CHAPTER II

SOCIAL INTERACTION : CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter the present study has been introduced. In this chapter the conceptual framework of social interaction has been discussed.

2.1 Meaning of the Term Social Interaction:

Talking about the nature of social interaction Sutherland, Woodward, and Maxwell (1966) has said, "Social interaction is that dynamic interplay of forces in which contact between persons and groups results in a modification of attitudes and behaviour of the participants". The above authors have further added, "to see if interaction has taken place, we need but ask: has there been a change in attitude and behaviour, that is, a modification in the personality of individuals or in the structure or values of groups". Similarly Hubert Bonner (1953) has said, "Social interaction is a type of relationship between two or more persons in which the behaviour of one is modified by the behaviour of the other." He has further added, "When man in his contact with others affects a change in any of them, so that each adjusts himself to the behaviour of another, we call the process social interaction". Francis J. Brown (1961) has also expressed the similar ideas about the nature of social interaction when he said "It (social interaction) is a two way
process whereby each individual or group stimulates the other, and, in varying degree, modifies the behaviour of the participants". From the above descriptions of the nature of social interaction, it is quite evident that change and modification brought in the interacting persons or groups is the underlying idea of all of them.

The Dictionary of Sociology has defined the term "social interaction" as "social processes when analyzed from the stand-point of interstimulations and responses of personalities and groups" (Fairchild, 1954). Interstimulation in the process of social interaction, thus, goes on between one person and another person, between one group and the another group, between group and the person, and among the members of a group, and so on. George J. McCall and J.B. Simmons (1966) in their book, "Identities and Social Interactions" have contended social interaction as consisting of "mutual influences of individuals." Both the above definitions limit the scope of social interaction only to "interstimulations" and "mutual influences". They have avoided modification and change which comes into being as a result of social interaction.

Paul A. Hare (1965) has seen the term "social interaction" as "a compromise between the inputs from man's biological nature and personality, on the one hand, and role, culture and environment, on the other." Here "environment"
refers to the natural and man-made non human elements which form the situation in which the interaction occurs. From the knowledge of how an individual's nature typically responds to his environments, some aspects of his social interaction can be predicted. For some predictions, especially with a clinical population, personality may be the dominant element in social interaction. However, many aspects of social interaction can be predicted if we know the patterns of behaviour which are typical of the group or groups to which a person belongs. Paul A. Hare (1963) has illustrated the elements of social interaction in the following figure:

**Figure 2.12 Elements of Social Interaction**

Social interaction, according to Paul A. Hare (1963) includes how an individual acts towards others (output) as well as how others respond to him (input). Thus, it is a reciprocal process involving at least two actors, two acts (on action and one reaction) and two periods in which social interaction takes place.
Paul A. Hare (1963) has further added, the term "interaction" refers to all words, symbols, and gestures with which persons respond to each other; however, in actual research only verbal behaviour is usually recorded, or at the most, overt or easily identifiable attempts at one person to communicate with another. It deserves mention here that in the present study also only verbal behaviour aimed at communication and association will be studied. / 2.2 Theories of Social Interaction:

Many theories have been advanced about the nature of social interaction. All of them have made an attempt to answer how and why of social interaction. Some of them deserve mention here.

2.21 Exchange Theory

"Social interaction begins, this theory states, when a social actor - either an individual or an organization - attempts to gain some kind of benefit from another actor (or actors) by exchanging something with him" (Olsen, 1968). If the other actor also believes that he will benefit from such an exchange, interaction takes place.

Social interaction initiated in this manner will continue as long as the reward - cost outcome is in excess of some minimum level." Any activity on the part of one person that contributes to the gratification of the needs of another is considered a reward. Costs includes punishments.
incurred and deterrents in interacting with another person, such as fatigue, anxiety, and fear of embarrassment, as well as rewards foregone because of the interaction” (Secord, and Backman, 1964). Social interaction can become satisfactory and lasting only when the reward - cost outcome is at least slightly above some minimum level of what a person feels is his due.

Exchange theory provides an explanation of why persons in a group receive widely different number of choices. Some members provide high rewards at minimum costs to those they interact with, and others supply only small rewards at high costs.

This theory cannot explain all social acts. Olsen (1968) has pointed out, first, exchange transaction between actors are often supported by an encompassing organization, which decreased the need for mutual trust but which also perpetuate the relationship inspite of unequal exchanges. Second, organizational values, norms, rules and goals frequently influence or drastically alter the processes through which exchange occur. Third, organizational demands upon actors often cause them to abandon their original exchange relationships and take part in new activities.

