UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the relationship between sociology and education and hence sociology of education. We shall also discuss the unique ways in which sociology attempts to solve human problems called sociological perspective. The types and use of each type of perspective in solving educational problems will also be discussed.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. define sociology;

2. explain the term "Sociology of education";

3. explain sociological perspective and give three types of it;

4. describe the consensus perspective and its use in education.

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Sociology primarily concerns itself with social relationships. A network of social relationships is called the society. The society is the sole concern of sociology. Though, there are other aspects of the social science that focuses on some other aspects of the society, the central concern of sociology is the social relationships of mankind. Sociology also uses scientific method in its study. Science is an accumulated body of systemised knowledge and widely accepted processes dedicated to the discovery of generalizations and theories for refining and building on the existing knowledge. The scientific method which is universal (though now objected to by some scientists) consists of formulating a problem to be investigated, formulating some hypotheses and conducting a research which must be public, systematic and replicable.

Sociology is therefore a scientific study of human behaviour in groups, having for its aim the discovery of regularities and order in such behaviour and expressing these discoveries as theoretical propositions or generalisations that describe a wide variety of patterns of behaviour.

Members of a group interact with one another at the individual level. The patterns of behaviour are the sum of the activities of one member on another in the group. Thus, sociology is also seen as the study of the formation and transformation of groups and the relationship of groups and group members with one another, noting that where there are groups there are tendencies for participation, cohesion and conflict.

Sociology also involves the study of human groups and how they operate through established institutions and institutionalised patterns of behaviours which are more or less adapted to the specific functions of society assigned to each institution.

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What is Education?

To the sociologist, education takes place in the society and is a social thing. Durkheinn (1950) argued that:

> *"It is society as a whole and each particular social milieu that determine the ideal that education realizes. Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands. But on the other hand, without a certain diversity all cooperation would be impossible; education assumes the persistence of this necessary diversity by being itself diversified and specialized"*

Durkheinn thus sees education as a means of organizing the individual self and the social self, the I and the We into a disciplined, stable and meaningful unity. The internalization of values and discipline represents the child's initiation into the society. This is why it is very important to study and analyse education using sociological approaches.

Swift (1969) noted that:

1. everything which comprises the way of life of a society or group of people is learned. Nothing of it is biologically inherited.

2. the human infant is incredibly receptive to experience. That is, he is capable of developing a wide range of beliefs about the world around him, skills in manipulating it and values as to how he should manipulate it.

3. the infant is totally dependent from birth and for a very long period thereafter upon other people i.e. he is incapable of developing human personality without a very great deal of accidental or intended help from other people

He therefore, defined education as "*the process by which the individual acquires the many physical, moral social capacities demanded of him by the group into which he is born and within which he must function*." This process has been described by sociologists as **Socialization**. Education has a broader meaning than socialization. It is all that goes on in the society which involves teaching and learning whether intended or unintended to make the child a functional member of that society.

The role of sociology in education is to establish the sociological standpoint and show its appreciation to education. Manheinn (1940) stated that:

> *"Sociologists do not regard education solely as a means of realizing abstract ideals of culture, such as humanism or technical specialization, but as part of the process of influencing men and women. Education can only be understood when we know for what society and for what social position the pupils are being educated."*

Education does not operate in a vacuum. To have a better society, we should analyse the society to show its strengths and weakness and plan the educational programmes to these effects.

The educational system of many countries must reflect the philosophy of that society. It should be based on the needs, demands and aspirations of the society for it to function properly. It should be related to the level of culture, industrial development, rate of urbanization, political organization, religious climate, family structures, and stratification. It should not only fulfil the individual's and society's needs but their future aspirations.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Briefly, sociology of education is defined as a study of the relations between education and society. It is an analysis of the sociological processes involved in an educational institution.

To Ottaway (1962), it is a social study and in so far as its method is scientific, it is a branch of social science. It is concerned with educational aims, methods, institutions, administration and curricula in relation to the economic, political, religious, social and cultural forces of the society in which they function.

As far as the education of the individual is concerned, sociology of education focuses on the influence of social life and social relationships on the development of personality,. Thus, sociology of education emphasises sociological aspects of educational phenomena and institutions. The problems encountered are regarded as essentially problems of sociology and not problems of educational practice.

This view of sociology of education is different from the concept of *educational sociology* which is seen as the application of general principles and findings of sociology to the administration and/or processes of education. This approach attempts to apply principles of sociology to the institutions of education as a separate societal unit. The problems of educational sociology are derived from the field of education.

The content of the sociology of education therefore included such general concepts as the society itself, accommodation, assimilation, cultural lag, sub culture, status etc. Such other considerations as the effect of the polity and economy on education, the social forces and determinants that effect educational and cultural change; the social institutions involved in the educational process – the family, the school and the church; various problems of role structure and role analysis in relation to the total social system and the micro-society of the school; the school viewed as a formal organisation, involving such problems as authority, selection, the organization of learning and streaming; the relationship between social class, culture and language, and between education and occupation; and problems of democratization and elitism, all fall within the purview of sociology of education.

In doing the above, the sociologists often employ any one of Historical correlational or the functionalist approaches. These are demonstrated in the particular perspective used for the study of a given problem.

ACTIVITY 1

1. Discuss the importance of sociology to education.

2. Explain what education is and show its relationship to sociology.

3. Explain what sociology of education is and distinguish it from educational sociology.

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION

From the days of the founding fathers of sociology such as Aguste Comte and Emile Durkheim in France, or Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel in Germany, sociologists have struggled with the question of interpreting social life and social phenomena. There is no avoiding the fact that in the years since Durkheim published his "The Rules of Sociological Method (1895/1964), commitment to the development of sociological theories of society has become a new scholartic orthodoxy. On the one hand, there are thinkers such as Parsons and Merton, who with Durkheim assert the primacy of society over the individual. They stress the paramount necessity of external constraint for both societal and individual well being hence, the notion of a social system which, though created by people, nonetheless, enjoys an independent and external existence while at the same time acting as a constraining and conditioning influence upon individuals (Dawe, 1970; Meighan, 1986).

On the opposite side, and at every level in conflict with the system theorists, thinkers like Max Weber, Mead, Cooley and Blumer reject the notion of a social system or the view that human action is a response to that system. The key notion of the action theorists is that of "autonomous man" who is able "to realise his full potential and to create a truly human social order only when freed from external constraint" (Dawe, 1970). These latter thinkers have tended to emphasize the ability of individuals to create meanings, constitute social situations and, in effect, control the social and natural world (Meighan, 1986).

In the middle, stood thinkers like Karl Marx, Simmel and Dahrendorf who combined the study of social structures and institutions and critical theory. Considered also as system theorists because of a number of other characteristics, they have in common with the earlier system theorists such as their acceptance of the notion of society as a social system and human behaviour as being shaped by that system, they are still seen by many as having provided an alternative critical approach which, in the main, challenges the conservative notion of social order and control of the earlier social theorists. Hence, the use of the term "**conflict**" perspective to distinguish the critical theory of these latter thinkers from the "**consensus**" theory of the earlier thinkers.

Unlike the Durkheimian view, which stresses the primacy of society over the individual, conflict theorists view social order as being achieved "through a continual process of disputed interaction between men, of sectional struggles and of the imposition of order by those who win power" (Meighan, 1986, p.261).

These sociological perspectives persist today. They affect not only the sociological scholar seeking to preserve viewpoints, which radically separate him from his colleagues, but virtually every student of sociology as well. Sociological researches are approached from

different theoretical perspectives ranging from structural functionalism, marxism, interactionism to feminism each affecting not only the way the researcher seeks to explain what constitutes the problem under study, which radically separates him or her from the others, but also the recommendations that he or she makes for redress.

The three main sociological perspectives which are represented by the three groups of theorists enumerated above namely, consensus, action and conflict perspectives would be examined in order to see what it is about these sociological theories that has made them so different from each other. In doing so, we must also look at the meaning and scope of sociological theory. We must clarify what is a sociological perspective and the assumptions upon which a given perspective bases its analysis and interpretation of social life. From that point we must further ask what conclusions about the nature of sociological perspective follow from our definition, and how the different perspectives enumerated above can intersect with the study of education.

WHAT IS A PERSPECTIVE?

Much of the material presented so far has been concerned with how some early thinkers viewed society and social life. We have seen that the interpretation adopted by the three groups of thinkers identified differed fundamentally as a result of the different views they had of man, of society and of the interaction between the two. The position that each group of thinkers adopted from which they viewed society determined how they interpreted it and what they regarded as the most important aspects of social life. This position from which the thinkers approached the study of social life is what is called **perspective**.

And as rightly pointed out by Meighan (1986), no sociologist would approach the study of social life without making a choice from the pool of perspectives available. Nor would the information drawn from such a study be of use to people in their daily lives unless both the perspective from which the study is approached and the ways in which that perspective differs from others are known.

A perspective can thus be defined, as Meighan (1986) did, as "a frame of reference, a series of working rules by which a person is able to make sense of complex and puzzling phenomena (p.227). As Meighan further explicated, for the sociologist, the phenomenon referred to in this definition is social life, and in taking a particular position towards its study, he or she makes a set of assumptions upon which analysis can be based and which, typically include ideas about the nature of human beings, of society and of the interaction between the individual and society.

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

You may be tempted to ask: do sociological perspectives really have any relevance to the study of education? Does a study of these perspectives really have any impact on the "real world" of education – on classrooms, pupils, teachers and school organization? It is not difficult to show some evidence of such relevance and impact. Consider, for example, the controversy concerning gender inequality in education. How can we best explain and react to the relative under representation of girls and young women at all levels of schooling in

certain sections of the country? Or their relative heavy under representation in the physical sciences and science and technology related professions?

The consensus theorists would see nothing wrong in this. They would, in fact, accept the reproduction of gender inequality in education as given since it reflects the existing social inequities that characterise the larger society. They view the school as a neutral institution that provides equal opportunities while the allocation process is seen as resting on the basis of talent and universalistic criteria. Conflict theorists, on the other hand, would immediately see the educational system as being dysfunctional because it permits one group (the male) to dominate at the expense of another (the female) in the educational scene and would strive to change the status quo.

It is obvious therefore, that the extent to which either of these two perspectives is perceived as the most appropriate theoretical framework for examining the problem of gender inequality would determine both what is perceived to be problematic about the topic for investigation and the kind of explanation, which would emerge from such investigations.

All these issues, as we have shown in our earlier discussion, can be and indeed, are interpreted in different ways by different people, depending on one's theoretical inclination.

We have seen that the way these issues and views are used by the system theorists differed sharply at the point of presuppositions from the way the same issues are employed in the hands of an action theorist. Similarly, we have seen that even among system theorists the consensus theorists differed sharply in their methodological persuasions from the conflict theorists even though they are grouped together under the same generic umbrella of system or structural theorists. What is of importance at this stage is to note that the choice of a perspective by a working sociologist would naturally shape his perception of both what constitute a problem and his approach to its solution.

Our point of departure is an examination of the nature and distinctive features of the various schools of thought that are grouped under each of the three theoretical categories described above. But first, let us summarise the issues we have discussed so far.

From the foregoing, the following can be noted:

- We began by looking at three ways in which sociological theorists have viewed and interpreted social life: two are somewhat extreme, and the third represents a middle path. The first extreme we have looked at is that of the "consensus" system or structural theorists represented by Durkheim, Parson and Merton who as Ritzer (1996) pointed out, focus on the invisible larger structures of society which they perceive as determinants of the actions of people and the society as a whole. Under this theory, shared norms and values are fundamental to society and to the maintenance of social order; social change occurs only in a slow and orderly manner.

- The second extreme views society and social life in purely human or social action terms; that is as no more than the creation of its members, the product of their construction of meaning, and of the action and relationships through which they attempt to impose that meaning on their historical situation (Dawe,1970).

- With such a view, the issue that is important is not so much the instances of an individual's compliance to large structures of society which act upon him, but his genuine creative ability to build such structures and ascribe meaning and significance to them (Meighan, 1986).

- The third category represents a middle path group of theorists such as Marx, Simmel and Dahrendorf, who although adopted a structural approach to the study of social life, nonetheless, rejected the methodological persuasions of the consensus theorists. They reject the notion of value consensus in society and stress the existence of fundamental differences of interest between social groups resulting in conflict being a common and persistent feature of society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).

- We then went on to define what a perspective is and the assumptions that are associated with choice of any given perspective as a theoretical framework for analysing and interpreting social life. Attempt has also been made in this section to illustrate the relevance of sociological perspectives to the study of education. The question, as we have seen, is not whether the perspectives are relevant and applicable to the study of education, but how. The conclusion is clear: Sociological perspectives are relevant and applicable to the study of education, but the assumptions which guide our choice will vitally affect the outcomes of our application of them.

ACTIVITY

As a recapitulation of the points so far covered, answer the following questions in the spaces provided:

1.   What is a perspective?

2.   Which of the three categories of sociological perspectives described in this section, in your view can best explain the existing struggle by women for equality and empowerment in our society? Jot down the kind of questions you would be raising in trying to answer this question in the space provided below.

THE CONSENSUS PERSPECTIVE: FUNCTIONALISM

The main sociological perspective under the consensus model is Functionalism, which views society as a system. That is, as made up of a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. In the functionalists' view, the basic unit of analysis is society and the various parts that make up the society are understood mainly in terms of their relationship to the whole (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). The early sociologists viewed society as an organism such as the human body, which is made up of several important parts that work harmoniously together towards the survival and maintenance of the organism. Hence, an understanding of any part of the society would require an analysis of that part's relationship to other parts and most importantly, its contribution to the maintenance of society.

In furtherance of this analogy, the functionalists argued that, just as the human body (to which it is likened) has certain basic needs that must be satisfied if it is to survive, society, too has its own basic needs that must be met if it is to continue to exist. Within such understanding, social institutions such as the family, religion, polity, education and the economy are regarded as indispensable parts of the social system rather than as isolated units. In particular, they are understood in light of the contributions they make to the system as a whole (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).

Functional Prerequisites

These basic needs or necessary conditions of existence are generally referred to in sociological literature as the functional prerequisites of society. Various approaches have been used to identify what these functional prerequisites of society are that cut across all societies. Davis and Moore (1967), for example, argued that all societies have some form or other of **social stratification**, while Mardock (1949) claimed that the **family** is found in every society. From these conclusions it is assumed that existing institutional arrangements such as social stratification and the family meet needs that are common to all societies. The functional prerequisites that are associated with the universal presence of these two aspects of our existence are (i) the need to device a mechanism for ensuring that social positions are adequately and appropriately filled by motivated persons; and (ii) the need to device a mechanism for the reproduction and socialisation of new members of society for its renewal and continuity (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

A second type of approach to the identification of functional prerequisites revolves around an analysis of factors that threaten the continued existence of society such as apathy, assimilation, extinction of members or what Horbbes (1651) described as "war of all against all". Levy (1952) argued in this regard, that for a society to survive, it must device means of preventing these events from occurring such as a system of social reproduction, role differentiation and role assignment, as well as, a system of goals and rewards to motivate members of society to want to perform their assigned tasks and responsibilities. These means of securing the continued existence of society themselves constitute some of the basic requirements that need to be met.

A third type of approach is also utilised for the identification of these prerequisites. Here the issue of deduction from an abstract model of the social system becomes more relevant and the functional prerequisites are more largely inferred than identified. For example, once it is assumed that society is a system, and then it follows that the basic requirements for its survival would include, among other things, a minimum level of integration between its constituent parts as well as, some degree of mutual compatibility of the parts (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

In such an approach, religion is perceived to be the vital part of society, which meets the functional needs of social integration and cohesion through the inculcation of the social norms and values of society among its members.

