring about the overall development of the personality of an individual with a complete transformation. Literacy is the foundation stone and essential prerequisite for education. The only person having basic skills in reading and writing with some level of understanding capacity can go for further education. Proper education is impossible, unless the skills of literacy are acquired.

In view of the intimate relationship between literacy, there is an established misconception in our society that education is synonymous with literacy. A large

sector believes it to be one and the same, while some believe that literacy is a stepping stone to education. Although there lies a hint of truth in the former, it would be categorically wrong to imbibe literacy as the sole form of education.

1. Some of the salient differences between education and literacy can be discussed under the following points:

2. Literacy is the ability of an individual to gather, understand, retain and circulate information whereas education is a process where such knowledge and information are effectively used to develop the personality of the individual.

3. Education means the process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, briefs, and habits. Education is the journey from converting a human being into a being human. Only if education makes you a good person it is useful or else all your time and energy will be a waste. Whereas literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.

4. Education fosters the complete development of an individual with a broader set of appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills while literacy forms one of the many dimensions of human development.

5. An educated person can be called literate but a literate person cannot necessarily be called an educated person. Because, education is a much broader concept than literacy.

6. Literacy mainly revolves around acquiring the ability to read and write whereas education is about the overall development of a person making it a complete human who not only read or write but also has the ability to think in broader terms and analyze things rationally

7. Literacy cannot make a person wise but education makes a person wiser and provides with the understanding of distinguishing between right and wrong

8. The learning received while becoming literate can be forgotten but education lives when even the learning is forgotten

To sum up, education is about knowing your skills, abilities, and learning, and then using them in the right direction at the right time. Educational institutions can make all the students literate but cannot make all of them educated. Education changes a person as a whole. Educated people understand their responsibility towards society and country. It is more of using ethical practices to bring a real change in society. The literacy rate all around the globe is different in different countries. The countries in which individuals have a higher level of education are more prosperous and developed. Such a country has a better economy and a low population. Literacy has become a crucial factor in leading a good life in the contemporary age. The future of a country depends on its education level, and literacy is responsible for the same.
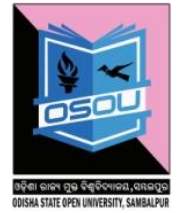
3.7 LET US SUM UP

Literacy and education are two very closely associated concepts widely used in the lexicon of social development all over the world. In modern society, literacy is considered an essential pre-condition for the development of individuals and therefore the society at large. Many people use the term "literacy" synonymously with education but in reality, literacy cannot be understood with one and same meaning with education. Though literacy shares some common features with education, it is different from education in quite many ways which will be discussed in this unit in detail. Along with differences, the unit also deals with the underlying interrelationship between literacy and education at length.

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UNIT-4   EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Structure

4.1.   Introduction

4.2.   Learning Objectives

4.3.   What is a Social Construct?

4.4.   Education as a Social Construct

4.5.   Theoretical Foundations

4.6   Let Us Sum Up

4.7   References

4.1.   INTRODUCTION

Education is a social process. This process is said to have emerged in society out of human and social needs. It has become an essential need of every individual in society as it plays an important role in preparing an individual to be an effective member of society with the skills and attitude to participate in the process of development. Education as a process of acquiring knowledge for advancement and development is inherent in nature, but when seen from a sociological perspective, it is considered as a social construct with socially assigned meaning by people in the society.

You have studied the basic concepts associated with education in the earlier units. In this unit, you will get to understand the meaning of social construct, education as a social construct and philosophical foundations of education as a social construct in the light of different theories of sociology of education.

4.2.   LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completion of the study of this unit, you will be able:

☐   To gain basic understandings of the concept of a social construct

☐   To conceptualize education as a social construct

☐   To explain the theoretical underpinnings upholding education as a social construct

4.3. WHAT IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT?

A social construct is a social concept or implied meaning that develops and gets popularised within a society or group used by the majority of the people within that group of society use it with similar meaning for a prolonged period of time. There are many such social constructs frequently used by people including sociologists in the discourse of social sciences. They don't represent objective reality but instead are meaningful only because people within the society or group accept that they have meaning. Simply put, social constructs do not have inherent meaning. The only meaning they have is the meaning given to them by people. For example, the idea that 'women are weaker and less work-efficient than men' is a social construct termed as 'gender' which is recognized all over the world. Besides, the idea that 'the colour pink is to girls and blue is to boys' is a social construct attached to gender. The popular perception that a particular colour can be associated with a certain gender is not an objective representation of truth or fact. Instead, it is a prolonged social behaviour and practice that came to have meaning within the context of society.

According to the **Oxford Living Dictionary (2017**) "Social construct is a concept or perception of something based on collective views developed and maintained within a society or social group; a social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally."