2.22 **Power Theory**: In social organizations people interacting seldom have altogether equal voices in shaping the nature and course
of interaction. In most cases, one actor (or coalition of actors) will be in a position to drive a harder bargain for his definition of the situation and his plans of action. Thus, power is said to arise from imbalance in exchange resources. According to Secord and Backman (1964), "An analysis of power is essential to an understanding of the flow of interaction in a group and is necessary to explain the distribution of rewards and costs among group members."

Power theory, according to Olsen (1968), contains several basic assumptions, although they are not always made explicit.

(i) Power occurs within social relationships or organizational entities, it is never a property of any single actor.

(ii) Power is inseparably linked with social interdependence.

(iii) The amount of power exercised by an actor in a given situation is determined jointly by the resources he employs and by the resistance he encounters.

Power, thus, is such a pervasive and vital aspect of interaction that most persons seem to be quite sensitive to the facts about power. In a study of power in two boys' camps by Lippit, Palansky, Redt and Rosen (1952), boys were found to perceive accurately the relative power of group members, including their own. Boys who perceived themselves
as high in power made more attempts to influence others.

2.23 **Symbolic Interaction Theory**:

This theory lays stress on individuals engaged in social interaction as relatively independent elements. The interactions might be exchanged transactions or any other type, but in all cases the individuals are seeking goals through social interaction. According to Olsen (1968), "A distinctive feature of interaction theory is its emphasis on the symbolic meanings that individuals give to their own and other's actions." A person does not respond to overt behaviours, but rather to the meanings that he and others attach to both acts and objects. As an individual engages in interaction, therefore, he is continually interpreting or defining everything that takes place in that situation, including many aspects of the surrounding environment. His subsequent actions are then primarily shaped by these interpretations.

To quote Parons (1952) "... various elements of the situation come to have special "meanings" for ego as "signs" or "symbols" which become relevant to the organization of his expectation system. Especially where there is social interaction, signs and symbols acquire common meanings and serve as media of communication between actors."

2.34 **Social Role Theory**:

The concept of social role is one of the most important concepts in behavioural sciences. Sociologists,
who analyse social systems, "have found it useful to conceptualize the systems of recurring interactions in a group in terms of social role concepts" Seeord and Backman (1964). Behaviour in any group can be analyzed in these terms. In a University, for example, we may have interactions that recur from day to day. In room after room of a classroom building, certain patterned interactions take place: One person stands before a group of others; he speaks, and they write in their note books. This pattern can be analyzed in terms of the role behaviour of those occupying the positions of teachers and students.

Social roles, according to Olsen (1968), contain the twin components of the overt action patterns and cognitive expectations". He has further explained, "Cognitive expectations prescribe and proscribe actions and attitudes for the persons enacting a given role." These role expectations are of three different types: cultural, situational and personal. Cultural expectations are contained in the culture of the organisation of which the role is a part. They are, in effect, the social norms and rules that apply specifically to this role. Situational expectations are held by the other people, or role partners, with whom the role is enacted in a given situation. Personal expectations are those, which the enactor holds for himself in his role.

Cognitive expectations tell a person what he should and should not do in a role, but "a social role is not
actually fulfilled until individual expresses these expectations in overt patterns of action and interaction" (Olsen, 1968). The carrying out of role actions should not be viewed as a mere conformity to predetermined expectations. Role acting is a creative process in the course of which existing expectations are often altered and new ones established. It is through "role acting" that roles are actually created Turner (1962). A role actor is always devising a performance for his role partners on the basis of his own goals, his partner's expectations, cultural norms and rules, and the demands of the immediate situation.

2.25 **Self Theory**

This theory is the complementary of role theory. "Social roles are perceived and enacted against the background of the self" Lindzey, et.al. (1968). It will be essential to introduce the term 'role-identity' here. This concept has been defined by McCall and Simmons, (1966) as "character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of the particular social position". They have further explained that the contents of a person's role-identities provide him with criteria for appraising his own actual performances. Those actions that are not consonent with one's imagination of self as a person in a particular social position are regarded as embarrassing, threatening, and disconcerting, if possible, they will be discontinued and superseded by actions more in keeping with one's view of self.
In a study of eighty-seven entering college freshmen assigned to the same dormitory conducted by D.M. Kipnis (1961), it was found that the subjects who had initially perceived their best friends as either markedly positively different or markedly negatively different from themselves showed the greatest amount of changes in self-conception in direction of their best friend's evaluation.

2.26 Reference Group Theory

According to this theory the people evaluate themselves and orient their behaviour with reference to "(i) the groups in which they hold official membership, (2) others to which they aspire or which they hope to belong in future, and (3) others which they reject and definitely do not wish to belong to" (Lindesmith and Strauss, 1968). Above authors have further explained, "A reference group is, thus, any group with which a person psychologically identifies himself or in relation to which he thinks of himself."