The Concept of Function

The term "function" in Functionalist analysis refers to the contribution of the part to the whole. That is, the significant role played by a given part of the social system. Hence, the function of the family can be said to be that of ensuring the continued existence of society through reproductive renewal and socialisation of new members, while that of religion is to integrate the social system through the inculcation of common values.

To the extent that these social institutions perform their roles adequately, they remain functional. However, any detraction from their expected roles of maintaining the society in a cohesive and harmonious state would render them dysfunctional.

Presuppositions and Assumptions

Talcott Parsons (1955) cites seven assumptions that govern structural functionalism:

i.   "Systems have the property of order and interdependence of parts;

ii.   Systems tend towards self-maintaining order, or equilibrium;

iii. The system may be static or involved in an ordered process of change;

iv.   The nature of one part of the system has an impact on the form that the other parts can take;

v.   Systems maintain boundaries with their environments;

vi.   Allocation and integration are two fundamental processes necessary for a given state of equilibrium of a system; and

vii   Systems tend toward self-maintenance involving the maintenance of boundaries and of the relationships of parts to the whole, control of environmental variations, and control of tendencies to change the system from within" (Parsons cited in Ritzer, 1996 P. 240).

Value Consensus

Functionalist analysis has mainly concerned itself with the central question of how social system is maintained. This focus has narrowed down the functionalist's search for an answer to value consensus – a collective conscience consisting of common values, norms, beliefs and sentiments without which social solidarity and cohesion would be impossible.

Value consensus thus forms the fundamental integrating principle that binds the various parts of society together. If members share and remain committed to the same norms and values, social order will be maintained. Differences of interests are regarded as of minor and secondary importance compared to those that all groups share in common.

Functionalism and the Study of Education

At this stage it will be useful to relate the functionalist analysis to the study of education. In his work Meighan (1986) gives us a hint of what functionalist analysis of education might look like and a fuller expression of the implications of viewing education by examining the relationship between the structures of society. Basic to the functionalist approach is a concern

for maintenance, legitimation, transmission and internalisation of the "collective conscience" that, in the functionalist's view is so central to the society's integration and survival. The system of education is seen as a means of perpetuating and reinforcing the much-desired societal homogeneity by inculcating in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands (Durkheim, 1956). Thus, the object of education is to legitimise rather than challenge the status quo of the existing social arrangements in a given society.

Meighan (1986) goes on to illustrate the consequence of viewing education from a functionalist perspective. First, any question about the organization and process of education will have to be viewed in terms of education's role in providing for the adequate socialisation of the individual. Second, if education is to succeed in fulfilling its transmission and socialisation functions, then its nature and purpose must be manipulated by society. The implications of these two views are many. First, education must be viewed as having a conservative and integrative function – that of transmitting the cultural heritage of older generation to younger generation and maintaining the social order. The main function of education in this regard would be to work towards solidarity and integration rather than differentiation or managed pluralism. In this sense, the education system becomes an important part of the process of achieving unity, cohesion and consensus in society.

Second, Meighan (1986) speaks of the way the functionalist view would influence interpretations of three key areas of schooling, namely, the curriculum, the roles of teachers and pupils and interpersonal relations. In all three areas, the functionalist would find a common pattern of maintaining social order: The task of designing the curriculum involves selecting only those contents that can demonstrably be shown to be part of the common collective culture.

Similarly, this same dominance of social needs over those of the individual prevails in the expected role of the teachers who must ensure the inculcation of group values, allegiance and sense of responsibility in their pupils. The pupils on their part, are seen as passive recipients of the rules of society from their teachers. They must be passive and restrained because they lack knowledge and skills and are sometimes motivated by selfish desires which need to be controlled. In this definition of roles three distinct elements characterising interpersonal relations in the school are distinguished: (i) by virtue of their knowledge, experience and authority, teachers enjoy superior position over their pupils, (ii) teacher-pupil relations are structured in such a way as to mediate conflict or disharmony in the social order and (iii) within this arrangement, neither the teacher's authority nor the pupil's passivity is to be defined by personal need or interest, rather, both are to be governed by what is called the collective culture on which the entire functionalist perspective rests.

To this point it will be seen that application of the functionalist model to education or indeed any social institution, even at the level of simple analysis, requires a measure of understanding of the fit between the parts of the social system and their functional contribution to the smooth running of the whole. Functionalist analysis aims to uncover the "deep structures" operating in the consciousness of the whole by focusing on what can be regarded as the cardinal functions of its various parts on which the entire social structure rests.

ACTIVITY

The main argument of the functionalist theory is that society is a system made up of parts that are interconnected. And because the functionalists view society as a whole, any change in a part which affects the other parts to which it is interrelated.

As a recapitulation of the points covered in this unit, answer the following questions in the spaces provided:

1.   What benefits may be derived from the application of the functionalists' macro-theory to the study of social order?

2.   What are the main disadvantages of relying on a consensus model for interpreting social reality?

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UNIT TWO: THE ACTION AND CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

From a consideration of the functionalist perspective which places primacy of society or the whole over the individual, we move onto another which holds just the apposite view known as action perspective. This perspective emphasises rather the role of the individual and how he interpretes reality was an entity not really governed by the group. This difference in emphasis it will be shown has brought as well a new methodology, quite different from that adopted by functionalists. A key difference in their methodologies will of course be highlighted. Thus, whereas functionalism claims objectivity in its methods whereby issues are more or less static and predetermined in ways essential to the individual the action perspective, it will be shown stresses the individual's subject interpretation of reality as being the key . The great implication of this perspective and its accompanying methodology are then applied to the institution of education in this unit.

We shall also look at yet another sociological perspective which developed essentially as a reaction against functionalism. We remember that functionalism views society as constituted of parts which perform specific functions for the survival of the whole. Conflict perspective, the third in our consideration of sociological perspectives, it will be shown rejects the ideas of consensus in that it asserts that what characterizes society is perpetual conflict between individuals. The central ideas in this perspective are competition, and exploitation. This basic difference notwithstanding, it will also be shown that this sociological perspective shares something in common with functionalism – their concern for the whole society in their analysis. And like the preceding perspectives we will be examining the different varieties of the conflict perspective, namely Marxism, neo-marxism and feminism. In the final part we will examine the way the conflicting issues in the larger society impact on the institution of education.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the unit are to:

1.   give a comparative view of the action and functionalist perspectives;

2.   discuss the methodology of the action perspective;

3.   state the varieties of the action perspectives;

4.   describe the impact of the action perspective on the study of education;

5.   give the central assumption of the conflict perspectives;

6.   explain how the conflict perspective is both similar and different from the functionalist one;

7.   describe the way contradiction in the larger society affect the institution of education.

THE ACTION PERSPECTIVE

Basic to the action perspective is a concern for the individual-level rather than the social-level approach. Whereas functionalist perspective has attempted to answer questions about the process by which order is achieved in social life, including both the way interpersonal relations are regulated and how individual affairs are constrained using a social system model, action perspective looks for another dimension. The society is viewed as the product of man, a human creation which does not merely reflect the product of its members' construction of meaning, but at a deeper level conveys the actions and relationships through which they attempt to impose that meaning on their historical situation (Meighan, 1986). Thus, the object of action perspective is to discover how the actions of men help to produce society rather than how the society regulates and constrains their affairs. The action theorists, as we have seen earlier, reject the notion of a social system that is "ontologically and methodologically prior to its participants", a notion that puts society above and external to the individual. Here the progression works in direct opposition to the functionalists' view, where the single unit of analysis is the society, which is regarded as a system that shapes human behaviour. Action perspective goes from the smaller unit of social action to the more comprehensive, focusing on small scale interactions rather than society as a whole.

An action theorist with a strongly antilarge-scale units of analysis bias, such as Weber, shows the tendency most clearly in his preference for the "individualist" method over the collectivist notions, for as he maintains, it is in the action of one or more, few or many individuals that collective notions find their meaning.

Whether such an approach can ever be reconciled or viewed as complementary to the functionalist's large-scale macro-level analysis remains an open question. However, some major interpreters of Weber's work notably; Hekman (1983), Lachman (1971)Runciman (1972) and Wax (1967) who espouse macro-structural methods maintain that Weber's theory involves both approaches.

To describe the kind of individual-level approach which operates without the functionalist theoretical presuppositions, Weber developed the concept of Verstehen (German for understanding) an idea derived from a field known as Hermeneutics devoted to the study of the meaning and interpretation of published writings. Hermeneutics aims at understanding the thinking of the author and the basic structure of the text. Weber sought to extend this idea to the understanding of society by focusing on actors and interaction with a view to identifying the meaning behind observable behaviour and events (Ritzer, 1996).

This approach is far removed from that of Durkhein or Parsons both of whom stress the importance of macro-level analysis. Weber's method as noted by Meighan (1996) requires the user (i) to define the ways in which members of society create the social order within which they live through both their individual and collective actions, and (ii) to comprehend and assess the structural and internal arrangements employed by members of society to both act socially and to impose some form of control over their existential conditions. A stress on the creative capacity of individual members replaces the constraining framework of functionalism, while the absence of a large-scale theory of structures and their interrelated

complementary functions further put this approach in a category different from that of Durkheim or Parsons.

Action Perspective and Subjective Reality

Before moving to the various schools of thought grouped under this perspective and the main differences between them, we should briefly look at the unifying factor that binds the groups together. To this point in the analysis, it will be apparent that the method of the action theorists seems to be touched by a concern for the subjective dimension of reality, which requires the user to take into analysis the subjective vision of the individual actors and what Meighan (1986) describes as the "idiosyncratic and situationally specific features of human behaviour". The group is thus unified by the fact that its members are willing to make the actions and the subjective interpretations of real people their main concern. Jack Douglas (1971) probably speaks for all when he rightly asks if anyone not committed to the subjective reality of social action would also discover the real meaning of that action:

> *Any scientific understanding of human action, at whatever level of ordering of generality, must begin with and be built upon an understanding of the everyday life of the members performing those actions. (To fail to see this and to act in accord with it is to commit what we might call the fallacy of abstractionism, that is the fallacy believing that you can know if a more abstract form what you do not know in the particular form (Douglas, 1971 cited in Meighan, 1986,p. 249).*

It follows from this therefore, that a second reason why the action theorists make subjective reality the basis for any sociological analysis is derived from their conception of and attitude to what constitutes acceptable sociological knowledge. Although as a general rule the action theorists accept the use of concepts which refer to collective behaviour or general patterns of conduct and notions of whole group of people and the objectified relationships between them, they cautioned that these concepts are but mere images and possible interpretations of the complexity of human life rather than concrete descriptions of actual behaviour (Meighan 1986). This act of pointing out possibilities is but merely a vehicle for explaining that which the real actor wishes to convey. Although the medium is certainly important, the action theorists maintain that it cannot replace or be more accurate than the social actor's own interpretations of his or her actions. The meaning of social action must therefore be sought in the actor's own interpretation of his action. As Gorbutt (1972) cautioned, an observer must not assume that his or her predetermined interpretation and understanding of a situation under study at the beginning of the investigation have any more than a tenuous validity. He argues:

> *We cannot merely describe a school assembly, for example, as a consensus ritual which binds staff and pupils together. This indeed may be the stated intention of the headmaster. But the interpretation put upon the event by others, even though they may outwardly conform, cannot be assumed (cited in Meighan, 1986, 250).*

Thus, at every stage in the process of sociological inquiry, the observer must avoid, as far as possible, superimposing his or her own premeditated interpretation of the phenomenon under

study. In general then, it may be seen how central the stress on the relativity of knowledge and the subjectivity of meaning is to the action perspective.

Considerable benefit may clearly be derived from the application of this approach to the study of social reality. When controlled by a subjective methodology, the interpretation of human reality assumes a whole new dimension focusing attention on both the knowledge that people have of their world and the meanings they give to the objects which constitute it.

Varieties of Action Perspective

Thus, freed from the rigid assumptions of the objective methodology, action perspective has taken a variety of directions, namely, interactionism phenomenology and ethnomethodology. While acknowledging the considerable variety within the forms of action perspective, the main emphasis in the rest of this unit will be upon symbolic interactionism because as Meighan (1986) points out, it is arguably the one branch of interpretive sociology that has had the greatest impact on educational research. But first let us consider some of the subtle assumptions and methods that both characterise and distinguish the emergent directions from one another. The differences as we shall see, do not prevent one from observing the similarities that remain, especially as they relate to the over all subjective methods employed by the adherents of each category. Hammersley and Woods (1976) speak of three elements, which are fundamental to the methodological distinctions of the three main branches of the interpretive sociology mentioned above, namely "process", "meaning" and "rules".

a. **Interactionism**

Interactionism aims to uncover the "process" through which men construct their actions. As the name suggests, it is concerned with the interaction between people. Basic to this perspective is the belief that action is meaningful to those partaking in it and so to understand the meaning of a social action would require an interpretation of the meanings the actors in a given context give to their activities (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). This means that true meaning of a social action can only be derived from the actors and the context in which the action is taking place. It also means that meanings are not fixed entities but are rather negotiated within the actual process of interaction just as prices of goods in the open market are negotiated between the seller and the buyer. The interactionist seeks to understand this process of negotiating meaning as it happens in context.

b. **Phenomenology**

A second branch of the action perspective is phenomenology. The phenomenologist's emphasis is on "meaning" rather than "process". The aim is to uncover the knowledge and assumption which individual actors must possess and act upon in order for the social world to exist. These knowledge and assumptions are not always obvious at the conscious level and are more often taken for granted in the course of our everyday lives (Meighan, 1986). The task of the phenomenologist is to construct meaning from an analysis of what the actors think they know and the way in which they interpret their actions and the context in which such actions are taking place.

c.   **Ethnomethodology**

A third branch is ethnomethodology. Like the interactionists and phenomenologists, the ethnomethodologists are also concerned with the ways in which members of society create and maintain the social world within which they live. However, their main emphasis is on the methods and devices as well as the practical activities which make such construction possible at all. In this sense, the ethnomethodologists are poised to uncover the rules of social interactions: How do members of any given society negotiate a new social order? From an ethnomethodologist's perspective, the construction of social reality proceeds from negotiated meanings that are constructed within ongoing interactive situations. The stress therefore is on the nature, construction and expression of the regular techniques used by social actors to negotiate roles and make their actions rational and comprehensible for others (Meighan, (1986). Thus, for example, whereas in theory in most patriarchal societies, there are clearly defined roles for men and women in marriage, in real life situation, the interaction between husbands and wives and the emergent definition of their respective roles and marital relationship are continually negotiated and renegotiated between the couple, and the outcomes of that continual negotiation will depend on the types of concessions and compromises the two individuals involved are willing to make to each other at any given time in the life of the union (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000)

In summary, then, it can be seen how the action perspective has taken a variety of directions. However, although the three groups identified above as representing these directions may differ in methods and conclusions, they all fall squarely within the general theoretical framework of interpretive sociology. Even a casual observer can readily see considerable overlap between these separate branches of the action perspective. Meighan (1986) asks doubtfully if anyone could effectively describe the processes of classroom life exclusive of the meaning that the real actors in the classroom take from it and the negotiated roles they partake in order to create and order that life, as well as, render their behaviour accountable to others in the interactive situation.

Because to some extent the work of symbolic interactionists reflects the interface between these concerns, only that branch is of interest at this point.

The remainder of this unit will seek to present a brief description of symbolic interactionism as it evolved from its beginning in the work of G.H. Mead (1863-1931) in the 19th century to its present day modification. An exposition of its basic principles, assumptions and methods will be followed by an examination of its impact upon educational research. Finally, I shall offer a critique of symbolic interactionism as a tool for sociological research.