Most common practices and behaviours that are generally accepted and are used to represent certain things within a society are called social constructs. Of course, these societal norms do not necessarily have to be accepted by every single person in order to be social constructs. These social constructs often change over time with the change of people's perceptions and practices related to them. For a better understanding of the concept of social construct, we can take some of the most frequently used social constructs as below:

Adulthood: the specific stage of life when an individual is called an adult is a social construct. In the USA and many of the countries of the European Union, people are

considered as adults at the age of 18 years. In Scotland, however, people are called adults at the age of 16 years. In India, people above the age of 18 years are called adults but in certain cases of severe crimes, the people above the age of 16 years are also treated as adults.

Gender behaviours: the concept of certain behaviours attached to one's sexual orientation is also a social construct. It applies to the idea that men should keep their emotions bottled up or the notion that women are overly emotional. It also applies to the beliefs that male children should play with trucks and girl children with dolls.

Gender roles: There are also social constructs associated with gender roles, such as the formerly widely held belief that women should stay home and men should work. This also relates to beliefs that certain types of jobs are women's work (nurses, teachers), while others represent men's work (doctors, construction workers)

Greetings: the manner in which people greet each other is a social construct. Shaking hands, for example, is meant as a business greeting only because people view in that way. The same is true for kissing people on both cheeks as a greeting in cultures where that is a common practice.

Disability: The concept of disability is a social construct. The social construct of disability often relates to visible indicators of disability, such as a wheelchair or missing limbs. The people who have less visible disabilities are often misunderstood because their conditions do not fit into the social construct of others.

To sum up, a social construct is the meaning, notion, or connotation placed on an object or event by a society, and adopted by the inhabitants of that society with respect to how they view or deal with the object or event. The assigned meaning of such events or objects varies in place and time. Different cultures have different connotations to social constructs with special reference to the local context.

4.4. EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Basic Concept

When education is understood from the learning perspective, it is an inherent human nature. We all are born with some sort of learning ability. In that sense, learning happens naturally all the time in our life. This point of view restricts the idea that education is a social construct. Some scholars in the field of sociology of education do not accept education as a social construct, because, unlike a social construct, education or learning is inherent in every individual and it can be explained with objective facts. The supporters of this view argue that the concept of educational institutions like schools and colleges is a social construct while learning or education is not.

When education is viewed from the sociological perspective, it is a social process as well as the product of social interaction. The longstanding collective perceptions and associated practices linked with education have shaped a different idea of education with different sociological connotations. Many scholars in the field of sociology of education have tried to relate these sociological connotations to education and have tried to represent education as a social concept or social construct. According to the supporters of the idea that education is a social construct, the concept of education is a type of social construct, because it has been created in order to ensure people a promising and secure future; as well as, a stable life. Education itself helps us understand the world around us and enables us to adapt to the way society is structured. The concept of education is linked to the belief that you can achieve success in life according to the level of education a person has completed. It is believed that a person with higher education will obtain better jobs along with a higher salary compared to a person that has not pursued a higher level of education. The concept of higher education is socially constructed in order to create a competitive world where there is a separation of social status.

According to **John Dewey**, a renowned pragmatic sociologist of education, "All education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness." For him, education is a social product. Society consciously assigns social values to

education which plays a very vital role in the development of individuals and the society at large. **Lev Vygotsky**, a famous theorist in learning also considers learning as a derivative of social process and relates learning or education consequent development of a child to its scope and quality of social interaction. He attached great importance to the social factors of education and learning. According to **Bruner**, "Learning reaches its full potential from active participation in the culture." The education of a particular society to great extent is determined and shaped by its culture. On the other hand, culture is transmitted by education. Hence, Education as a social concept or social construct derives its meaning and significance from such established ideas and collective perceptions.

4.5. Theoretical Foundations

Education as a social construct is a debatable proposition. You as the students of sociology are made to substantiate the argument that education is a social construct by connecting ideas drawn from different grand theories linked with the social perspective of education.

The study of education from a sociological perspective has often captured the larger extent of theoretical debates presented by many scholars in the field. Beginning from the early debates of classical sociology of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim to the contemporary influences of Symbolic Interactionism, Postmodernism, to the Critical Race Theory, Capability Approach theory etc. different theoretical perspectives of the contemporary times, have greatly influenced, shaped and reshaped the connotation and implied meaning of education in the modern society. Some of the most important theoretical orientations having close links with the present studies on education from sociological standpoints can be presented in the following lines:

1) Functionalist Theory:

