

UNIT NO 5

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC
FOUNDATIONS OF
EDUCATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is obviously reflection of the social, cultural and political conditions prevailing outside. It reflects the society but it has within it the seeds of dynamics of change and thus can keep pace with the fast changing world. The schools thus are not blind followers of the dictates of the society but when it degenerates they can improve it and enthuse it with new vistas of thought and new horizons of desirable ideals.

The school has to give up its ivory tower isolation. It must be closely linked with the society. The starting point of educational reform must be the relinking of the school to life and restoring the intimate relationship between them which has broken down with the development of the formal tradition of education.

However, effort has been made in this unit to highlight the socio-economic foundation of education.

2. OBJECTIVES

After studying the unit, it is hoped that you will be able to:

- explain the concept of society and culture;
- identify the social conditions and their impact on education;
- discuss the economic conditions and education; and
- describe the relationship of politics with education

3. CONCEPT OF SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Society, according to Zais (1976) is:- “a collection of individuals who have organized themselves into a distinct group”. Zais also describes culture as, “a kind of social cement that consists of the characteristic like habits, ideals, attitudes, beliefs and ways of thinking of a particular group of people”.

Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976) argue that the idea of culture is rather elusive, that rather than being a thing it is a process.

They regard it as the field of interaction between (1) men's social relationships and conventions, (2) the symbolic forms available to them for focusing on and coordinating experience and (3) their systems of belief, value and actions".

Thus although 'society' and 'culture' are not the same thing, they are interdependent.

The word 'culture' has two distinct meanings. In popular usage it tends to refer to some sort of "high" culture, reflecting minority tastes in such areas as music, performing arts and literature. Thus a link is made with minority tastes, social position and elitism.

It is more technical usage, anthropologists and sociologists refer to culture in a descriptive but as far as possible, value-free way. They considered Culture, more than a collection of mere isolated bits of behaviour. It is the integrated sum total of learned behaviour traits which are manifest and shared by members of a society. A culture, as we have seen, defines an accepted way of life in a society.

Therefore, it suggests that such a way of life is preferred, or valued over any other. Cultural norms provide guidance to individuals about what they ought or ought not to do.

Nevertheless, it is hard to interpret the values of an individual, not to mention a society.

Are our values displayed in what we do, or what we say we believe in?

4. SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND EDUCATION

Education starts from the cradle and continues throughout life. It should enable an individual to sublimate the basic instincts and develop healthy attitudes towards life. The educative forces of the school exert active influence towards social control and change. The concept of democracy and word citizenship should

be fostered through education. Various agencies of education contribute to social change at various stage of life.

Family is the first unit of social life. Social experience in the family in early childhood proves a basis for the development of personality and culture. The family plays a great role in aiding or subverting the larger social process through effective or ineffective social control. Likewise, missions and cultural centres also play their roles in the process of social change and social control.

The mass media of communication, like public opinion, radio, press and television are the agencies of social change.

Social schools whether part-time or full time need to be started for training the cultivators who work in the fields and classes should be held in the evening or other suitable time so as to allow them to go on as usual with their daily routine work. Education for the rural population should cater to the demands of the various operations involved in efficient agriculture. The illiterate peasants can be trained in the task of mechanized cultivation, manuring and fertilization, as well as irrigation and other operations. Programs of social and civic education should be planned so that they are made conscious of their rights and obligations.

Education is expected to change the values and attitudes of the people and to create in them an urge or the necessary motivation for social change. It is generally believed that education will provide necessary training in skills and occupations and thus produce the needed competent personnel for manning the different specialized jobs in modern industrial, business, educational and research establishments.

Education is considered to be an important instrument of assisting people in knowing their weaknesses and enabling them to gain necessary knowledge in order to achieve progress in various spheres of their life in a systematic or consistent manner.

5. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND EDUCATION

Socio-economic condition of a country has a great bearing on the educational system of a country. Two points must be understood very clearly. The first is that schools are a part of society and not apart from it. Secondly schools can be understood only with an understanding of the society they reflect.

The relationship between education and society has been summed up by the International Commission on the Development Education (1972) as, “In our view, there is a close correlation simultaneous and delayed between changes in the socio-economic environment and the structures and forms of action of education, which we believe makes a functional contribution to historical movements. Moreover, it seems to us that through the knowledge it provides of the environment in which it operates, education may help society to become aware of its problems and provided that efforts are centred on training ‘complete men’ who will consciously seek their individual and collective emancipation, it may greatly contribute to changing and humanizing societies”.

The International Commission on the Development of Education (1972) has again observed, “The social demand for education is constantly increasing. Pupil on the one level strive for the level above. Parents generally want their children to have a higher degree of education than they had themselves. Education is regarded as the primary instrument in social mobility. In developing countries, university degrees and diplomas often take on the value of substitutes for titles and privileges customarily recognized in ancient feudal-style societies, whose social structures survived despite changes in regime. These considerations of prestige and form sometimes strongly influence the orientation given to educational systems and the resources allocated to different disciplines”.