Symbolic Interactionism: The Theory

Symbolic interactionism owes its beginning to the developments in sociological theory which followed the publication of G.H. Mead's "Mind, Self and Society´ in 1934/1962. Mead and those who follow him argue that human beings are unique in their ability to use symbolic communication (use of ideas and concepts as distinct from mere gestures) in their social

interactions. In this sense, language, which represents the symbol system in use, reflects certain universal symbols or structures, which in turn reflect universal orders within the human mind. All communication is in some way an expression or exchange of these symbols and the task of the interactionist is to discover or uncover the nature of these patterns of exchange (Ritzer, 1996; see also Meighan 1986).

Mead argues that through language humans, as distinct from animals, are able to (i) organise and store up a schemata of impressions and understandings of the social and physical world; (ii) transmit same to others who share the same language form, and (iii) apply same to new situations, perceptions or symbolic communications received from others, and in the process create new forms of understanding of such signals (Meighan, 1986).

This access and ability to choose from a range of available response options developed over time in the mind of the individual's help to liberate them from the determining and constraining forces of nature. With a growing self-consciousness, the individual ceases to be a passive subject to the direct impact of external stimuli for he can delay his response to such stimuli, anticipate and weigh their significance and consequences against particular lines of action towards them before making an appropriate choice (Hargreaves, 1972)

In this sense, the individual becomes an active participant in his social world acting and being acted upon within and towards situations. Through such complex and flexible processes of interaction, social identities, meanings and roles are created, maintained, modified or changed (Meighan, 1986). Individuals respond to situations on the basis of how they perceive and define them and these definitions refer to the meanings individuals attach to the ongoing events in which they find themselves. So to arrive at an adequate interpretation of an event, the investigator must understand both the various definitions of the situations by the actors in the event and the ways in which these different definitions intersect with each other resulting in series of negotiations of roles which act in concert to produce the totality of the interactional setting (Meighan 1986)

However, caution about the individuals' all time awareness of the processes, which make up their social interaction, is required. The extent of such awareness as pointed out by Meighan is debatable and the social observer is compelled to be alert not only to the overt intentions and understanding of his subjects, but also to the outcomes of unexpected and unintended actions within the observed interaction. It is through careful examination of these social dynamics that the "hidden" elements of interaction are exposed and apprehended.

Basic Principles of Symbolic Interactionism

The basic principles of symbolic interactionism have been enumerated by a number of its adherents (Blumer, 1969a; Manis & Meltzer, 1978; Rose, 1962). Ritzer (1996) has summarized seven distinct but interrelated principles of the theory:

i.   Human beings, unlike lower animals, are endowed with the capacity for thought.

ii.   The capacity for thought is shaped by social interaction.

iii.   In social interaction people learn the meanings and the symbols that allow them to exercise their distinctively human capacity for thought.

iv   Meanings and symbols allow people to carry on distinctively human action and interaction.

v.   People are able to modify or alter the meanings and symbols that they use in action and interaction on the basis of their interpretation of the situation.

vi.   People are able to make these modifications and alterations because, in part, of their ability to interact with themselves, which allows them to examine possible course of action, assess their relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one.

vii.   The intertwined patterns of action and interaction make up groups and societies (p.347).

ACTIVITY I:

1.   The argument of the action theorists differs significantly from that of the consensus theorists discussed in this Unit. What in your opinion, are the main differences between the two perspectives?

2.   What advantages has the action theorist over the consensus theorist in understanding social reality?

The Method and its Impact on the Study of Education

As mentioned earlier, much of symbolic interactionists method involves the strife to understand the meaning of events for people in particular situations, with the emphasis being on the participants' own interpretations of reality (Ritzer, 1996). In the context of social action meaning is thus the place where the symbolic interactionists seek meaning. This approach is conceived along lines familiar enough to social anthropologists who are equally concerned with the ways in which the social world is organized by its members (Burgess, 1984b). The link between symbolic interactionism and the ethnographic methods used by social anthropologists has been well articulated in Williams, (1981). Like the ethnographers, the symbolic interactionists are primarily interested in the cultural patterns and behaviour of the group and, in particular, the members' perception of the world in which they operate.

Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Education

Perhaps the most important questions involve the basic challenges and insights which the adoption of this technique of regarding the categories and meanings used by members of the social world as problematic puts to us in the area of education. As noted by Meighan (1986), already this emphasis had given impetus to the emergence of a new sociology of education in Britain in the 1970s, which focused attention on how teachers and pupils act and interact in schools as well as how they construct and understand the definitional categories on which they base their actions.

A close examination of the assumptions which both teachers and students have about knowledge, learning, intelligence and even schooling and education itself is seen not only as a way of unveiling the foundation upon which the school system rests, but also as a means of bringing the system under a more direct control of its creators and users (Meighan, 1986).

This view has encouraged a considerable amount of ethnographic research in schools (see, e.g. Rist, 1973).

In this context, the application of a variety of qualitative techniques of data collection, such as participant observation and extensive interviewing, the search for meaning at a level other than the macro-structural level, coupled with the dual role of the researcher as both an insider and outsider, all offer hope for new and supposedly accurate kinds of meaning.

Implicit in these methods is the idea that qualitative data are at least as meaningful as quantitative data if not more so. In fact, questions of objectivity and bias are often set aside and perhaps this explains why the method has come under heavy criticism from adherents to the more scientific quantitative methodology. Nonetheless, behind its apparent subjectivity, symbolic interactionism is governed by a set of assumptions alluding to its objective nature as well. It may well be useful to look again here at the claims made for the method in this area. Wilcox (1982) has singled out some of the fundamental precepts, which guide this type of inquiry.

The first is to set aside one's own preconception or stereotypes about what is going on and then explore the setting as it is perceived and constructed by its members.

The second is to try and make the familiar strange, in Wilcox's words, "to assume that that which seems commonplace is nonetheless extraordinary and to question why it exists or takes place as it does, or why something else does not" (pp.458-60).

The third is the assumption that in order to understand why things take place as they do, one must view the relationship between the setting and its context.

The fourth is to establish, maintain and develop relationship with the subjects of study in order to ensure the constant flow of data.

The fifth is to remain in the field long enough to note regularities and irregularities and interpret them with confidence.

The difficulty of this task may be appraised, by looking at some of the fundamental questions raised by these assumptions. For example, is it possible to study behaviour while at the same time suspending one's assumption about it? Does being "out there" in the field immersing oneself in a setting warrant validity by providing direct contact with reality? Already, in the works of some symbolic interactionists notably, Gorbutt, (1974); Becker, (1974); and Douglas, (1971), one can sense a willingness to experiment with symbolic interactionists method while retaining a certain ambivalence towards its claim to protecting the "integrity of the phenomena".

The new methodology that emerged from this sociological perspective and which has come to be known as the new sociology of education has totally changed the conception and sociology of education. Before the development of this sociological perspective, many issues in the course were taken for granted, from the face value only. This means sociology of education before this time concerned itself more with a description of existing state of things, known more technically as the descriptive is. A common curriculum was seen to be necessary to all; low level of achievement in school was explained very simplistically as the

inherent inability of blacks or disadvantaged groups and; in several cases language differences was held to be responsible for this.

The current view of sociology of education consequent upon this sociological perspective challenged the usually taken for granted in the several researches that came in its wake. Notably among their findings are the positions that the curriculum is more than a collection of subject matter. It is to them a system of meanings which must reflect those of any group of people for whom it is intended. Thus, they explain black underachievement to the imposition of curricula which contain meanings from different cultural backgrounds. In this same light, this perspective explains differential achievement to be due to several reasons many of which have cultural roots. For instance, it is their view that in cultures where talking to elders is seen as disobedience, any form of oral assessment in school will work to their disadvantage.

This sociological perspective in short has greatly succeeded in establishing that though cultures differ, none is deficient. It even makes problematic what is taken as knowledge is always wrongly taken to be constitutive of it. This suggests that there are in effect several categories of knowledge and different cultures merely emphasize different ones. The new sociologists are quick to compare those illiterate peoples who without the aid of modern equipment are able to move far into the sea or cattle herdsmen who move about without compasses as having knowledge of a unique kind which is both practical and relevant.

ACTIVITY II:

1. What are the main disadvantages of relying on subjective reality as the only basis of sociological analysis?

2. What are the basic challenges and insights, which the adoption of the action perspective puts to us in the area of education?

THE CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

A common assumption in the preceding discussion of sociological theories whether at the macro-level looking at the interconnectedness between individuals' actions and the structure of society, or at the micro-level with a strong antilarge-scale unit of analysis bias, is that the social arrangements and interactional situations which govern social reality are a product of the mutual decisions and agreements of the people involved. The existence of systematic social arrangements and some interactional social situations, which seem to favour some groups than others, is never questioned. Social inequities in terms of access to and ability to use and control resources in society are accepted as given and unproblematic (Meighan, 1986). But even the conservative functionalists accept that social groups can have differences of interest resulting in conflict as a valid and necessary part of social discourse even though they undermine the significance of such conflict in disrupting the social order.

The failure of both consensus and action perspectives to provide satisfactory answers to the question of inequitable distribution of resources or the exploitative relationships prevalent in the society gave rise over the years to an alternative theory of how societies hold together

developed as a way of demonstrating how order and coherence in society are founded on conflict and the domination of some over others.

This relatively new theory emerged from the writings of Marx (1818-1883). As we shall see later, not only did the Marxian theory break with the Durkheimian view of the primacy of society over the individual by focusing on the notion of power as the mediating factor in its concept of binary opposition, but it opened the door to a number of other theories, particularly where the concept of binary opposition and the notion of power lent support.

For the Marx, the basic aspect of social order is to be found in the concept of binary opposition. Social order is achieved through a continual process of disputed interaction between men, of sectional struggles and of the imposition of order by those who win power (Meighan, 1986) Using this Marxian binary model, the conflict theorists demonstrate that although the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' or the owners of the means of production and the forces of production are binary opposites, the notion of power mediates between each pair of opposites.

This mediation operates at two levels. First, it empowers certain individuals within a group to shape, direct and define the rules governing the conduct of other members of the group as a way of managing intra-group conflict and maintaining order. At the second level, it enables one group of people to successfully overcome opposition from other groups or even other individuals. In this way, all social arrangements governing the interrelationships between individuals' actions and the structure of society and all interactional situations are thus subjected to a pervasive **Hagelian dialectical analysis.**

As noted by Haralambos and Holborn (2000), although there are many varieties of the conflict perspective within sociology, all (i) view society as a whole, (ii) adopt a structural approach; (iii) use the notion of the existence of different groups that have different interests in society resulting in conflict, and (iv) submit that social arrangements will tend to favour some groups at the expense of others.

Conflict theorists at least with reference to their emphasis on the existence of competing groups and interests in society, would agree that conflict is in some way central to the maintenance of social order. Finding the ways in which these competing differences and interests are either resolved or controlled is the true goal of analysis. This does not mean however, that conflict is a permanent feature in our social arrangements as there are periods of truce and compromises resulting in harmonious co-existence of the competing groups. But even these periods of harmony do not last for ever, and new forms of conflict may eventually erupt (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

From this it can be seen that like the functionalists, the conflict theorists are also inclined towards the study of social structures and institutions. However, as noted by Ritzer (1996), the conflict theory represents largely a series of contentions that often contradict the views of the functionalists about social reality. Ritzer follows Dahrendorf (1958, 1959) in juxtaposing the tenets of the two theorists. Whereas the functionalists view society as static or in a state of moving equilibrium, the conflict theorists regard society at every point, as being affected by the processes of change. Furthermore, whereas functionalists emphasize the orderliness of

society, by contrast, conflict theorists direct attention to the existence of dissent and conflict at every point in the social system.

Again, where functionalists explain social order in terms of value consensus and a common morality, the conflict theorists perceive any order that there is as resulting from coercion of some members by those at the top. Thus, where functionalists regard shared social values as the main factor in social cohesion, the conflict theorists stress the role of power in bringing about order in society.

Although there are many varieties of conflict theories, the focus in this unit will be on only three namely, Marxism, Neo-Marxism and Feminism. What follows will be an attempt to describe these three forms of conflict perspective and their methods.

Marxism

Marxism is named after its founder, the German born philosopher, economist and sociologist, Karl Marx (1818-83). As a theory, Marxism begins from the simple observation that human survival depends on the production of food and material objects. In this production process, people enter into social relationships with each other. Production is thus a social enterprise involving individuals forming certain associations and affiliations from which they derive the benefits of collective effort (Meighan, 1986). But production also involves a technical aspect known in Marxian parlance as the forces of production, which refers to the scientific knowledge, raw materials, implements and the entire technology used in the process of production (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). In this regard, every major stage in the development of the forces of production whether in a simple hunting economy or in the complex industrial state, is characterised by a particular form of the social relationships of production.

Together, the forces of production and the social relationships that characterise them form the economic basis of society, which the Marxists refer to as the infrastructure. The other institutional aspects of society such as the legal, political, educational and the belief and value systems, which are themselves determined by economic factors, constitute what the Marxists call the superstructure. These two complementary parts of society are highly interdependent to the extent that a major change in the infrastructure will result into corresponding changes in the superstructure (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

In Marx's view, all historical societies are characterised by basic contradictions, which prevent them from surviving forever in their existing forms. These contradictions as noted by Haralambos and Holborn, (2000):

> *"involve the exploitation of one social groups by another: in feudal society, lords exploits their serfs; in capitalist society, employers exploit their employees. This creates a fundamental conflict of interest between social groups since one gain at the expense of another. This conflict of interest must ultimately be resolved since a social system containing such contradictions cannot survive unchanged" (pp.11-12).*

At this stage it becomes pertinent to discuss two views of Marx about human history. The first is his perception of people as being both the producers and product of history. The

second relates to his view subjecting human history to a pervasive Hegelian dialectical analysis. These views will be discussed in turn in the following subsections.

Marx's Historical Perspective

In Marx's view, people are both the producers and the products of society. They are the architects of their society and themselves by their own very actions. In this way history becomes a process of human self-creation. Conversely though, people are shaped and moulded by the same social relationships and systems of thought that they helped to bring about through their actions and reactions. From this it will be seen how Marxism can help one to understand society. It would of course call for a historical perspective which would attempt to uncover the process through which humanity both produces and is, in turn, produced by, social reality (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

The Marxian theory views society as a whole and its various parts as interdependent and influencing each other. Hence these parts can only be understood from the perspective of their mutual effect. In this sense, though originally conceived as something of an alternative to functionalism, it is important to note that Marxism usually affirms a modified macro-structural theory as a means of explaining how societies hold together. It shares the holistic presuppositions of the functionalist's view of society as a system. It is important, then, before proceeding, to ask in what way or ways an appreciation of the Marxian historical perspective might affect our understanding of society.

Marx's Dialectical Materialism

As we have already observed, the Marxian view of history is based on the idea of dialectic, which itself represents a struggle of opposites and a conflict of contradictions. Conflict then becomes the source of change and the prime mover of the dialectical process. The basic aspect of the dialectical process is to be found in the concept of binary opposition. The struggle or conflict between two binary opposites escalates in intensity leading to a collision, which, in turn, paves the way for the emergence of a new set of forces at a level of development (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

This sets the dialectical process on course again as the contradictions between the new set of forces intersect and conflict in a fresh movement towards change.

This idea of dialectical change is derived from the Hegelian dialectical analysis of society, which explains historical change in terms of dialectical movement of human ideas and thoughts. In Hegel's view, social change finds its basis in the conflict between incompatible ideas. Marx, on the contrary, in rejecting the priority Hegel accorded to ideas, placed his emphasis on the economic system. It is, as Haralambos and Holborn (2000) explained; "in contradictions and conflict in the economic system that the major dynamic for social change lies" (p. 1043). It is this concentration on economic factors that has earned Marx's view of history the name, dialectical materialism.

