**Socialization**

**The Concept of Socialization:**

**Definition and Necessity**

In any society there are socially recognized ways in which the norms and values of the society are inculcated in the human infant who comes into this world as a biological organism with animalistic needs or impulses. Individuals learn group-defined ways of acting and behaving, and what they socially learn becomes part of their personality.

**Socialization** is a process of making somebody social and fully human. Or more appropriately, it is a process whereby individual persons learn and are trained in the basic norms, values, beliefs, skills, attitudes, way of doing and acting as appropriate to a specific social group or society.

It is an on-going, never ending process- from cradle to the grave. That means an individual person passes thorough various stages of socialization, from birth to death. Thus, we need socialization as infants, preschool children, schoolboys/girls, pubescents, adolescents, adults and older persons.

From the point of view of individual persons, especially a newly born baby, socialization is a process whereby a biological being or organism is changed into a social being. In terms of the group, society or any professional organizations, socialization is a process whereby the organizations', social groups' and society's structure and well-being are kept and sustained. It is the process whereby the culture, skills, norms, traditions, customs, etc., are transmitted from generation to generation - or from one society to another. Socialization may be formal or informal. It becomes formal when it is conducted by formally organized social groups and institutions, like schools, religious centers, mass media universities, work places, military training centers, internships, etc. It is informal when it is carried out through the informal social interactions and relationships at micro-levels, at interpersonal and small social group levels. The most important socialization for us is that we get through informal agents like family, parents, neighborhood and peer group influences. It has a very powerful influence, whether negative or positive, in our lives.

The process of socialization, whether it is formal or informal, is vitally important to both individuals and society. Without some kind of socialization, society would cease to exist. Socialization, thus, can be labeled as the way by which culture is transmitted and individuals are fitted into the society's organized way of life.

**The Goals of Socialization**

In terms of individual persons, the goal of socialization is to equip him or her with the basic values, norms, skills, etc, so that they will behave and act properly in the social group to which they belong. Socialization has also the following specific goals (Broom and Sleznki, 1973):

 To inculcate basic disciplines by restraining a child or even an adult from immediate gratification; a child who is toilet-trained will delay

relieving himself/ herself until the proper environment is created.

To instill aspirations;

To teach social roles;

To teach skills;

To teach conformity to norms; and

To create acceptable and constructive personal identities.

Despite the inculcation of values and norms is significant in the process of social integration, we need to also note that social values are not equally absorbed by members of a society or group. The integrative function of socialization is also not equally beneficial to all people. There is always the question of whose values have to be inculcated? This question particularly becomes crucial in an increasingly globalizing society. Hence, the ideological role of socialization with the issues of differential power, control, domination and conflict become important.

**Human Biological Bases of, and Capacity for, Socialization**

From among the animal kingdom, humans are the only ones who are capable of socialization because they are endowed with the necessary biological bases that are lacking in other animals. The following are the key biological characteristics of human beings on which socialization is based: Absence of instincts, social contact needs, longer period of childhood dependence, capacity to learn and language (Broom and Sleznki, 1973; Henslin and Nelson, 1995)

**Absence of Instincts:** The term "instinct" in its current social science usage refers to the complex behavior patterns for which some animal species as biologically programmed. For example, nest-building among birds is an indistinct. But humans have no comparable behavior patterns which are biologically fixed, although they have innumerable built-in physiological reflexes. Human have biological drives or impulses such as hunger, thirst, sex, etc, rather than instincts. This absence of instincts makes humans dependent on social direction and their behaviors are amenable to such direction. The openendedness of humans is thus the biological ground for social conformity.

**Social Contact Needs:** Humans need sustained social contacts. Studies conducted on primates and human infants revealed that lack of body stimulation and contact in infancy appear to inhibit and prevent the development of higher learning functions. Satisfaction of the social contact and initiations needs in humans is a strong biological imperative.