It is hard to conceive of society developing without a renewal in education. This is valid for all societies of whatever type, whatever their

predominant doctrine and however, they envisage their future-whether reformist or revolutionary”.

In Pakistan, the upper middle class in approximately ten to fifteen per cent of the population may be found in this category. The children of this category also attend public and expensive schools. Similarly, the lower middle class. This class is represented by government subordinates, school teachers, shopkeepers etc. Their children generally strive very hard at school and often do very well in their performance. In many cases students coming from these families feel frustrated when they find that they are denied equality of opportunity in education and society also.

The condition of the lower classes are appalling. It is estimated that about 50% of the people belong to this category. Peons, domestic workers, sweepers, labours, petty craftsmen, landless farmers etc, come in this category. They live in over-crowded conditions, huts or temporary shelters. Their children usually study in schools, where there are no adequate building and furniture facilities.

Pakistani society demands admission and recruitment in educational institutions without discrimination not only on grounds such as class, colour, but also on sex. At present, a vast majority of 180 million Pakistani population live in rural areas. Educational facilities in rural areas are very less than the urban areas. Education of women in some areas is less than the urban areas. There is due need to put stress on the education of women.

A United Nations Report on community development points out that the key to success in community development lies in the “intelligent participation of women”. A woman who has benefitted from a well-planned functional literacy programme is clearly going to be an asset in moving her whole family unit forward on the road to socioeconomic emancipation. Also the failure to draw girls and woman into the educational mainstream poses a serious obstacle to socio-

economic development. On the other hand, the experience of technologically advanced countries give a clue to likely future developments. In fact, there are, already indications that women may be called upon to participate actively in a wide variety of jobs which must be done in a rapidly developing economy. It would, therefore, seem imperative to re-define the role of women in a developing economy in the context of the adaptive demands of modernization.

The Education Policy 1992 greatly stresses that one of the social objectives of education is to equalize opportunities enabling the backward or underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a level for the improvement of their conditions. The policy suggested various reforms in this connection.

National Education Policy 1998-2010 also took note of the unproductive educational system and suggested a new educational pattern based on science and mathematics and work experience so that education should be modernized and productively increased and the educational system geared to the economy and manpower needs of the country.

6. POLITICS AND EDUCATION

Educational system operates in a political context. All major decisions are made by politicians, either nationally or locally and are part of complicated relationship between local and central government. The over-riding power of elected members of parliament and local councillors to decide the allocation of resources, the structure of school system, the procedures relating to the appointment and promotion of teachers, their pay and conditions of service have never been challenged as usually it is part of responsibility of government.

What is the role of education in society? For this, it is necessary to place education basically in political perspective. A perspective which demonstrates its ultimate purpose as reinforcement of established patterns of power. Political

scientists have not studied drastically the links between formal education and the political order. Obviously the future citizen is socialized into particular societal norms, and presumably he will act they dictate as long as his socialization has been successful and has the means to structure of his behaviour. In other words political socialization is not a neutral process, but it has cultural and ideological biases. This is a fact that politics and education has positive relationship.

If socio-cultural forces influence the education, then ideological pressures determine the direction of the influence. According to Tapper and Selter (1978, p.3) the most significant linking of class, education and politics is found in that literature which describes the context within which behaviour is acquired as ideologically biased.

7. ACTIVITIES

1. Schools have to give up their ivory tower isolation. For this arrange a discussion among our five colleagues and record the recommendations.
2. Social experience in the family in early childhood provides the base for the development personality. Select two students of your class, observe their patterns of personality and establish cause and effect relationship between their pattern of personality and family experiences.
3. Society wishes to change itself through education. Observe the behaviour of students and examine whether education is contributing towards desired direction or not. Support your answer with observed events.
4. Socio-economic system of any culture influences the educational system. Survey the conditions of a part of your town and find out how this is affecting education.
5. Discuss and suggest some ways to improve internal efficiency of the educational institutions with the head of your institution.

8. EXERCISE

- Q. No. 1** Education is expected to change the attitude of people in a desired way. How can a teacher contributed in this regard?.
- Q. No. 2** Education is reflection of the social, cultural and political conditions prevailing in the society. How?
- Q. No. 3** Culture is “a kind of social comment that consists of the characteristic habit, ideals, attitudes, beliefs and ways of thinking of a particular group of people”. Discuss.
- Q. No. 4** Society and culture are inter-dependent. Why?
- Q. No. 5** Community development also depends upon intelligent participation of women. Suggest five ways of women participation in community development.
- Q. No. 6** Educational policy 1992 has criticized the unproductive educational system. Enlist the recommendations of this policy so that educational system can be modernized and made productive.
- Q. No. 7** Ideological pressures determine the direction of the influence of socio-cultural pressure. Elaborate with examples.
- Q. No. 8** By spending 2% of G.N.P. on education, can we evolve as an industrial country?. Support your answer with facts and logic.

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