ACTIVITY III

As a recapitulation of the points covered in this section, answer the following questions:

1.   What are the main arguments of the conflict theorists?

2.   In what ways are the structural functionalist and the Marxist theories both similar and different?

NEO-MARXISM

As second variety of the conflict perspective is called Neo-Marxism. Neo-Marxism is a term applied to a variety of sociological theories whose critical approach reflects the idea of Marx. As we shall see, Marx has exerted a profound influence on a variety of other theorists who claim to be operating within the guidelines laid down in his original work. However, as noted by Ritzer (1996), it is not always the case that these theorists who apply Marx's methods share the same assumptions, as there are "irreconcilable differences among them". In making the distinction, Ritzer (1996), has attempted to square various types of Neo-Marxist theories with their respective concerns in sociological analysis. At that point, a large group of conflict theorist's function like the economic determinist, the Hegelian Marxists or the critical theorists and others, whatever views or methods of Marx they actually affirm. In what follows, I shall briefly discuss some of these theories.

a.   **Economic Determinism**

The economic determinists based their argument on Marx's insistence on the paramount importance of the economic system in exerting the primary influence on other aspects of society. To the extent that economic factors determine all other sectors of the society such as religion, politics, value system and education, Marxism is interpreted in terms of economic determinism. Economic determinism assumed prominence in the period 1889 – 1914 at a time when market capitalism had its booms and busts, which led to predictions about its imminent collapse (Ritzer, 1996). Adherents to this interpretation spearheaded by Engels, Kautsky and Bernstein argued that the collapse of capitalism was inevitable because of the contradictions that interplay within its economic structures. The class struggle between workers and the capitalist class is expected to lead inevitably to the overthrow of capitalism and the emergence of socialism (Kautsky cited in Agger, 1978).

Ritzer takes up an issue with this last point for it seems to short-circuit the Marxian dialectic by undermining the significance of human thought and action. The entire imagery of the class struggle is about actors who are constrained by the economic structures of capitalism into a series of actions. This in a way, contradicts the dialectical thrust and dynamism of Marx's theory since it smacks of political quietism. As Ritzer (1996) retorts: "why should individuals act if capitalist system was going to crumble under its own structural contradictions?" (p. 279)

b.   **Hegelian Marxism**

The contradictions apparent between economic determinism and Marx's thinking referred to above gave rise to a number of other varieties of the Marxian theory. One of such varieties is the Hegelian Marxism, which calls for a return to the Hegelian roots of Marx's theory as a way of complementing the strength of the early Marxists' objectivity with a subjective orientation. The Hegelian Marxists' concern is to restore the dialectic between the subjective and the objective aspects of social life (Ritzer, 1996).

Prominent thinkers in this group are George Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci. Lukacs' main contribution in this regard appears in his work on two major ideas namely, reification and class consciousness. Without rejecting the presuppositions of the economic Marxists on reification, Lukacs clearly feels the application of the concept should be extended beyond the economic institution to cover all society including the state, the legal and the economic sector since the same dynamic applies in all sectors of capitalist society where social structures assume a life of their own independent of man (Ritzer, 1996).

However, in his work on class consciousness, which refers to the belief systems shared by members of the same class group such as the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, Lukacs also stressed the subjective dimension of the dialectical relationship between the objective economic position, class consciousness and the subjective thoughts and actions of the individual or a group of individuals occupying the same class position. At this point, Lukacs refuses to see the individual as simply being constrained and regulated by forces external to him, but rather as the architect of his own fate. Thus, he would argue that as the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat intensifies, the latter would move from being a "class in itself" (i.e. a created entity), to being a "class for itself" (i.e. a class conscious of its mission and vision) poised and capable of taking the necessary action that could overthrow capitalism (Ritzer, 1996).

In this sense, it can be seen that Lukac's perspective is influenced by two views standing in opposition: the view of social structures as having a life of their own and an objective character (reification) on the one hand, and the view of an individual being the creator of his own fate (class consciousness) on the other, make up one whole dialectical relationship that incorporates the two into a fundamental opposition. The key to understanding social reality should be looked for not simply in the two binary opposites but in the way they are mediated in a relationship of fundamental opposition such as that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in a capitalist system.

Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) also contributed to the shift of emphasis from economic determinism to more modern Marxian positions (Ritzer, 1996). He rejected the deterministic fatalism of economic determinism and favoured in its place the resurrection of political will (Gramsci, 1917/1977). Although he accepts the notion of historical regularities, he, indeed, rejected the idea of automatic or predictive inevitability of historical developments inherent in Marx's historical materialism.

For Gramsci, the subjective dimension of the dialectical relationship is very crucial to the emergence of any change in the status quo. Hence, in a capitalist system, the masses have to act in order to bring about social revolution. But to do so, they need to be conscientized and made aware of their predicament and the exploitative nature of the system in which they live. They can hardly get to this point on their own but would depend on the guidance and direction of an elitist corps of intellectuals, a think tank, as it were, and a driving force that would teleguide the masses into action. However, the moment the masses imbibe these ideas they would take the actions that culminate into social revolution (Ritzer, 1996).

In this sense, Gramsci and Lukacs are typical of a group which would: (i) openly reject the economic determinism of the Marxian theory but still use something of its analytical methods, and (ii) attempt to re-establish the dialectic between the objective and subjective aspects of social life by focusing on collective ideas rather than on social structures. Gramsci's central concept of hegemony, which he defines as the cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class is negotiated rather than attained through coercion. Thus, it is not enough to merely gain control of the economic structures and the state apparatus, equally important is to gain cultural leadership over the rest of society (Ritzer, 1996; see also Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

c. **Critical Theory**

The Hegelian Marxists are not alone in focusing their interest in subjective factors, for as noted by Ritzer, (1996), this initial interest laid the basis for the subsequent development of critical theory, which concerns itself almost exclusively with subjective factors. Put simply, critical theory consists largely of criticisms of various aspects of social and intellectual life ranging from the economic determinism of Marxian theory from which it draws its inspiration, scientism of the discipline of sociology, the cultural repression of the individual in modern society, to the absolutism of the positivist methodology (Ritzer, (1996).

Critical theory was developed by a group of German neo-Marxists notably, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse who were based at the Institute of Social Research in Farnkfurt. The main contribution of this theory is in its efforts to steer Marxian theory in a subjective

direction at both individual and cultural levels. At the cultural level, the critical theorists argue that the economic determinists have overemphasised the prominence of economic structures at the expense of other aspects of social reality such as the culture. In particular, the critical theorists have concerned themselves with what Habermas (1975) described as "legitimations", which are simply defined as systems of ideas developed by the political system or any other system to legitimise its continued existence. Such systems are designed to manipulate the masses into accepting the legitimacy of the prevailing political system and the status quo of the existing social arrangements in society.

At the individual level, the critical theorists are concerned with actors and their consciousness as well as what happens to them in the modern world (Ritzer, (1996).

Through legitimations the consciousness of the masses is controlled to the extent that they no longer perceive domination as a problem, let alone strive to liberate themselves.

A second aspect of the critical theorists' main contribution lies in their dialectical approach, which stresses the importance of social totality. A hint of this notion of social totality may be found in Connerton's (1976) statement: "No partial aspect of social life and no isolated phenomenon may be comprehended unless it is related to the historical whole, to the social structure conceived as a global entity" (p.12). As pointed out by Ritzer, (1996), this approach rejects a focus on a single aspect of social life outside of its broader context such as that promoted by the economic determinists.

This view also has methodological implications. Basic to the critical theorists' method is a concern for both diachronic and synchronic approaches. Whereas the synchronic approach focuses attention on the interrelationship of the different parts of society within the social totality, the diachronic approach concerns itself with "the historical roots of today's society" as well as its future direction (Ritzer, 1996).

While examples could be multiplied, the preceding might serve to illustrate a wide range of approaches that can be grouped under the more general term, neo-Marxian theory. We have seen that although all begin with a dialectical disavowal of the economic determinism of the early Marxists; they often go in separate directions and inspite of their differences they all align themselves and base their dialectical structure on Marxian analysis.

ACTIVITY IV:

Briefly discuss the arguments of

(i)   Economic Determinism.

(ii)   Hegelian Marxism.

(iii)   Critical Theory.

(iv)   In what ways is each different from Maxism? How can we relate their arguments to education

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FEMINISM

Another brand of the conflict perspective is the feminist theory, which has been aptly described by Rtizer, (1996) as "that system of general ideas designed to describe and explain human social experiences from a women-centred vantage point" (p.444). There are, as noted by Ritzer, many different versions of feminism but most share common elements.

Ritzer (1996) cites three questions that govern and unite all the varieties of contemporary feminist theory: (i) "the descriptive question, and what about women?"; (ii) "the explanatory question, why then is all this as it is?"; and (iii) "the qualifying question, what about the differences among women?" (p.444). Using the response pattern to the first of these three

questions, i.e.: and what about the women? Ritzer went further to categorise feminist theory into four types as follows:

(a) Gender difference: This category emphasises the differences between men and women in terms of their location in, and experience of, most situations.

(b) Gender Inequality: This category stresses that women's location in most situations is not only different from that of man, but is also less privileged and unequal.

(c) Gender Oppression: This category promotes the view that women are, in addition to being different from and unequal to, oppressed and actively restrained, subjugated, moulded as well as, used and abused by men.

(d) Third-wave feminism: The fourth category argues that women's experience of difference, inequality and oppression varies by their social location.

Like the Marxists, feminists concern themselves with the divisions within society, but they differ from the Marxists in the way they explain these divisions. Whereas the Marxists focus on class differences, the feminists see the major division as being between men and women (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Likewise, although they share with Marxists the view that society is characterised by exploitation, they differ in terms of the nature of exploitation they concern themselves with: Whereas, the Marxists concentrate on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class, the feminist tend to emphasise the exploitation of women by men as the most important source of exploitation. For these reasons the feminists describe contemporary societies as patriarchal, a man's world in which women are dominated and relegated to lower status positions, poor-paid jobs and restricted access to political power.

The ultimate objective of these varieties of feminism therefore, is to end men's domination and rid society of male chauvinism and its resultant undesirable and unjust exploitation of women.

Marxian Analysis and the Study of Education

The application of Marxist analysis to the study of education has assumed two paths. Bowles and Gintis (1976), for example, represent those who have made an attempt to explore the structural "fit" between the education system and the economic order. They identified a number of features of schooling in modern capitalist societies, which they squared up with social relations of work roles and concluded that education has a vital role in preparing individuals for their roles in the world of work (Meighan, 1986). Thus, in their view, education functions both as a transmission and a control mechanism in the reproduction of the social relations which sustain the capitalist mode of production.

The bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the school is perceived by Bowles and Gintis as the main factor influencing the subordination of young children. The power of the teacher in

shaping his pupils' identities and in creating a stratification system within the classroom reflects this process of nurturing and socialisation of young children into the subservient culture of the work place.

On the other hand, Bourdien and Passeron (1977); Willi's (1977) and Apple (1980) represent those who have attempted to uncover the ways in which certain cultural beliefs and practices that support capitalist society are created, transmitted and reproduced within schools. In this sense, schooling is seen not merely as a process for socialising young children into the culture of the work place; but rather as a phenomenon which is closely related to the distribution of resources and opportunities in society (Meighan, 1986). The education system then becomes an instrument manipulated by those in power to perpetuate their positions and legitimise the ideology that maintains them in those positions. This is exemplified by the state's action in taking control of not only the educational institutions but also the type of knowledge that is provided in these institutions.

We will now attempt to explore in some detail Marxian analysis to education. According to them the institution of education like any other social organisation, can only be understood at any given time in terms of the operative mode of economic production. Pierre Bourdieu (1976, p. 199) for instance showed how differences in years of schooling have continued to expand over time, a situation he links to differences in modes of economic production. According to him, "since the eighteenth century, the single school system has been replaced by a dual educational system, each branch of which is matched not to an age group but to a social class – the lycee (or the college … for the middle classes and the elementary (or primary) school for the common people". For instance, under capitalism, longer years of schooling we intended to prepare children from particular social backgrounds who can afford the cost to inherit the privileges of their parents. This position draws from Samuel Bowles' position that unequal education only leads to the reproduction of the social class division of labour.

One area of the institution of education which writers of the Marxian line of thought have focused is the social relations in schools. According to them, this always mirrors the social relations of production in the larger society. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis put forward what they referred to as the correspondence principle, according to which "the educational establishment in response to pressures from the capitalist class and others will attempt to structure the social organisation of schooling so as to correspond to the social relations of production (1976, p. 216). They reason that differences in rules, expected modes of behaviour and opportunities for choice between college and secondary school students lie in the fact that the two levels are preparing for different levels of labour requirements under capitalism. Similarly, the type of relationships that exist between teachers and learners, following this correspondence principle always mirrors that of the operative economic mode outside. They observe that schools under capitalism are characterized by asymmetrical relationships between teachers and learners in the same way as those of order, control and obedience to the establishment.

Taking this operative mode of economic production on the institution of education and the correspondence principle together, Marxists are in agreement that even matters of curriculum and knowledge are never neutral. They are always shaped by the twin factors of economy

and those who wield power. In Marxist thinking those who control the means of production (who have power) impose their meaning to what constitutes knowledge. They categorize knowledge into two in line with the two broad social class divisions and the different job requirements that are associated with them. The first knowledge category is the type that is unsituated, uncontexted and abstract and is open to those who are to assume superior postions in society. The second is for low status groups and is practical and oral in nature. This knowledge categorization, Marxists believe, impacts on items in the curriculum. Academic education which promotes abstract knowledge comes to be viewed as superior to vocational education which yields to practical knowledge. Marxist thinking views these dichotomies as unnecessary and advocates instead the union of thought and action, knowing and doing, the abstract and practical. At the same time they concede that as long as there exists labouring and elite classes in society so long will these dichotomies and their associated scales of preference or value persist. These dichotomies, Marxists believe will always make the schools to train for different brackets in life with the result that technical education will always be despised as it remains a sure route to low status manual employment.

The location of the institution of education as one of the superstructures of society which is affected by the more important infrastructure, in Marxian analysis, provides a useful basis in understanding the degree to which changes or reforms can be made in it. Marxians are of the belief that all attempts to bring any level of change in the education system are bound to be fruitless unless such changes are preceded by changes in the economic infrastructure of society. In this way issues like equal educational opportunity or the attempt to use schools to achieve equality in the society as a whole is bound to fail as long as the larger society remains unequal. Similarly, schools on their own can never solve the problem of unemployment no matter the amount of curriculum restructuring that takes place.

ACTIVITY V:

1.   State the arguments of the Feminists. Compare and contrast the views of the Marxists and the Feminists. What are the educational implications of the Feminists' views?

SUMMARY

- This unit began with a brief discussion of the action perspective focusing on its main thrust and ideas, which are in sharp contrast to the structure determinism of the consensus perspective. We have seen that the action perspective's main distinctive orientation leans towards subjective capacities of actors and their links to action and interaction. All this was conceived in terms of process as there was strong disavowal of the perception of the actor as being impelled by large-scale external structural forces.

- We examined the three main varieties of the action perspective namely, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethonomethodology highlighting their different emphasis and methods. Because symbolic interactionism to some extent, reflects the

interface between these directions of the acation perspective, the discussion in this unit concentrated largely on that branch focusing on its nature, basic principles, assumptions and methods.

- We also discussed the method and its impact on educational research. We have seen how emphasis on subjective reality has encouraged the application of diachronic approach, which employs the use of a variety of qualitative techniques of data collection, such as participant observation, extensive interviewing and the search for meaning at a micro-level.

- We discussed the influence of the action perspective to the study of education wherein it was shown how its method amounted to the questioning of what is usually taken for granted. In particular, it questioned what is knowledge, achievement and cultural deficiency.