**Longer** **Period of Childhood Dependence**: A third biological condition that makes extensive socialization essential for humans is that the human infant need much longer period of physical dependence and sexual immaturity than other animals. The need to acquire the techniques and skills of social living further prolongs the dependence. Such longer period of dependence, during which the child is cared for and controlled by others, results in an intense emotional dependence that remains throughout life.

**Capacity to Learn:** A high level of intelligence is an innate human biological potential. Hence, humans are highly educable; they can learn much more than other animals and can continue to learn more over a longer period of time.

**Language:** Man's ability to learn is a function of his capacity for language. Other animals may have some degree of intelligence but only humans have reasoning capacity because they have language. Language expresses and arouses emotion; conveys feelings, values and knowledge. Whether as vehicle for knowledge or for attitude, language is the key factor in the creation of human society. Symbolic communication, which is possessed only by humans, makes language possible. Humans innately possess the potential and capacity to create culture and to be guided by cultural and social norms. At the center of all these is language.

**Patterns of Socialization**

There are two broadly classified patterns of socialization. These are: Repressive and participatory socialization. Repressive socialization is oriented towards gaining obedience, while participatory socialization is oriented towards gaining the participation of the child. Punishment of wrong behavior and rewarding and reinforcing good behavior are involved in the two kinds of socialization, respectively. The following is a tabular representation of the two modes of socialization.

**Major Types of Socialization**

There are different types of socialization; the major ones include: **primary or childhood socialization, secondary or adulthood socialization, de-socialization** and **resocialization**. Other minor types of socialization include: anticipatory socialization and reverse socialization.

**Primary or Childhood Socialization**

This is also called basic or early socialization. The terms "primary", "basic" or "early" all signify the overriding importance of the childhood period for socialization. Much of the personality make-up of individuals is forged at this period in life. Socialization at this stage of life is a landmark; without it, we would cease to become social beings. The human infant who is a biological being or organism is changed into a social being mainly at this early stage. Hence, children should be appropriately socialized from birth up to particularly five years of age, because this period is basic and crucial one. A child who does not get appropriate socialization at this stage will most likely be deficient in his/her social, moral, intellectual and personality development. Some grew up developing anti-social attitudes, aspirations and practices.

**Secondary or Adult Socialization**

While socialization is an overbidding issue for children and adolescents, it is a never-ending process that continues through out life. Secondary or adult socialization is necessitated when individual take up new roles, reorienting themselves according to their changes social statuses and roles, as in starting marital life. The socialization process at this stage may sometimes be intense. For example, fresh college graduates entering the world of work to start their first jobs, there are quite many new roles to be mastered. Intense adult socialization may also occur among immigrants. When they go to other countries, they may need to learn the language, values, norms, and a host of other custom and folkways, coupled with experiencing economic hardships may prove to be truly stressful and most challenging. Although it may be fairly stated that childhood socialization experiences what kind of people we become, the challenges of socialization thus continues in late adolescent and adult stages. This happens to be so particularly in the context of fast changing world in complex societies.

**Re-socialization and De-socialization**

In the lives of individuals, as they pass through different stages and life experiences, there is the need for resocialization and de-socialization. Re-socialization means the adoption by adults of radically different norms and lifeways that are more or less completely dissimilar to the previous norms and values. Resocialization signifies the rapid and more basic changes in the adult life. The change may demand abandonment of one lifeway with a new one, which is completely different from, and also incompatible with, the former. This quite so often happens as adult life in modern societies demands sharp transitions and changes.

De-socialization typically precedes re-socialization. Desocialization refers to stripping individuals of their former life styles, beliefs, values and attitudes so that they may take up other partially or totally new life styles, attitudes and values. The individuals have to abandon their former values and take up new ones in order to become part of the new social group.