It is one of the oldest theories to find its connection with education as a social concept. The functionalists view society as a system of many component parts complementary to each other, interdependent on each other and mutually contributing to the better functioning of the society as a coherent system. In the context of education,

functionalism is concerned with the role and functions of schools and other educational institutions in the maintenance of social order. Hence, the Functional theory emphasizes on functions that education serves in fulfilling various needs of an individual and the felt needs of the society. Perhaps, the most important function of education is socialization. Education is the driving force that helps children to learn the necessary norms, values, and skills to live a productive human life in society. The Schools usually teach the three Rs ('Reading', 'wRiting', 'aRithmetic') that enable them to conduct normal literary works and the works of daily needs. Besides, they also teach many of the society's norms and values to the children that help them to grow up and contribute to better functioning of the society. Children in India are usually expected to learn the standard norms, principles and values of Indian society, for instance: respecting elders, nationalism, community belongingness, etc., the acquisition of which is highly rewarded in all levels of social life.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917 A.D.) whose ideas marked the origin of the functionalist theory of society in the intellectual world was the first sociologist to apply sociological theory to education and to contribute to the idea of education as a social construct. He was of the opinion that society is a system comprising of many interrelated and coherent sub-systems functioning together to meet the various needs of the society. He also believed that in all societies, education was critically important for creating moral unity essential for cohesive living. Education catered to these critical needs of the society, education had taken different forms at different times and places. Durkheim's idea of functionalism in the sociology of education upholds the idea of education as a social construct.

 Talcott Parson (1902-1979 A.D.) was another famous proponent of the functionalist theory. He was of the opinion that education plays the most vital part in the development of individuals and society, particularly in modern times for no society earlier needed education as badly as the present one. The very existence of human life in the complex social system calls for minimum education for every person to effectively participate in the process of development. Legitimacy for merit-based allocation of resources, status, and position has become the order of the day in the modern period. Many functionalists like Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945)

argued that inequality was the functional necessity of all the societies on the ground that the most important positions of the society would be filled by the most talented persons. They went on to say that the modern democratic societies differ from previous traditional agrarian societies as they are meritocratic, i.e. talent and hard work would be the sole basis for allocation of individuals to positions rather than based on accidents of birth. Given the decisive role of education in a society with meritocratic tendencies, education has taken the centre stage in the human development process. For this reason, education has been viewed much as a social need altering the very concept of education as a social concept upheld by the collective perception of the people.

John Dewey was another major contributor to the functionalist perspective of the sociology of education in modern times. According to him, the school was a 'miniature community' or an 'embryonic society' and within that, the discipline was the tool that would develop the spirit of cooperation and community life. He believed that freedom and responsibility are the hallmarks of a democratic society and students are the future of the society. There should be optimum freedom with responsibility for the students to inculcate them with democratic living. He also upheld the idea that democracy that is vital for social development could only be realized through education. He viewed education as an instrument to establish social order. Many of the followers of his idea of education, assign special meaning to the concept of education with much inclination to education as a social construct.

2) Conflict Theory

The conflict theory is sometimes referred to as the countered theory of the functionalist theory which finds its roots in the Marxist theory of class conflict. This theory argues that each school in the system functions in the vested interests of the dominant groups and reproduces the elements of inequality. Conflict theorists view the relationship between society and the school as standing on the ground of conflict. According to **Ballantine & Hammack (2012)**, "the concept of a conflict theory of education revolves around the fact of unequal distribution resources among different social groups and helps to understand as to how the contemporary schooling system

plays an important role in perpetuating inequality in the society under the dark cover of meritocracy."

In the modern days, in most of the developed nations, most schools begin tracking their students in grade school, the students thought by their teachers to be bright are placed in the faster tracks (especially in reading and arithmetic), while the slower students are placed in the slower tracks. Such tracking is legitimated on the point that it helps the students to learn according to their grasping abilities. It promises to ensure that bright students learn as much as their abilities without much wastage. On the other hand, slower students are not taught beyond their grasping abilities. In this process students' social class, race, ethnicity and caste (in the case of India) determine the track they placed into irrespective of their intellectual abilities. Children from middle-class families are more likely to track "up" while poorer students from weaker sections are tracked "down". Hence, it leads to low self-esteem among the students who were tracked "down" as compared to the students who were tracked "up". Many of the similar practices in the school are believed to be perpetuating social inequality in different forms and magnitude. Hence, according to the proponents of conflict theory, education is used as an instrument for continuing social inequality.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) is known to be the father of conflict theory; therefore, he is also considered the intellectual founder of the conflict school of sociology of education. According to Marx, due to industrialization and urbanization, there was the emergence of a new class of workers namely the "proletariat" who lived in poverty, worked day and night in the industry so as to feed and give a better standard of living to their children. Marx believed that the class system, which separated owners from the workers and deprived workers of the benefits of their own labour, led to class antagonism and made class struggle inevitable. He believed that, in the end, the proletariat would rise up and overthrow the capitalists, and in doing so, establish a new society where no one would be alienated from the labour. Education would play a major role in the uprising of the proletariat.