- We also examined a wide range of theoretical approaches that are categorized as conflict theories. They fall within three main groups namely; Marxian theories, neo-Marxian theories and feminist theories. As we have seen, all of them take Marx's work as either their main theoretical paradigm or their point of departure.

- The Marxian theory presents itself as a major alternative to structural functionalism. However, we have seen that, in spite of this claim, Marxism merely affirms a modified macro-structural theory as a means of explaining how societies hold together. The main difference between the two being Marxism's rejection of the notion of the primacy of consensus in the dialectical process. By placing emphasis on the contradictions and conflict in the economic system, Marx developed a new theory of conflict for explaining the dynamics of social reality.

- The neo-Marxian theory emerged, as we have seen as a reaction against the poor version of Marxian theory, which characterised, the works of early conflict theorists such as Dahrendorf. Nevertheless, we have also seen that although all the neo-Marxists begin with a dialectical disavowal of the economic determinism of the early Marxists, they often go in separate directions, and in spite of their differences, they all align themselves and base their dialectical structure on Marxian analysis.

- A third type of conflict theory discussed in this unit is feminism. Four categories of the feminist theory were identified namely, differences, inequality, oppression and third-wave theories. The similarities and differences between feminist and Marxist theories have also been outlined.

- Finally, the implications of the Marxian analysis for the study of education are drawn. The application of the Marxian analysis to the study of education has taken two directions. These are those like, Bowles and Gintis (1976), who examined the structural "fit" between the education system and the economy; and other like Willis, (1977) and Apple, (1980) whose main attention focused on the way in which the education system is manipulated and used to legitimise and perpetuate the cultural beliefs and practices of the capitalists society (Meighan, 1986).

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ASSIGNMENT

1. The Functionalists focus on group similarities and common values, while the Marxists focus on contradictions and conflict among and between groups. For what purposes might each of these perspectives be useful in educational research?

2. What are the differences between the arguments of the Marxists and the action theorists? What effects do these have on their perspectives of education?

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UNIT THREE: THE CONCEPTS OF SOCIOLOGY AND CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, we have discussed the meaning of sociology of education and what sociological perspective are. In this unit, we shall have a closer look at the 'society', what it is and its relationship with education. We shall also study culture and its relationship with education.

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1.   define society and culture;

2.   give the features of a society;

3.   describe the relationship between society and education;

4.   describe the content of culture; and

5.   describe the Role of culture in education.

THE MEANING OF SOCIETY

Human beings do not live alone as individuals. They are always in groups and members of the groups do interact together. The groups, the individuals and their activities take place in a larger set up often called community or society. The members of a community or society always have certain things in common – geographical territory, religious belief, interest and a general feeling of belongingness.

Community is however different from a society. Community is a more embracing term referring to a definite population living in a particular place. It includes everybody, adults and children, social and non-social persons living in a given place sharing a common mode of life, but all members are not necessarily conscious of its organization or purpose.

A society on the other hand is a sub-community whose members are socially conscious of their mode of life and are united by a common set of arms and values. It is a group of human beings sharing a self-sufficient system of action and is capable of existing longer than the lifespan of an individual, the group members being recruited at least in part by the sexual reproduction of its members.

From the above definition, it can be seen that though children are members of the community, they are functionally not members of the society. This is because they do not know their rights, duties and obligations as full members of their society. They are equally oblivious of the way their society functions. They are however, potential members of the society. The role of education is to make them full and functional members of the society. Every society has a set of techniques for bringing up their children.

Levy (1950) argued that there are four criteria which had to be fulfilled before any group could be considered as constituting a society. These are:

1.   The group must be capable of existing longer than the life-span of the individual.

2.   The group must recruit its new members, at least in part, by means of sexual reproduction.

3.   The group must be united in giving allegiance to a common complex, general system of action.

4.   That system of action should be self-sufficient.

Thus, a society is not determined in terms of number of participants or their geographical spread. However, for them to interact fully and co-exist harmoniously, there are certain conditions and mores that regulate their behaviour towards one another. These codes of conduct include:

1.   **Cohesion**

Cohesion of a social unit or the entire society refers to the resistance to division. According to Cohen (1969), Cohesion may be due to:

a.   allegiance to the larger unit;

b.   good overall coordination;

c.   mutual interest or inter-dependence;

d.   intersection of ties; and

e.   the quality and strength of ties.

Cohesion is very important for the survival of the society. Mutual inter-dependence and division of labour often foster cohesion.

2.   **Conformity**

As earlier mentioned, there are certain mores and regulatory conditions to which all members must conform for harmony in the society. These norms ensures continued participation of individuals. There are modes of enforcing these rules and regulations. However, at the individual's level, conformity may be internally or externally motivated. These are usually borne out of the individual's attachment to the society.

3.   **Cooperation**

Cooperation within the society is a deliberate and voluntary effort to facilitate the performance of tasks by others in return for similar services. The individual may have to make personal services in favour of the common good of the society. There is a clear division of labour in the society. Every member has a role to play in line with his/her status. This, the individual does in cooperation with others playing their own roles towards the attainment of the societal expectations. Cooperation is an essential ingredient of a society or social unit like the school.

4. **Participation and Interaction**

Every individual of a society has a role to play. There are expectations from members in order to fulfil the aspirations of the society. Collective and individual participation of members is necessary for the survival of the society. Interaction in the society consists of a number of interrelated features such as:

i.   Purposefulness – it should be directed towards the achievement or clearly recognised and generally accepted goal of that society.

ii.   It is interpersonal as members are conscious of the existence of each other.

iii.   It is reflective and individuals often develop the consequences of their belonging to a group that can affect, influence or alter their attitude to themselves and to other members.

iv.   Interaction is also historical in that the consequences of past or recent happenings often interfere with the interaction in the present.

Interactions do take various forms and these include communication, competition, conflict and accommodation/toleration of others.

EDUCATION AND SOCEITY

We have seen that a society has a set of aims, mores and values to which all members subscribe and they are to some extent conscious of the direction in which they may want them to change. It is the role of education to develop the personality of the child not only for this purpose but also to prepare him for membership of his society. The individual in the society can only be who he is, at any stage of his development, by interacting with the social and physical environment. Education can therefore not take place in a vacuum.

Personality is regarded as an organised whole and all inclusive, comprising the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual characteristics of a person. The character and temperament of individuals are subsumed in this definition. The children are born with some inmate qualities bestowed on them by heredity. Personality development depends partly on these inmate factors and partly on the environment. The education of individuals therefore depends on these factors. Education is seen as the whole life of a community viewed from the particular standpoint of learning to livethe life. This total way of life of a community is regarded as the culture of that community. Culture is therefore the content of education.

Thus, the social environment influences the education of the child, his or her genetic constitution notwithstanding and vice-versa. Education is also determined by the culture of the community.

ACTIVITY I

1.   Discuss the criteria to be fulfilled before a group can be called a society.

2.   Describe the codes of conduct that holds a society together.

3.   Describe the relationship between education and society.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

As we mentioned earlier, culture refers to way of life of the community. The term "culture" was derived from the German word "Kultur" which implies civilization.

Taylor, (1902) *defined culture as that complex whole which included knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. This definition sees culture as an entity which is common to all societies. Sharing this kind of view is Reuter 1950 who also defined culture as the sum total of human creation, the organised results of group experience up to the present time, adding that culture included all that man had made in the form of tools, weapons, shelter and other material goods, all that he had elaborated in the way of attitudes and beliefs, ideas and judgements, codes and institutions, arts and science, philosophy and social organisation.*

These views do not agree that each society has its own culture pattern. Linton (1947) defined culture as *the configuration of learned behaviour and the results of behaviour, whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.*

This definition implies that culture is a configuration of a number of interacting culture patterns. The culture patterns of a given society include reproduction and care of the young, religious practices, ideals of life, etc. Thus, each society has its own culture.

Boas (1966) also agrees with this in his definition of culture that individual societies have their own body of customs, beliefs and social institutions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

Ezewu (1983) identified six characteristics of culture as follows:

a. **Culture is organic and supra-organic**.

   It is organic because it is made up of human beings and supra-organic because it transcends the life-span of any given individual of that society.

b. **Culture is Overt and Covert**

   When the ideals, worldview and attitude towards nature of the culture is considered, it is covert. It is overt when its artefacts, speech forms, etc are considered.

c. **Culture is explicit and implicit**

   When we consider things we do and believe in but can in no way be explained. Then that aspect of culture is implicit. However, there are some roles played and actions taken which participants can easily explain. Such actions make culture explicit.

d. **Culture is Ideal and Manifest**

   Ideal culture involves the way people ought to behave or what they believe they ought to do. The actions people take or things they do that people can recognise or see them do make culture to be manifest.

e.   **Culture is Stable and yet changing**

In order to maintain the norms and values of the society, they are passed on from generation to generation. Often, some aspects of the culture are considered no longer relevant, or have to be changed when in contact with other cultures. In this situation, if the culture is stronger than the incoming culture, it absorbs it and make it part of its own but if the incoming culture is stronger, it will relegate the original culture to the background and take its place. However, if the two cultures are at par, they may fuse into one another.

f.   **Culture is shared and learned**

Individuals born into a culture through interaction imbibes that culture. The rate at which individuals imbibe culture is different even though it is a common right. This can be explained that they learnt at different rates. Culture can therefore be learnt.

ACTIVITY II

1.   In your own words, define culture.

2.   Discuss the fact that culture is not a given entity common to all societies.

THE CONTENT OF CULTURE

Wisler (1923) classified the content of culture into the following:

i.   Speech which includes languages and writing system;

ii.   Material traits and food habits, shelter, transportation, dress, utensils, tools, weapons, occupations and industries.

iii.   Art – carving, painting, drawing, music, dance;

iv.   Mythology and scientific knowledge;

v.   Religious practices – ritualistic forms, care of the dead, etc;

vi.   Family and social practices – marriage, inheritance, social control, sports and games, method of reckoning relationships.

vii.   Property – real and personal; standards of value and exchange and trade;

viii. Government, political and judicial forms;

ix.   Warfare.

All the above constitute the different aspects of the culture of a given society and no single one can be equated with culture.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Education had been variously defined by various authors. R. S. Peters sees it as the process of initiation of the young into the culture of the particular society. D. J. O'Connor (1957)

defines it as a process by which the society through schools, colleges and other institutions, deliberately transmit its cultural heritage. John Milton on the other hand says it is that which prepares a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices either at war or in peace in a given society.

From the above, it is clear that education is dependent on the culture of the society for its content. Thus, it is through the educative process that man is equipped to live in his society through the transmission of culture. However, Morrish (1972) noted that "Culture is not merely transmitted, it is made, it is not simply historical and related to the past, it is functional and vitally concerned with the present. It is not the collective catalogue of discrete objects, ideas, morals and pieces of knowledge; it is a configuration of the total social inheritance and way of life.

It is the function of education not merely to preserve and transmit the best of the past, it must demonstrate its function in the present as well as its possibilities for the future, and ultimately it must seek to provide a total view of society and its purposes.

The onus then is on the educators in Africa to ensure that educational systems transmit our cultural heritage. Western education should be adapted to our own environment and not adopted wholesale. In the past, most educated elites cannot fit into their society well. This is still true today of most educated Africans.

Malinowski (1943) observed that:

> *"The young African of today has to make a living, and in this he has two worlds, as it were, to depend upon. He belongs to neither of these fully and completely that is, after he has undergone the process of European training for he become through that partly alienated from pure tribal tradition, but never completely adopted into the white community".*

The curriculum of our education should therefore be adapted to suit our peculiar environment, culture and needs.

ACTIVITY II

Discuss why there can be no education without culture

SUMMARY

- In this unit, we have defined society as a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subjected to a common system of political authority and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups around them.

- We also defined culture as the whole way of life of the community.

- We discussed the relationships between the society, culture and education. Education is seen as a vehicle for nurturing the young to become a full member of the society

and the transmission of the cultural heritage. Culture is therefore the content of education.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss why it is correct to say "**Education is the child of society**".

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UNIT FOUR: SOCIALIZATION, THE FAMILY AND EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

We have discussed what a society is and that the members are expected to play certain roles as they interact with one another. Every society has its way of life, which we call, culture. Every society also has their unique way of bringing the young up for adult life or to make them full members of the society. In this unit, we shall discuss the role of socialization and its agents in making the young ones full members of the society.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

(1)   Define the concepts of Socialisation and Family

(2)   Give the importance of each in the education of the child

(3)   State the agents of Socialization

(4)   Explain the process of Socialisation

SOCIALISATION

Every society is faced with the task of making the young children full members of that society. The process for doing this called socialisation.

Socialisation is the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills and disposition that make them more or less integrated members of their society. It is through the process of socialization that members learn certain habits, traditions, knowledge, skills, norms, and values which the society considers important.

Socialisation continues through a person's life. It entails both the transmissions of the socio and cultural heritage and the development of personality. Zanden (1977) pointed out that in the absence of socialization, society could not perpetuate itself beyond a single generation and culture would be non-existent.

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIALISATION

Socialisation is very important for the survival of the individuals in the society. Peretomode (1995) listed the following as the importance of cocialisation:

(1)   providing the foundation for the individual's effective participation in society

(2)   it inculcates basic discipline in the individual such as respect for elders, toilet habits etc.

(3)   it instils aspiration in societal members.

(4)   it provides individuals with identities largely through the aspiration it encourages or discourages

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(5)   it provides for the stability, persistence and continuity of society by communicating the contents of the culture from one generation to the other.

(6)   it makes minimum, initial communication and interaction possible by providing for members to possess specific skills, values, internal behavioural dispositions etc.

AGENTS OF SOCIALISATION

The process of socializing the young in the society involves many segments of the society. Each role has distinct roles to play even though the ultimate goal is to make the young a full member of the society. The socialization agents are:

THE PEER CROUP

The peer group is an important agent of socialization. The age grade or the peer group comprises of persons roughly the same age. Though the peer group is not an established institution like the school or the family, it has its own customs and organization.

The peer group can also be defined as one composed of members of roughly equal age sharing equal status as well and pursuing some interests in common.

The roles of the members are not well defined. They do not only change frequently but members too do change often.

The peer group provides an avenue for the children to become less dependent of family authority. They are able to form their own identity. The peer group provides a useful transition between the world of the adolescent to the adulthood.

Within the peer group, members are exposed to knowledge which they have no access to within their individual families. There are some hitherto no go areas they can now venture into behind the adults as a group. Thus, peer association can serve either to bolster or weaken the basic social identities and outlooks that were developed earlier in the family.

The group also helps to make the child a more complex individual. They are exposed to values and experiences of several other families, which are most likely to be varied. These contacts broaden their horizons and perceptions. They now see things beyond the microcosm of the family but that of the society.

The interaction within the peer group is usually high. Socialisation is very effective because the members are few, very close and the contacts are continuing. Peer groups have norms and values, which members strive to adhere to. The group also provides, through their leadership, behaviour models for all members. The tendency to be like the model is high.

Success within the group depends on the degree of participation. Those that are withdrawn will either fall out of the group or remain obscure. Status often depend on the degree of participation.

Data (1984) summarises the influence, power, and functions of the peer group when he states that "*A peer group shelters, and protects its members. It gives him psychological sustenance by meeting emotional needs of affection under standing and acceptance. ….. Its members can interact directly with one another. It thus provides an effective learning situation; it transmits*

the culture of society (undiluted form), teaches certain roles and social expectations, and conditions the attitudes and sentiments of its members"

The school should therefore learn to use the strong influence of the peer group to the advantage of the growing children. Teachers must be conscious of this influence. Often it is the source of disciplinary problems. Modern day cultism in higher institutions may be an extreme of this.

THE SCHOOL

The school is a formal and planned social institution with rules and regulations and specifically charged with the responsibility of preserving, improving and extending the culture by showing appreciation to it and adherence to its norms. The basic function of the school in the socialization of the child is the development of the cognitive abilities.