Sherif (1953) has stated, "the individual's directive attitudes namely, ego attitudes, which define and regulate his behaviour to other persons, other groups, and to an important extent even to himself, are formed in relation to values and norms of his reference groups". Newcomb (1950) applied this concept in a study of the attitudes of Bennington College students, using positive and negative reference groups - the former being those in which one desired to be accepted and
treated as a member and the latter those to which one is opposed and in which one does not desire membership.

The idea of negative reference group emphasizes that when one commits oneself to the view-point or values of one group, this fact automatically places one in a potentially hostile or competitive position with respect to other groups. Thus, for a communist, the Jansangh Party is negative reference group, particularly at election time.

2.37 Conclusion

None of these theories individually explain the true nature of social interaction. However, these are quite useful for explaining different aspects of interaction. In their pure forms, of course, these theories are not entirely compatible in the assumptions they make about mankind, but each does help to explain a different aspect of the total picture. The rich diversities of these theories serve to underline the very highness of human interaction, a multiplex process containing within itself an astonishing variety of component strands.

The discussion, the conceptual framework of social interaction has thus, led to the clarity in understanding the present study. This conceptual frame-work has always been kept in mind while proceeding with study and especially when discussing the patterns of social interaction among the school personnel.
2.3 Importance of the study:

Good social interaction among the school personnel leads to effective education. Often it is the quality of the interaction between principals and teachers or between teachers and teachers or between teachers and students that accounts for the degree of success or failure that a school achieves. Where interaction throughout the structure is generally good, good teaching and high morale are likely to result. Where interaction is poor, frustration and dissatisfaction will be apparent. Many studies on the social-interaction in the classroom have proved that quality and quantity of teacher-pupil interaction is critical dimension of effective classroom teaching. Anderson, Brewer and others (1945, 1946) have demonstrated that children's behaviours were consistent with the kind of personality the teachers displayed in the classroom. Thus, it can be safely assumed that the study of social interaction among the school personnel will help in providing better education.

Secondly, importance of such a study can also be visualized from a practical standpoint. Two of the outcomes of a scientific study are, a precise understanding and an effective control of a phenomenon. The latter refers to the utilitarian value of a study. It can be safely assumed that the study in hand is likely to yield beneficial results which may contribute to our understanding and control of those behavioural problems which we face in school situations.
as well as in the wider-world outside the school. This study will throw light on the sociometric interaction in the school. This will also bring the isolates among the students and the teachers into light. Thus, by studying the factors which are responsible for the creation of isolates, a considerable work can be done to remove their difficulties. The work of Tronto Groups (Northway, Frankel and Potashin) shows that "isolate children tend to remain isolates if no measures are taken on their behalf but that many of them can be helped towards more secure positions in their groups" (Richardson 1951).

Lastly, such a study has become imperative in the modern changed and highly changing circumstances in India in general and in Himachal Pradesh in particular. Education for the masses and not for the classes had led to the explosion of school population. Before independence, education was the privilege of only a few people but now it is open to all and sundry. Thus, we find the enrolments in educational institutions are increasing every year. Teaching was in olden times a privilege of male sex mainly. But now many ladies are joining this profession. With the opening of many schools within a very short time, young people are entering the teaching profession. Previously the number of girl-students used to be very small. But now the number of girl students is increasing enormously. The problem of male teachers teaching
female students and vice-versa is really a great one in a society which forbids free mixing of sexes. The practice of untouchability has been banned by the Indian constitution, but it has not been fully removed from the minds of the people so far. Our newspapers and magazines are the silent testimonies of the atrocities which are committed on the Harijans by the high-caste Hindus. Caste prejudices and barriers still exist in the minds of the people. This, perhaps creates difficulties in the relations of the students, teachers and principals of different castes. Attitudes of teachers who belong to pre-independence generation and those of the students who are the product of democracy many a time cause adjustment problems on the part of both - the teachers as well as the students.

Relations between the Heads of the institutions and the teachers are bound to change due to democratic influences which lay much stress on equality and liberty. It can also be presumed that the attitudes of the teachers of pre-independence and those of the teachers of post-independence will be different. When both the types of teachers mentioned above work in one institution there is bound to be differences in their outlook towards the teaching problems and their behaviour with the students and the principals. This again is a problem of social interaction. Due to the increase in the enrolments, teachers from far off places in the Pradesh and
from some states of India work together in one institution. This also involves a problem of adjustment in a country like India in which people still believe in regionalism. In the olden times, the teacher used to be held in high esteem by the society, but now he is neglected and many a time a looked-down-upon servant of the society. Changing relationship between the teacher and the society are bound to bring changes in the relationship between the teacher and the taught. All this involves a problem of creating new and healthy patterns of social interaction among the principals, teachers and students so that the task of educating the teeming millions can be carried on effectively. This study is a step forward in the direction of effective teaching.