Another sociologist who also conformed to the theoretical orientation of conflict nature was **Max Weber (1864-1920)**. Weber was of the opinion that power relations between dominant and subordinate groups give structure to the society, but unlike Marx Weber believed that class differences alone could capture the complex ways of human interactions and hierarchies of human relations inevitable. Weber was convinced that status is an important sociological concept because it alerts us to the fact that people identify their group by what they consume and with whom they socialize. Moreover, Weber had a critical awareness of how bureaucracy was becoming the dominant type of authority in the modern state and how bureaucratic ways of thinking were bound to shape and determine educational planning, reforms and practices in the society.

3) Critical Theory

According to the critical theorists of this orientation, dominant or hegemonic ideologies consciously act to capture our consciousness and understanding, in such a way that the majority of people fail in understanding the underlying realities behind the screen. Understanding from this perspective, schools are believed to be playing a very crucial role, not only in differentially distributing specific kinds of knowledge as projected by the dominant groups for their own interest but also in distributing the kinds of normative and dispositional elements required to make this inequality seem natural. Thus, they are believed to teach a hidden curriculum that seems uniquely suited to maintain the ideological hegemony of the most powerful classes in society.

As the critical theory argues, the curriculum under the contemporary education system contemplates contributing towards and supporting the process of reproduction and maintenance of the ideology of the dominant groups of the society. The critical theory further believes that in doing so, the dominant groups and the mechanisms they have developed and maintained do nothing but serve the purpose of persisting the inequalities of various kinds in various forms. Hence, the critical theorists are of the firm belief that schools as education systems are used by the dominant groups who are mostly at the helms of affairs of educational planning and administration to maintain educational inequality first and then other forms of inequalities in the society.

Pierre Bourdieu, a French philosopher and sociologist of the 19th century was a dominant exponent of the critical theory particularly interested in the critical sociology of education. Through his seminal work to find an intimate connection between the class culture and power in the modern and widely stratified society ultimately forced him to engage in exploring the connection of educational institutions which according to Bourdieu play a very important role in reproducing and transmitting dominant ideology by using cultural traits of the dominant class. His concept of 'Cultural Capital' played a very important role in understanding the role of schools in reproducing and transmitting the ideology and traits of dominant groups in a very legitimate way. According to him, modern schools mostly glorify, adopt, recognize and appreciate the cultural traits of the middle class and dominant class and ignore and discourage the cultural traits of the working class. As a result, the students from the dominant class enjoy better status in the school, earn good marks and ultimately get a good job and better position in society. In this, cultural traits play an important role like economic capital for a student of the dominant class. On the other hand, a student from the backward and working-class feels alienated in the school setting where his unfamiliar cultural traits are placed high and rewarded whereas his own culture and behaviour are ridiculed or neglected. It hampers his/her academic performance and he/she fails to fetch a good job and a better position in society. This phenomenon continues educational inequality and ultimately leads to other forms of inequality in society. Thus, schools as important social agencies play a very crucial role in promoting and maintaining equality in education first and then in other aspects of life.

4) The theory of Symbolic Interactionism

This theory stands as the pillar of the basic idea that symbolic human behaviour based on certain social values attached to specific behavioural patterns greatly influence human relations thereby deciding the status, power and position of individuals or groups in the society. In the lens of a certain value base, some individuals and specific groups are labeled as higher and others are labeled as lower. This labeling very often leads to the ascription of status according to the label which eventually becomes the very part and symbol of the individual and determines one's social status and power relation in the society thereby significantly influencing the life of the individual or

group in question. Some of the theorists of Symbolic interactionism have seen education as one way that labeling theory is seen in action. They say that this labeling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are labeled. For instance, due to poor performance in a particular class, often a student is labeled as a low achiever. This label gradually gets attached to that particular student as the rest of the world particularly people around him start to treat him as a low achiever. Such labels become the source of symbolic interaction creating a complex set of experiences and attitudes in the victim to live down the label. In the school system, mostly children from disadvantaged groups are more likely to get such labels to their misfortune. Thus, social interaction based on some socially formulated beliefs and concepts linked to the educational ability of student's plays a crucial role in the educational attainment of students. This idea under interactionism goes on to suggest that education to a great extent is upheld as a social construct.

To sum up, all the theories associated with the sociology of education depict education as a social concept or social construct standing on the pillars of collective perceptions as formally captured by many scholars in the field.

4.5   LET US SUM UP

A social construct is a social concept or implied meaning that develops and gets popularised within a society or group used by the majority of the people within that group of society use it with similar meaning for a prolonged period of time. There are many such social constructs frequently used by people including sociologists in the discourse of social sciences.

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