The school is designed to use its curriculum as a major instrument to transmit on to the child and possibly reinforce the skills, practical knowledge, important cultural values norms, patriotism and loyalty, lesson of obedience, ambition, concern for others and so on.

It is in the school that the child extends the range of his human contacts and prepares himself to deal with a world infinitely more complex than his own family.

These roles and functions of the school will be elaborated upon in the later units.

THE CHURCH AND THE MOSQUE

The Church and the mosque are socio-religious institutions in the society that help individuals satisfy the spiritual dimension of their needs. They are interested in the moral aspects of personality development of not only the children but the adults too. These religious institutions affect and influence the economic, political orientation, beliefs, values, intellectual and social growth of their members through their practices, preaching? and teachings. However, this mode of teaching is different from that of the modern system. Indoctrination of any kind is discouraged as children are expected to learn and believe on the grounds of empirical evidence and environment of freedom. Whether there is a conflict or not will depend on the subject mater dealt with. Teachers are expected to help pupils resolve such conflicts without forcing their own beliefs on the pupils.

At the level of the children, there is no doubt that mosques and churches play a vital role in socialization, the methodology they use notwithstanding.

THE MASS MEDIA

The media of mass communication include books, magazines, newspapers, posters in public places, advertising billboards, films, television, the radio and the world wide web (www) – the internet.

Unlike the school, the mass media is not a formal socializing institution but could be used in most cases by educators as a powerful instrument of socialization. Mass media often transmit messages of all sorts – direct information, entertainment, propaganda, persuasion etc. These

messages affect people's orientations, values and experiences in no small measure thus not only socializing the child but also persist in the socialization of the adults.

Peretomode quoting Chinoy (1962) observed that the mass media can, through the model of behaviour they provide, the values they express, the experiences, thrills, entertainment, horror and so on they offer-reinforce the efforts of the family and school or weaken and dilute them.

Television, radio and the internet may cause children and adults to neglect practice of reading skills or encourage pornography because they use their leisure time for being entertained.

The above notwithstanding, mass media can be helpful educational tools and strong socializing agent. The internet and the use of multimedia in education is gaining ground. ICT can no longer be divested from education. The onus is therefore on the school and the parents to use them to the advantage of the children. The children should also be properly counselled and guided.

ACTIVITY I

1. Examine the term socialization and discuss its importance
2. Critically discuss four agents of socialization.

THE FAMILY

The family in the African setting includes the parents, brothers, and sisters of the couple and the children of their brothers and sisters. The concept of family embraces a whole lineage. Thus, the family is the fundamental biological and social institution into which a child is born and where the child's primary socialization takes place.

Some authorities see the family as a group of related kins, linked by blood and marriage, who occupy a common household and are usually characterized by economic co-operation and solidarity.

In Africa however, members of a family may not share the same household. Levi-strauss (1960) listed the following as the characteristics of a family:

(i)   it finds its origin in marriage;

(ii)   it consists of husband, wife and their children, though it is conceivable that other relations may find their place close to that nuclear group;

(iii)   the family members are united together by (a) legal bonds (b) economic, religious and other kinds of rights and obligations (c) a precise network of sexual rights and prohibitions and varying and diversified amount of feelings such as love, affection, respect, care, etc.

The family has a hold on the life of its members for life particularly in Africa. This is probably because of the strength of the ties formed among members of the same family which is usually very strong.

The child learns to play appropriate roles and acquires abilities, attitudes and modes of response that enable him to participate in social life in the larger society from the family. Thus, his personality is shaped and the cultural demands and expectations are transmitted.

TYPES OF FAMILY

Family patterns vary from one society to another. Some of the various kinds of families include:

(a) **Monogamous family**: This consists of one husband and one wife at a time with their children. This is often referred to as the nuclear family.

(b) **Polygamous family**: This is a family in which the husband marries more than one wife at a time and all of them live in his house.

(c) **Monandrous family**: This is a family in which the woman marries a man and brings him to her house to live. She exercises control over the household and the children belongs to her. This is a matrineal household.

(d) **Polyandrous family**: This is a family in which a woman marries more than one man at a time and brings them to leave in her house. She exercises control over the household and the children belongs to her. It is also a matrilineal household.

(e) **Group family**: In this family, men, by arrangement married several women. There is no sexual prohibition. The men, women and the children in the group form the family. The male children can have sexual intercourse with any female including mothers. It is an extreme form of communal life.

(f) **The Extended family**: This is the traditional family set up in Africa. It comprises the entire lineage of a given family.

The functions of the family are childbearing, childrearing and primary socialization. The ability of the families to do this differs. This is because families also differ vastly in terms of their significance in the social order. They also differ in terms of social status – prestige, economic strength, and political power.

Owing to this varying social-economic status, some families are better placed to help members of their family move high in the social strata. What the modern family can teach a child therefore depends mostly on the cultural background and socio-economic status of that family. The socio-economic status of the family is therefore of paramount importance for the socialization of its children within the framework of societal demands. It has been known to determine children's ascribed roles and statuses in the society.

Experiments and studies in education have also shown that:

- there is a positive relationship between the level of educational and occupational aspirations of the child and the social status of the family;

- parental encouragement, regardless of the social status of the family, has a significant influence of raising educational aspirations.

- school achievement is positively associated with the socio-economic status of the child's family;

- how the child responds to school is highly dependent on the attitudes and behaviour already inculcated in the child in the early years at home.

Owing to these varying family backgrounds also, the school may not work perfectly in harmony with the family in socializing the child. The teacher must recognize this fact and take cognizance of the role of family in the education of the child. The purposes of the school and the family are intertwined so the school must utilize this to the advantage of the child.

ACTIVITY II:

Critically examine the role of the extended family in the socialization of the child.

SUMMARY

- In this unit, we have seen the role of the family in the socialization of the child. We have also described the role of socialization in the education of the child.

- Though there are many agents of socialization, the family is the most significant. The family is the centre for the indigenous education of the child and the culture is the content of socialization of the child.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss critically the relationship between education and socialization.

2. What is the role of the family in socialization? Explain the changes that have affected this role in recent time.

3. Describe the role of the peer group, the school and the mass media in the socialization of the child.

4. Discuss the relationship between education and the family.

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UNIT FIVE: THE SCHOOL AS A FORMAL ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be exposed to the concepts of school organisation, characteristics of an organisation, bureaucracy, characteristics of bureaucracy, and the concept of the school as a bureaucracy.

By focusing on the school as a formal organisation, the unit will examine the school in terms of its official structures and the patterns of decision-making, which arise within them. In doing so, the unit attempts to draw a parallel between the structures and patterns of decision making of formal organisations such as government establishments and multi-national corporations and the organisational structures of schools and patterns of interaction between teachers and pupils in schools. The aim is to show how the school reflect and reproduce the same structures and patterns of decision making. The unit underlies the similarities, which exist in both structures and functions between the school and other bureaucratic establishments.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

i)   explain the concepts of "school and "society";

ii)   state at least three links between school and society;

iii)   name and explain four manifest functions of education;

iv)   name and explain four latent functions of education.

v)   define a number of technical terms, such as organisation, bureaucracy and the concept of the school as a bureaucracy; and

vi)   identify the similarities between the structures and patterns of decision making of formal organisations such as government establishments and those of the school.

THE CONCEPT OF ORGANISATION

Different people have defined the concept of organization in various ways. Some of these definitions are as follows:

Some writers (e.g. Etzioni, 1964; Ezewu, 1983) defined organisation as a group with an identifiable membership that engages in concerted collective action to achieve a common purpose. Other writers (e.g. Bamisaiye, 1992 and Champion, et.al., 1984) defined Organizations as social units that pursue specific goals, which they are structured to render such as social, religious, cultural, health and other socially relevant services.

A single distinctive characteristic of an organization, which distinguishes it from other social structures like the family, is the fact that it has been formally established for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals. Every organization has its own particular formally instituted pattern of authority and an official body of rules and procedures.

Alongside this formal aspect of the organization are networks of formal relations and unofficial norms, which arise out of the social interaction of individuals and groups working together within the formal structure. In schools, we call this informal aspect of organization the hidden curriculum. Both the formal and informal aspects of the organization are interrelated.

One of the most important aspects of the formal structure of an organization is its system of administration, and in modern societies, the typical administrative system is the bureaucracy.

By and large, organization can simply be seen as a group of people that consist of different but inter-independent parts. It has an outline of activities and responsibilities to be accomplished or to undertake. It has rules and regulations, relationships, roles expectations as well as aims and objectives intended to be achieved. In other words, it is a collective entity pursuing common goals, which the organization is meant to attain or achieve. Examples of organizations are: schools, social clubs, government ministries and parastatals, multi-national corporations, hospitals, prisons, armies, mosques and churches etc. All these are established to achieve certain specific goals or aim. It is also important to note that these goals and aims may differ from one organization to another.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF AN ORGANIZATION:

Etzioni (1964) has identified three characteristics of an organization as follows:

i) Division of labour, power, and responsibilities, deliberately planned to achieve certain goals.

ii) The presence of power-centres which control the concerted efforts of the organization and continuously review its performance, and re-pattern its structure, where necessary, so as to increase its efficiency.

iii) The substitution of personnel, i.e. unsatisfactory persons can be removed and others assigned their tasks and people can be transferred and promoted.

ACTIVITY I

Now think about the structure of the school you attended whether primary or secondary, try to identify which of the characteristics of an organisation listed in this section apply to the school structure. Compare your notes with others doing the same course with you.

THE CONCEPT OF BUREAUCRACY

For sociologists, bureaucracy is a component of formal organization and it simply means an organizational model rationally designed to perform complex tasks efficiently. The essence of bureaucratic organization is deliberately enacting policies that control organizational operations. By doing this, the organization intends to become as efficient as possible in reaching or meeting its set goals and objectives.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BUREAUCRACY

According to Marx Weber, the following distinctive features characterize a bureaucracy.
They are as follows:

i.   *Division of Labour:-* Specialized experts are employed in each position to perform specific tasks.

ii.   *Hierarchy of Authority:-* This means that there is an administrative hierarchy with each position under the supervision of a higher authority or a structure of command.

iii.   *Written Rules and Regulations:-* There are specific rules and procedures which define in clear terms the responsibility of each member of the organization and the coordination of different tasks. Rules and regulations are important aspects of an organization for the efficiency and attainment of set goals. It is through the rules, regulations, and procedures that an organization ensures uniformity of performance of tasks.

iv.   *Impersonality:-* In bureaucracy there is formalized and impartial methods of dealing with clients. Bureaucratic norms and values dictate that officials perform their duties without the personal consideration of people as individuals. This is meant to provide equal treatment for the employees.

v.   *Employment Based on Technical Qualifications:-* In a bureaucratic setting, the employment of workers is usually based on specialized training and clear career structure. In other words, employment of personnel is based on technical qualification rather than favouritism. In addition the performance of workers is measured by specific or set standards. Promotions of employees are also based on written personnel policies or regulations and conditions, which workers have to satisfy before being promoted from one position to another position.

ACTIVITY II

Before turning to the next section of the unit, write a few paragraphs illustrating how the outlined characteristics of a bureaucracy apply to the school, as you know it.

FEEDBACK

Now read the next section of the unit and compare your illustrations with those provided. Your illustrations should be close to the ones given in that section.

THE SCHOOL AS A BUREAUCRACY

To what extent are the characteristics of bureaucracy identified above present in the school? This question can be answered in the following way:-

i.   Schools and colleges employ specialized personnel or staff who are recruited on the basis of expertise and qualifications.

ii.   Schools have a hierarchy of positions and a formal structure of authority involving specific lines of command from the head of the school (e.g. Headmaster, Principal, Provost, Rector, Vice-Chancellor, etc.) downward (e.g. Labourers, Cleaners, Messengers, Cooks etc.).

iii.   All schools and colleges have rules and regulations governing the conduct of behaviour. There are rules and regulations governing the conduct of students on one hand, and another set of rules governing the conduct of teachers on the other hand. Both teachers and students are expected to respect and follow these rules and regulations of the schools with strict adherence.

iv.   Schools and colleges have teachers who are provided with specialist courses for the age range that they teach. For example, in the teacher education programme, pre-service teachers are taught courses that are geared towards the production of competent teachers full of technical qualifications such as sociology of education, educational psychology, philosophy of education, curriculum studies etc.

THE CONCEPT OF "SCHOOL"

The school is a place or institution for teaching and learning that is established for the purpose of education. As an institution for teaching and learning, school has various goals and objectives that include the following:

(i)   cognitive goals: The school is expected to produce individuals equipped with empirical knowledge and mastery of technology.

(ii)   moral or value goals: The school is expected to produce citizens who are equipped with the proper values for their participation in the development of the society;

(iii)   integrative goals: The school is expected to produce well-adjusted individuals, skilled in inter personal relations.

(iv)   "social mobility goals: The school is expected to promote upward mobility and social betterment of the individual. The social mobility goals are capable of over coming the disadvantages of poverty, socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

In analyzing the structure of the British schools, Musgrave (1978) cites four assumptions that underscore what most British people's notion of a school is:

(i)   a school should enjoy relative autonomy and individuality;

(ii)   it should be relatively small and characterized by a common purpose and operating under one head;

(iii)   it should mould character; and

(iv)   promote the inculcation of a well defined set of values.

While it is clear that these assumptions were drawn from an idea of a school that is typically British, all would agree that the structures outlined by the assumptions apply to the conceptions of what a school is and what it is for in most countries around the world. First, that schools are separate places established specifically for the purpose of teaching and

learning. Second, although in countries such as Nigeria most schools are owned and financed by governments (Federal, State and Local governments), they nonetheless, enjoy relative autonomy through their governing boards and parents-Teacher Associations (PTAs). Third, all schools operate under one head (the Head Teacher or the Principal). Fourth, because schools, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, are entrusted with the care of children in their formative years, the responsibility to cater for all aspects of their development both in character and in learning rests with the schools. All these point to inevitable links with the society. The stress on the moulding of character, for example, assumes an agreed standard of social values and norms to which children are to be socialized.

CONCEPT OF SOCIETY

The concept of society is simply defined as a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subjected to a common system of political authority and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups around them. It is also regarded as group of persons forming a single community.

A society tends to have some attributes or characteristics that are vital to its existence. A society must provide for adequate role differentiation and role assignment. The stability and continuity of any given society depends to a very large extent upon the performance of particular activities by different groups in that society. A society must provide an effective means of communication for its members. One of the essential elements for living in society, or community, with others is a means of communication. Communication or language provides the society with a means of socializing its members and a mechanism for role taking.

A society must establish a shared and articulated set of goals. The goals must be meaningful to at least the majority of people within the society. Similarly, a society must prescribe its normative regulatory system of means. That is to say, once a society has established its goals, it must clearly define the means for the attainment of these goals.

A society must establish among its members a well-articulated value system for regulating individual as well as collective behaviours to be continually handed down to the new and younger members of the society by the older generations through the socialisation process.

ACTIVITY I

1. Mention three goals and objectives of school as an institution.

2. For society to persist or continue, it must have or fulfil certain attributes or characteristics, name three of them.

THE LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

Education is one of the basic activities in all human societies for the continuance of a society depends upon the transmission of its heritage to the young. It is essential that the young be instructed in the ways of the group so that they will behave according to the accepted code of behaviour of the group. Every society therefore establishes its own ways of socialising children into the norms and values. The goals a society set for its educational system and

what and how children are taught in school all depend upon what is perceived as valuable to that society.