**Anticipatory Socialization**

Anticipatory socialization refers to the process of adjustment and adaptation in which individuals try to learn and internalize the roles, values, attitudes and skills of a social status or occupation for which they are likely recruits in the future. They do this in anticipating the actual forthcoming socialization. It involves a kind of rehearsal and preparations in advance to have a feel of what the new role would look like. However, anticipatory socialization may not be adequate when the nature and scope of life transition is complex. It may be difficult to fully anticipate what will happen.

**Reverse Socialization**

Reverse socialization refers to the process of socialization whereby the dominant socializing persons, such as parents, happen to be in need of being socialized themselves by those whom they socialize, such as children. This idea seems to be associated with the fact that socialization is a two-way process. It involves the influences and pressures from the socializees that directly or indirectly induce change the attitudes and behaviors of the socializers themselves. In reverse socialization, children, for example, may happen to socialize their parents in some roles, skills, and attitudes which the latter lack.

**Agents and Components of Socialization**

Agents of socialization are the different groups of people and institutional arrangements which are responsible for training new members of society. Some of them could be formal, while others are informal. They help individual members get into the overall activities of their society. There are three components to socialization process. There is the socializee who could be either a newborn child, a recruit to the army or the police force or a freshman in a college or an intern in medical service. Then again there are the socializers who may be parents, peer groups, community members, teachers or church members. Both the socializee and the socializer interact with one another not in a vacuum but in a social environment which plays an important role in the socialization process. These different socializing environments are called socialization settings. The most socializing agencies are the family, peer relationships, schools, neighborhoods (the community), the mass media, etc.

The institution of family is generally regarded as the most important agent of socialization. In the process of socialization, the most important contacts are between a child and his/her parents and siblings. The contacts could also be between the child and surrogate parents when actual parents are not available. Besides the child's parents, there are other agents of socialization (in modern societies) such as day-care-centers, nurseries and kindergarten, as well as primary and secondary schools and universities. It seems that these various agents of socialization have partially taken over the function of the parents, particularly in modern societies, where women are increasingly leaving their traditional home-based responsibilities by engaging in employment outside home. The school represents a formal and conscious effort by a society to socialize its young.

Other than parents and schools, peer groups play very significant roles in the socialization process. Sometimes, the influence of the peer group, be it negative or positive, can be as powerful as that of parents. The peer group may transmit prevailing societal values or develop new and distinct cultures of its own with peculiar values.

The mass media such as television, radio, movies, videos, tapes, books, magazines and newspapers are also important agents of socialization. The most crucial effect on children comes from television, as studies show. The effects are both negative and positive. Negative impact seem to be greater that parents and other concerned bodies worry about the way television is socializing children. For example, studies show that watching violence on television can encourage aggressive behavior in children.

**Chapter Summary**

Socialization is a life long, never ending process whereby individuals are trained and fitted into the normal functioning of their societies and groups. Only human beings are biologically capable for socialization. Thus, biological bases that make socialization in humans possible include: absence of instincts, social contact needs, capacity to learn, prolonged childhood dependence and language. Researchers of socialization have identified the mechanisms by which socialization takes place; these are called modes of social learning. They include: classical and operant conditioning; identity taking; modeling-after and problem solving. The patterns of socialization vary from society to society; there are two broad patterns of socialization; these are: repressive socialization which focuses on punishment and reward mechanism, emphasizing obedience of children; and participatory socialization, which focuses on participating children, by stressing child-centered socialization.

The goals of socialization include: inculcating basic disciplines, instilling aspirations as well as disciplines, providing individuals with identities, teaching social roles and their supporting attitudes, and teaching skills. The major types of socialization are: primary, childhood socialization; secondary, adult socialization; de socialization and re-socialization. Other minor types include: anticipatory socialization and reverse socialization. Socialization can be carried out at informal and formal levels; of these, informal socialization through the agency of parents, siblings, peer groups and interpersonal relationships plays a very powerful role in shaping our attitudes, goals, lifestyles, knowledge and overall personality development. Other formal agents of socialization also play very important roles; these are: schools at different levels and mass media, of which television stands out the most powerful agent of socialization relating to children.