It is generally considered that schools like any other formal organizations are created to serve the society and therefore they should concentrate attention and resources on the purpose for which they have been created by the society. They should serve as activities centres of the community. They should exert their influence in the community by practically demonstrating those ideas and values they stand for (Dada; 1971) quoted in D.L. Dubey et al (1984, P78).

It is commonly accepted that the major function of school is to produce men and women who, in addition to being able to make successful living, can also adjust to society and contribute to its economic and social well being.

It is through education via schools that individuals receive knowledge and skills, which can be used to improve general standard of living in a society as a whole. For example, through both their knowledge and people processing functions the schools are able to produce the required manpower such as engineers, agriculturalists, architects, doctors and others that are vital for meeting both the basic needs of society in these areas and for generating high productivity and growth in the economic sector of the society.

In order to explain fully the links between education and society it is necessary for us to look closely at the social functions of education. Musgrave (1978) focuses specifically on these functions. He maintains that the relationship between the school and society is essentially complementary, and outlines five aspects of the relationship where this is apparent.

First, the school performs a political function at two levels:

(i)   the legitimisation of government and its ideology through political socialisation of the citizenry; and

(ii)   training and provision of political leaders at all levels of government.

Second, the school supports the economic sector of the society with highly trained and educated manpower it requires for generating growth. This view of the school as pointed out by Nieto (1992), concentrates more on the labour market purpose of schooling, which almost exclusively subordinates education to the needs of the economy.

Third, and closely related to the economic function, the school performs the function of social selection through which the more able of the society are sorted out of the population. This is necessary for role differentiation and role assignment and hinges on the vital role education plays in stratification.

Fourth, the school helps to reproduce society through its conservative function of cultural transmission from the older to the younger generations. Young children learn about the norms, values and patterns of accepted behaviour of their society through education both at home and at school.

Fifth and finally, the school provides society with innovators who are able to initiate and sustain desirable change vital for its survival within a rapidly changing world.

This way of viewing the relationship between the school and society is directly similar to that which dominates the structural functionalist perspective. The functionalist view of education stresses the positive contributions of education to the maintenance of the social system. By focusing on the question, what are the functions of education for society as a whole and its corollary; what are the functional relationships between education and other parts of the social system?, the functionalists have narrowed their search light on only the integrative aspects of the relationship between school and society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Durkheim, for example, saw the major function of education as the inculcation of value consensus.

MANIFEST FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

Manifest functions of education consist of the basic and obvious functions of education. According to Swift (1969) there are at least four manifest functions of education in society.

(i)   Inculcation of values and standards of the society.

(ii)   Maintenance of social solidarity by developing in children a sense of belonging to the society together with a commitment to its way of life, as they understand it.

(iii)   Transmition of knowledge, which comprises the social heritage.

(iv)   Development new knowledge.

Other manifest functions of education are as follows:

► The provision of literacy and numeracy and specialized training for occupational competence leading to personal fulfilment and social contribution.

► The presentation and transmission of culture from one generation to another.

► Encouraging democratic participation through the teaching of verbal skills and the development of individual's ability for rational thinking.

► Expansion of student's intellectual horizons.

► The production of patriotic citizens through lessons by illustrating and demonstrating the nation's greatness and glory. For example, teaching of Social Studies, History and Geography etc.

► Education is an agent of upward social mobility in society.

► Education is also an agent of socio-cultural change and reform.

THE LATENT FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

The latent functions of education refer to the functions of education, which are not obvious but are implied. Swift (1969) identified some of these functions as follows:-

i.   It is a free baby-sitting service, separating children from their parents for regular and reasonably prolonged periods of the day and year.

ii.   It provides opportunities for children to become acquainted with a wider and more diverse circle of friends than they would otherwise reach.

iii.   It is a useful marriage market because young adults sometimes choose their mates from amongst their educational peers.

iv.   It is also a means by which the supply of labour is reduced.

The institution of education via schools is a significant agent of socialization, i.e. inculcation of values and attitudes acceptable to the society. Education reflects the general pattern of society. This means to say that the school curriculum for education is determined by the socio-cultural pattern or needs and aspirations of the society.

ACTIVITY II:

At this stage, close your book and in your notebook try to:

1.   Itemise two manifest functions of education.

2.   Identify two latent functions of education

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- There are two major questions, which have guided functionalist's explanation of education.

    -      What are the functions of education for society as a whole?

    -      What are the functional relationships between education and other parts of the social system?

- Two major functions of education are the manifest and latent functions.

    -      Manifest being those basic and obvious functions of education.

    -      Latent being those functions of education that are referred to as functions which are not obvious but are implied.

- An organisation is a social unit, which is structured to provide social, religious, and cultural, health and educational services for the people.

- Examples of organisation are: Schools, Hospitals etc.

- The characteristic features of organisation include:

    -      Division of labour

    -      The presence of power-centres

    -      The substitution of personnel.

- Bureaucracy is a component of an organisation, which means an organisational model that is designed to perform tasks and function efficiently.

- The characteristics of a bureaucracy are: Division of labour, hierarchy of authority, written rules and regulations, impersonality, employment based on technical qualifications.

- The extent to which the characteristics of bureaucracy are identifiable in the school organisation, such as:

  - Schools employ qualified personnel.

  - Schools have hierarchy of positions from the school head down wards.

  - The presence of rules and regulation in schools and colleges.

  - Schools have teachers who have received training in their various areas of specialisation.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Write a paragraph each on the five social functions of education outlined by Musgrave (1983) and illustrate the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the school and society.

2. Write an essay drawing a parallel between the structures and patterns of decision making of your state's Ministry of Education and those of the school in which you teach (if you are a teacher) or your former school.

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UNIT SIX: THE SCHOOL AND THE LARGER SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

In Unit 5, we examined the concept of the school as a formal organization. You've seen that the school, in terms of its official structures and patterns of decision making, is similar in many ways to formal bureaucratic organizations. This approach to school as an organization or a sub-system enables us to analyse its relationship with various other social institutions or sub-systems of the wider society such as the political and economic organizations. Already in Unit 1, we have outlined the conceptual framework within which this analysis can take place. In this unit, we shall proceed with a detailed analysis of the complex relationships between the school and other social institutions.

Furthermore, the lines of this exploration have also already been drawn in Unit 1. They consist of the five aspects of the relationship outlined by Musgrave (1983). These five aspects will be discussed in greater details in the following sections of the unit.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:-

i)   discuss the nature of education's contributions to other sectors of the society such as the polity and the economy;

ii)   explain the reciprocal relationships between education and economic growth, and between education and politics;

iii)   define a number of technical terms, such as social stratification, class, status, power, and the concept and types of social mobility (vertical and horizontal); and

iv)   discuss how differences in class and status of people may influence the educational life chances of their children.

THE SCHOOL AND THE POLITY

As a convenient starting point of this analysis, we shall investigate how the school and the polity are interrelated by looking closely at the two political functions of education singled out in Unit 1. These are political socialization and the legitimisation of the ideology of the ruling government.

However, it is worth noting at the on set that because both education and the polity are indispensable sub-systems of the society each working toward the integration, cohesion and unification of the society. Their relationship is mutually interdependent. Whereas the polity sets the goals for education and determines both its nature and purpose through policy making and regulation of education practice, education on its part creates the necessary political awareness and competence necessary for active participation in the political affairs of the society.

a)   **The Creation of Political Awareness**

As mentioned earlier, political socialization is an essential role that the education system performs. Coleman (1965) described the concept of political socialization as a process of acquiring attitudes and feelings toward the political system by individuals as well as toward their own perception of their role in it. Blakemore and Cookey (1981) viewed this process as involving the main tasks:

(i)   learning how the political system works;

(ii)   developing feelings about the system, which could be either positive or negative; and

(iii)   the development of attitudes about one's competence or lack of it to partake actively in politics.

To illustrate this process, let us examine the extent to which government in Nigeria attempts to inculcate political values through the school. There are both within and out of school strategies that are being used in this regard.

The within school strategies include the teaching of subjects like Civics, Government and Social Studies aimed at producing good citizens with positive feelings about their nation and its institutions. The establishment of unity schools across the country and the mandatory recitation of the National Anthem and the National Pledge every morning by school children are meant to inculcate the feelings of national consciousness and national unity in young children.

Similarly, through student unionism, the youth are inducted into the art of governance. By acting and playing political roles during their school years, students imbibe political values and the intricacies of politics. For many a student, students' unionism serves as a springboard for plunging into real politics in later life. Through it, they learn democratic ideas such as representation, consultation, accountability and other regulatory checks on use and abuse of power. They are also initiated into the political system of their country since students' politics is usually a reflection of the politics of the larger society.

In the past, especially during the colonial era, the central political contribution of education was the training of a small governmental elites for such minimal jobs as secretaries, clerks, interpreters, etc. However, based on the activities of early educated elites in most independent societies who turned out to be nationalist leaders that won independence for their countries, it is apparent that education not only results in moral development as was the intention of the missionary schools but also in the creation of political awareness among the educated (Thompson, 1983). The more highly educated are usually more aware of the impact of government and are more likely to consider them competent and free to engage in political discussions and influence governmental affairs.

The corollary of this awareness is the production of the critical mass of trained manpower vital for the smooth running of the political system. In recent time when societies are undergoing industrialization and modernization, the political class of any society is usually made up of professionals, political scientists and industrialists who are product of the educational system. For instance, even though the control of educational system of any society is usually under policies propounded by the government of the society, such policies were in reality, drafted by professors and university administrators, trustees, corporation directors and government bureaucrats who are in one form or the other involved in the business of education (Shield and Greer 1974).

b)   **Education and Legitimisation of Government**

The second aspect of the relationship between the school and the polity is the way governments try to manipulate the education system in order to increase their own legitimacy. As Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) pointed out, the popularity and legitimacy of political leaders depend largely on both their willingness and ability to meet peoples' escalating demand for schooling. This fact of the political importance of education has made it central and on top priority in political campaigns of all political parties in Nigeria. Consequently, intervention in education has become the most popular yardstick for measuring the success or failure of governments. For this reason, governments habitually cite their efforts in the provision of educational facilities as their main achievements and basis for their eligibility for re-election.

The second aspect of government's manipulation of education is in its control of the nature and purpose of education. Governments control what subjects are taught in schools. The main aim in this regard is to protect and legitimise the ideology of government. Ideas that run contrary to the ruling government's ideology would normally be suppressed and excluded from the schools' curricula.

During the post independence era in Africa, the colonial masters used education as an instrument of neo-colonialism. As Mugomba and Nyaggah (1980) puts it;

> *Any serious analysis of the political economy of colonial education in Africa during the colonial period itself and in the post independence era would be meaningless if it divorced such education from the ideological milieu which emphasized metropolitan cultural and racial superiority and considered education to be one of the primary instrument to be used in cultivating European political and economic hegemony over Africans (p. 4).*

According to them continuity in the role of education during the colonial period and in the post independence era is provided by the neo-colonial dependence arrangements which most African states accepted as the package deal for regaining their independence. Under the arrangement, metropolitan powers continue to provide school teachers and university personnel. They define what they consider as the right kind of education either in a complex manner or bluntly.

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c)   **Impact Of Politics On Education**

Just as the educational sector influences the politics of any given society, so also does the politics of the society influence the educational system. According to Shields and Greer (1974), "decisions regarding educational institutions in any given society are usually subject to state authorities". Even though in recent times private individuals and non-governmental organization establish and control privately owned educational institutions, the real control of these institutions both private and public education institution lies squarely in the hands of politically appointed board of ministerial administrators who are there to protect the interest and political ideologies of the government of the day. This, it usually does through formulation of policies that guide entire educational system. Government of the day, through its education policies and legislations, ensures that parents send or enrol their wards in school. Examples of such programmes include the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E.), education for the nomads and fishermen, a programme under the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) etc. All these education policies and programmes are with a view to providing education for all.

Other aspects of this control include decisions on how much is allocated to education as against other equally important services such as health, agriculture and rural development; as well as the distribution of funds across levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) and between types of education (academic, technical/vocational and adult literacy). In addition, there are decisions about which groups of the population to give priority to in terms of class, ethnic and minority backgrounds and gender.

ACTIVITY I

1.   Mention the three tasks that are involved in the process of political socialisation.

FEEDBACK ACTIVITIES

Compare your answer with the three tasks identified in the unit. Note any difference and modify your answer accordingly.

EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

School also helps the society in developing its economy. Both economists and educationists regard education as an investment in human capital.

Education is a long-term investment by the state to make itself a better place in which to live and a better place in which to make a living.

The role of the school here is to ensure that society's investment in human capital pays the necessary and desirable result. In this regard, formal education, through the institution of school, has multiple functions to perform the most important being to produce well educated people who will bring their talents, knowledge, skills and experience to bear as they function in various capacities in the economic sector of the society. In this way, formal education is

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the infrastructure for developing the economy. But the infrastructure has to be properly and firmly rooted. Through this educational infrastructure, pupils should be given proper attitude and skills for vocational efficiency and for the progress and survival of the social order. Education is therefore, not only a prerequisite for economic growth and development, but also a necessary and sufficient condition for political emancipation. This means economic development is indispensable for political and social integration both of which are vital needs of our society today. In fact, education is the key to modernization in all its ramifications. The proper role of the school is to see that the right type of education is provided in order to achieve the right type and acceptable form of modernization.

This view of the relationship between the school and the economy concentrates on the labour market purpose of education. As pointed out by Nieto (1992), such a view tends to assume a somewhat mechanistic explanation of the relationship between education and economic growth; that the supply of skilled manpower plays a critical role in the development of the economic sector. This view is typified in the Ashby Report on Nigeria, which stressed the importance of manpower forecasts, which in turn led to the massive expansion of both secondary and high education in the 1960s and 1970s.

The economy on its part provides the bedrock upon which the education system thrives. The level of economic buoyancy of a society determines the type and size of its education system. The economy provides the funds for the construction of schools' infrastructures, payment of teachers' salaries, procurement of teaching and learning materials such as furniture and instructional materials, and school supervision and inspection. The questions of how much to spend on education and what rate of expansion can be accommodated within the education sector are both dependent on available resources in a given society.

ACTIVITY II

1.   Write an essay summing up what you think is the nature of education's contribution to economic growth, and the reciprocal relationship between education and economic growth.

FEEDBACK ACTIVITY

Discuss your answers with your course facilitator or your subject specialist on line.

EDUCATION AND SELECTION

At any time, society contains children of different abilities and potentials. The education system acts as a sorting mechanism by channelling young children into different professions and occupations in their future lives. This set of functions of the school is generally termed as "people processing" or the "selection process". In this regard, schools screen, assess and grade the children that pass through them for occupations. In this way, schools affect the life chances of young children.

The use of the education system as a sorting mechanism is usually influenced by two main factors. The first can be traced to a political interest in universalising access to education to

all able children of all social classes according to their abilities and capabilities. This has led many countries including Nigeria to embark on massive expansion of education at all levels, but more particularly at the primary level in their bid to universalise access to qualitative basic education to all children irrespective of their class, ethnicity or gender.

The second factor is based on a strong economic interest influenced by those who believe that skilled manpower plays a critical role in economic development. Under this view, as discussed earlier, economic survival depends largely on a steady and numerous supply of highly educated technicians, technologists and other professionals with the necessary industrial skills the are needed for generating high productivity and growth in various sectors of the economy (Musgrave, 1983).

ACTIVITY III:

Write a couple of paragraphs each containing a factor, which influences the use of education system as a sorting mechanism.

FEEDBACK ACTIVITY

Now compare notes with other students on your course. Are the factors you have mentioned both economic and political in nature?

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

In this section, we shall look at the two main functions of education identified in Unit One; namely cultural transmission and change through innovation. Morrish (1976), stated in this regard that the object of education in general is to provide young children with the means for understanding their society and its structures and institutions, as well as opening up opportunities for them to create "meaning" out of their environment and interpersonal relationships.

a) **Cultural Transmission**

It is generally agreed that schools help the family to pass on the national culture to children entrusted in their care from very early in life. This point is best exemplified by Nigeria's attempt to use education as an instrument for inculcating national consciousness and national unity. The task of the Nigerian schools, particularly at the lower levels is to produce a good and united citizenry comprising people who think of themselves first as Nigerians before they think of themselves as belonging to any ethnic group or region.

You have in an earlier section, studied the process through which our schools perform this transmission of the national character. You have seen how the school curriculum is used to inculcate political values that promote nation building. On yet another plane, you have learnt how the schools are used to transmit the cultural heritage of a given society to its new members. This is achieved through the passing on of the cultural values, norms, ideals and patterns of accepted behaviour and conduct of the society to the younger generation. This aspect of the transmission of culture is

generally termed "socialisation process".   It is through the socialisation process that societies and cultures ensure the preservation of their integrity, identity and continued existence.

However, this process of cultural transmission calls for caution because of the cultural conflicts, if not confusion that exist in any given society. The crucial question is "what elements of the culture should the school transmit? It is possibly easy to assert that in such a state of affairs, the job of the school is to help to pass on to the new generation those elements of the old that have the greatest promise of contributing to the advancement of society. The materials and methods of instruction are to be taken from the culture as well as methods of classroom management and control. Principles and practices in school are to be selected from the culture also. The principles, theories, laws as well as social and moral norms used as subject matter in the school, should be drawn from the culture of the society. Hence, if school is to play an effective role as an agency for cultural transmission, the school and the culture should be inextricably interwoven.

b)   **Promoting Change**

As mentioned in an earlier section, in addition to preserving the cultural heritage of society, education also serves an innovative function, which brings about desirable changes in society. This is achieved through the provision of knowledge and ideas to members of society. Schools produce highly educated and skilled individuals whose education and level of enlightenment enable them to initiate and pursue change through innovations and critical reflection on the old ways of society.

The society, which schools should reflect, is clearly not static. It changes. So in reflecting it, schools should participate in determining the direction of its change. The point here is that while the school is expected to accept the social forces that play upon it, it should nonetheless not be oblivious of them. At any given time in the community, one can see that, there is an apparent state of cultural confusion. In this regard, the school cannot just simply reflect and perpetuate such confusion. Rather, the school should actively participate in the process of shaping the culture by focusing on only those aspects of the culture that help to preserve and maintain its integrity and others that have the promise of improving it. The school leads and directs the culture and should be integrated with the social life of the people. It should change as well as reflect the community. In fact, the schools should take part in the determination of a future social order. The proper role of school is therefore, to select, organize, direct and structure these forces in the light of present social needs, local circumstances and future demands.

Conclusively, in the process of necessary adjustment, school must help the society in the development of new attitudes, new values and new techniques demanded in the new order. It is clear that many of our traditional attitudes are inimical to development and would require change. Such negative attitudes include our chauvinistic and ethnocentric tendencies, our tendency to expect to receive or to give reward for performing our normal public duties, our lack of the sense of objectivity that is,

inability to remove one's own feelings or own welfare from the problem at hand; our low sense of responsibility, that is the lack of feeling of dedication, obligation, empathy and love toward one's community and disregard to one's public office, our tendency towards double standards of ethics and morality, and our nepotism and corrupt tendencies. It is the role of the school as an agency for cultural change to consciously help to change these attitudes by consciously emphasizing and inculcating the appropriate social attitude.

ACTIVITY IV

Outline and discuss the impact of education on politics and vice versa.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification simply means the way the society is divided into layers or social strata. Certain groups of people are socially superior to others. It also means social inequalities of wealth, power and prestige that result from social rank. Social stratification can also be explained in terms of the division of a population into unequal layers or strata based on income, wealth, gender, ethnicity, power, status, age or religion.

According to Marx Weber (1947), Stratification has three separate elements. They are as follows:-

i)   *Class:* This refers to a person's location in a society's economic system resulting in differences in the nature of work, income and wealth. Class position in society is a strong determinant of what one's life style is. The concept of class is also used to differentiate the population on grounds of economic considerations such as inequality in terms of wealth or income.

ii) *Status:* This means a person's relationship to established social position in society that vary in terms of prestige. Status also concerns the respect and differences given to individuals and groups. It can be achieved and may also be linked to occupations. However, other kinds of status are:

   a)   Family background status.

   b)   Ascribed status – old people have higher status than young ones. Males have high respect than females.

   c)   Religious leaders are accorded high status even if they are poor.

   d)   Occupation e.g. University professors and Dons – have high status while labourers have not.

iii *Power:* This refers to one's relationship to governmental and other political institutions, which will affect other people. For example, the Headmaster has political power both in school and outside the school. The teachers and pupils are under him

and he can take decisions that affect their future. Another role of the Headmaster is the outside role, which is in the community.

From a sociological perspective, class, status and power are not regarded so much as attributes of individual as they are aspects or elements of social structure itself (Appelbaun and Chambliss 1995).

Generally speaking, people in the society are not equal. People are categorized into different layers or stratum of the society. Members of each stratum tend to relate to one another.

The categorization of individuals in different strata as well as the way in which members of each stratum relate to one another is called social stratification (Ezewu, 1983).

Social stratification is the systematic inequalities of wealth, power and prestige that result from social rank (Weber, 1947).

Social stratification is the division of people into strata or hierarchy on the basis of variables such as: wealth, prestige, power, etc.

The popular classification of society is lower, middle, and upper classes. Social stratification and social class of a person or persons may be as result of education, politics, religion, occupation, economy etc. However, social classes are not stable, and they can change. Person or persons may move from one social class to another social class. This movement from one social class to another is called social mobility.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility simply means the stratification system, particularly as a result of changes in occupation, wealth or income. It is the movement of an individual from one social stratum to another within the occupation, class structure or society.

Kelley (1967) sees social stratification as "the relative location, horizontal and vertical of persons towards each other in terms of the relative ranking of power, wealth and honour within the social structure known as the society".

❖ *Vertical Mobility:-* This means the movement of individuals from one social stratum to another social stratum. This type of mobility includes both upward mobility and downward mobility. Upward mobility is an increase in occupational status, moving to higher and more prestigious positions. While the downward mobility is a decrease in occupational status, from someone who is working to an unemployed person.

❖ *Horizontal Mobility:-* This simply refers to the movement of individuals within a social stratum. In other words, it is a change in occupation that involves no change in status, example autoworker to steelworker. Horizontal mobility is also known as lateral mobility.

THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY BACKGROUND ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The socio-economic inclination of the family is a significant variable that affects the educational achievement of the child. This means that the higher the socio-economic status of the child's home the higher his educational life chances. The parent's economic position as

well as their attitude to education may determine the child's chances of continuing in education or otherwise.

Children from a lower socio-economic status are more likely to encounter problems such as:-

problem of accessibility/enrolment, lack of motivation and encouragement, drop-out, negative attitude of parents to schooling resulting from poor condition, parents' inability to cope with school expenses, and problems related to non-completion of schooling.

Children of parents occupying higher socio-economic status stand a better chance of both gaining access to and achieving in education. Children from high socio-economic backgrounds have the following advantages:-

❖ Early enrolment in school: - Parents with higher socio-economic status give their children an early start in education by enrolling them in nursery schools. This gives such children an edge over those who are not privileged to have an early start as it helps the children to be familiar with the school and its environment as well as its academic aspects like the learning of certain concepts such as 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 etc. and A B C D E F G H I J etc. as well as skills such as how to hold the pen, how to draw, paint and write.

❖ Due to the financial position of parents under this class, they can buy school facilities and materials for their children. Thus, learning is facilitated.

❖ Children from higher socio-economic class are more likely to be encouraged and motivated. In addition to having an early start in education, they are also known to enjoy other privileges at home such as the following:

➢ Children go school early

➢ Parents check their children's books after school hours.

➢ Parent praise for hardworking performance.

➢ Parents employ extra-lesson teachers for the children.

❖ Such children are also more likely to attend the most prestigious schools because their parents have the wherewithal to bear the costs of qualitative private education. Such schools are usually known for:

- Qualified teaching Staff;

- Adequate teaching and learning facilities;

- A high sense of commitment to work;

- Good teaching and learning environment; and

- High educational performance leading to opportunity for University or higher education, which at the end of the day provides good occupational opportunities and high income for living.

Dubey et al (1979) identified the following in the light of the relationship between socio-economic status of parents and their children's performance in school:

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i. The most important predictor of achievement in school associated with the family is socio-economic status;

ii. The higher the socio-economic status of the child's family, the higher we expect his school achievement to be;

iii. The relationship of socio-economic status to achievement is always consistent, no matter whether our measure of status is the occupation of father, the education of parents, the income of family or a combination of these. It remains the most important predictor even in the face of that significant variable called 'ability'; and

iv. Family size. Children from lower socio-economic status homes, where the family is large, start school with a verbal disadvantage. This is assumed to be because such children have less interaction with adults and elder siblings and their parents are more likely to be without any formal education of the western type.

However, it is pertinent to mention here that it is not always the case that children from high socio-economic status perform better than those from lower socio-economic status parents. Children from parents of higher socio-economic status who misuse the opportunities they got are unlikely to perform better. While on the other hand, children of lower socio-economic parents who are hardworking, dedicated and committed to work are likely to perform well. This of course may not be unconnected to the fact that they have seen the poor condition of their parents and thus wish to change it for better through education.

Education is one of the agents of social mobility and thus influences a person's future economic status in society. The higher the level of education of an individual, the higher his chances of occupational opportunities.

ACTIVITY V:

1. a. Define the concept "Social stratification".

    b. Identify and explain three elements of social stratification.

2. a. What is social mobility?

    b. Briefly explain vertical and horizontal mobility.

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION ON EDUCATION

At this stage, it may be necessary to pause and ask: What then are the effects of social stratification on education?

In the previous sections, we have touched on some of the ways in which parents' social class affects the educational opportunities of their children.

We have, for example, alluded to the fact that parents of low socio-economic status may be either unaware of the benefits of what parents of high status know by virtue of both their educational and occupational exposure, or unable due to poverty to provide certain school-like or school supportive activities for their children at home. We have agreed in this regard

that parental support of education and the provision of a host of other enriching experiences such as home tuition, access to home libraries, ability to learn the language of the school at home, an early start in education and access to most prestigious schools are not only crucial to children's success in school, but also responsible for the emergence of an obvious class division in children's education life chances.

It is evidently clear from the above that social stratification promotes obvious class division in educational life chances. Thus children of the middle and upper class parents are better prepared for school education more adequately than children from the low social class structure.

QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION

Children of middle and upper class parents and the elites are at an advantage over those from the poor or low socio-economic status parents as well as children of the uneducated or illiterates. Children of the high socio-economic parents gets the opportunity of having adequate school facilities, learn to speak English right from home before going to school and during school attendance at quality schools, having quality teachers etc. These and many other factors help to enable the children to have quality education thereby making a significant difference in terms of quality and level of education between the children of rich and elites on one hand and those of the poor and illiterates on the other hand.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEM

Education is a sound investment that is expected to enhance the economic growth of individuals. It is a known fact that education is a strong factor of social mobility. This means that education has the ability to influence a person's future economic status in society. Consequently, a person who has attained higher level of education is likely to have higher chances of getting good jobs, which in return, determines an individual's social class. It is very clear that children of higher socio-economic class are better opportune to attend the best schools and colleges and have better chances of going to tertiary institutions and Universities. This situation tends to create the socio-economic problems in the society, thereby, widening the gap between the rich, elites on one hand, and the poor, as well as the illiterates on the other hand.

OVER PROLIFERATION OF CLASS AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The economic position of parents largely determines their ability to provide education for their children. This means that parents send their children to schools based on their economic capabilities or status. Wealthy and elites parents send their children to class and private schools, leaving the poor parents to send their children to government or public schools most of whom are today in bad conditions. Examples of class schools are: Capital Schools, Unity Schools, Federal Government Colleges, Federal Science Colleges, University Primary Schools, University Secondary Schools, etc. In addition there are various private schools across the country, both at primary, secondary and university levels. Children of the poor parents or lower class status are likely not to get the opportunity of attending class and private schools.

It is pertinent to note that in class and private schools, high fees and levies are charged, which tends to pose a serious problem to parents that are poor in their attempt to provide a quality and quantitative education for the their children. In addition, too many class and private schools have led to the widening educational gap between the children of the poor and rich parents in the society.

RURAL-URBAN IMBALANCE IN EDUCATION

Some people in the society have direct access to quality educational opportunities. These people are mostly the middle and upper people. Others do not have ready access to the educational opportunities. These in most cases are the lower class people and the rural people. People that are living in the cities and urban centres have access to more and quality resources. Those in the rural places do not enjoy the accessibility of resources. Thus, they have no option other than to send their children to the poor schools in the village. There are the rural-urban differences in educational opportunity in the society. It is the social stratification in this respect that leaves rural groups and the poor people to remain deprived of educational opportunity from generation to generation.

GENDER BIAS IN EDUCATION

Girls and women from middle and upper class parents are advantaged when it comes to the provision of education, especially where there are boys and girls in the family. As for the upper class parents, they stand a better chance of educating both boys and girls. On the other hand parents that are poor are likely not to be able to send all their children to school. Thus, when it comes to who is to go to school, girls or women are placed at a disadvantage. The usual reason is that, girls and women are taken for marriage and therefore, it is more important to educate the boy-child. This trend is more prominent in northern Nigeria. In the eastern part of Nigeria, the case is different because, it is the boy-child education that is a problem in the area. This means that more girls are going to school than boys. In any case the economic factor is playing a significant role in determining the educational life chance of boys and girls.

However, it is not always true that children from middle and upper class perform better and achieve more than those from the poor and uneducated parents. It is very possible to have children from high socio-economic status not performing well in school. Children of poor and uneducated or low socio-economic status parents may perform well in school and consequently attain high educational status on the other hand.

At this juncture, it is relevant for the teachers and prospective teachers to understand that children from the middle and upper social class families are more likely to perform better than those children from the poor and uneducated homes. This as we have seen earlier in this chapter is not unconnected with the advantages of the upper class homes over those of the lower class homes.

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ACTIVITY II

1. Outline and discuss the effects of social stratification on education in Nigeria.

2. Think about the children that are out of school in your area and write an essay on why you think this phenomenon prevails in a nation that professes the principle of education for all.

SUMMARY

- The purpose of this Unit has been to illustrate both the contributions of education to and its reciprocal relationships with the other sub-systems of society such as the polity, the economy and the cultural system of society. We have seen that, on the one hand, education affects peoples' outlook on life, provides general and particular knowledge and skills and changes attitudes and thinking of people, which together affect a community's socio-cultural, political and economic development. On the other hand, we have seen how dependent the education system is on other social institutions for its nature, purpose, contents and resources both human and material. In the examination of this relationship, the unit laid great emphasis on the complementarities.

- Knowledge of the relationship between education and politics will help in providing quality education for our children and uplifting the society in general.

- It is imperative for policy makers, educational administrators, as well as teachers and parents to abreast themselves with the intricate nature of the relationship between the three components of this social system.

- On the part of Government, education should be made more related to work and production for the purpose of socio-economic, political, scientific and technological development of our great country, Nigeria.

- Social stratification means the social inequalities of wealth, power and prestige that result from social rank.

- There are three elements of social stratification viz: Class, status and power.

- Social mobility means the movement from one social stratum to another social stratum.

- There are two types of social mobility viz: vertical and horizontal mobility.

- Social stratification affects education in many ways, such as the promotion of obvious class division in educational life chances, qualitative differences in education, socio-economic problem, over proliferation of class and private school rural-urban imbalance in education and gender bias in education.

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