CHAPTER-2
THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION: A REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter turns to provide an idea to understand the Sociological Perspective of Education by eminent sociologists and their perception of education as a whole. In order to understand the broad fundamental nature of education and the government's commitment to people, the background of the social perspective, community leaders, and the society take part in it. The progressing importance of education has challenged prospective teachers, educational administrators, sociologists to apply sociological vision as stated by the sociologist to attain the benefit of knowledge and a basis for understanding them better (Corwin: 1965).

In the social perspective of education, social issues are linked to various aspects of values and how it is linked with education especially in basic education, the role of teachers, parents, and students of primary and upper primary schools of Uttar Pradesh. In this chapter, many sociologists' views, and their literature about the social aspect of primary education and intervention of the right to education act and focused on its relevance to the current scenario.

The main difference between sociology and education which has been understood is: sociology has been and is mainly theoretical and empirical, whereas the latter was and has been applied and normative. It was not the responsibility of the sociologist to provide solutions to social problems of the day which attracted the attention of the policymakers and which deserved research attention in order to provide solutions to the educational problems. Again, sociologists were interested in the relationship between school and society and in the much larger area (Chanana: 2013).

In a country like India where we find differences on various aspects, like caste, class, culture, education etc. While learning or education these are the different hurdle a common man face. So, how can we think that there is no barrier to learning? Here it is found that there is a different type of schools for marginalized people called
government school. As it is seen in government schools there are no facilities, no environment is provided to students and teachers, so they able to learn and educate themselves to compete for survival in this world. In these government schools mostly the marginalized caste-class students are learning like SCs, OBCs, STs, Minority and poor students. So, it is necessary to understand the education in social and sociological perspective.

Social Perspective of Education

Education is a social institution through which a society’s children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. The sociology of education is the study of how social institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcome. Education is concerned with all forms of education i.e. formal and informal education systems of modern industrial societies. It is relatively a new branch and two great sociologists Émile Durkheim and Max Weber were the father of sociology of education. Émile Durkheim's work on moral education as a basis for social solidarity is considered the beginning of sociology of education (Durkheim: 1898).

After the Second World War, it gained entity as a separate subject of knowledge. Technological advancement and engagement of human capital (work force) in industrialization America and Europe gave rise to the social mobility. Now it is easier to move up to the upper strata of society gaining technical skills, knowledge. People who were farmer earlier became a worker in factories. In that period social mobility was at top gear. And sociologist began to think that education promotes social mobility and undermines the class stratification.

It gained interest and lot of sociological studies done on the subject. Statistical and field research across numerous societies showed a persistent link between an individual's social class and achievement and suggested that education could only achieve limited social mobility. Sociological studies showed how schooling patterns reflected, rather than challenged, class stratification and racial and sexual discrimination. But sociology of education is a branch of study and very helpful in finding the relation between sociology and education.
The sociology of education is the study of how social institutions and forces affect educational processes and outcomes, and vice versa. By many, education is understood to be a means of overcoming handicaps, achieving greater equality and acquiring wealth and status for all (Sargent: 1994). Learners may be motivated by aspirations for progress and betterment. Education is perceived as a place where children can develop according to their unique needs and potentialities. The purpose of education is to develop every individual to their full potential.

**Relation between sociology and education**

The relation between sociology and education has always been a subject of debate. One concept says education is meant to overcome the inequalities of society whereas the other says the prime function of education is to promote the equilibrium status of the society i.e. it tries to maintain equality whatever state is prevalent in the society.

The sociologist who favors second theory says that education is a social effort hence it runs the way society wants. And society moves in the direction the dominant group of society wants. According to them, the second theory is a propagated myth by the promoter of first theory. The first theory is said positive and second is leveled as an egative thought. Although there is a conflict which theory is most relevant; one thing is crystal clear that education is social effort and it reflects rather than directs society. If education is said to direct society it is true only because there is a social force favoring this.

Both the theory has a role to play in defining the relation between sociology and education. This relation plays a great role in learning outcome. So it is a matter of great interest for the people like you; who is directly linked to educational institutions.

**Durkheim’s Perspective on Education**

Functionalist sociologist Emile Durkheim saw Education as performing two major functions in advanced industrial societies – transmitting the shared values of society and simultaneously teaching the specialized skills for an economy based on a specialized division of labour.
Durkheim, a French sociologist, was writing at the turn of the twentieth century (late 19th and early 20th) and he believed that schools were one of the few institutions uniquely poised to assist with the transition from traditional society, based on mechanical (face to face) solidarity, to modern society, which was much larger in scale and based on organic (more abstract) solidarity.

According to Durkheim ‘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 which collective life demands’ (Haralambos: 2013).

Education does this by instilling a sense of social solidarity in the individual – which involves instilling a sense of belonging to wider society, a sense of commitment to the importance of working towards society’s goals and a feeling that the society is more important than the individual.

Durkheim argued that ‘to become attached to society, the child must feel in it something that is real, alive and powerful, which dominates the person and to which he owes the best part of himself’ (Haralambos: 2013).

Education, and in particular the teaching of history, provides this link between the individual and society. If history is taught effectively, it ‘comes alive’ for children, linking them to their social past and developing in them a sense of commitment to the social group.

**Max Weber’s Perspective on Education**

Sociology, for Max Weber, is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects (Robert: 2010).

Weber was concerned with the question of objectivity and subjectivity. Weber distinguished social action from social behavior, noting that social action must be understood through how individuals subjectively relate to one another (Ritzer: 2009). Study of social action through interpretive means (Verstehen) must be based upon understanding the subjective meaning and purpose that individuals attach to their
actions (Craig: 2002). Social actions may have easily identifiable and objective means, but much more subjective ends and the understanding of those ends by a scientist is subject to yet another layer of subjective understanding (that of the scientist). Weber noted that the importance of subjectivity in social sciences makes the creation of fool-proof, universal laws much more difficult than in natural sciences and that the amount of objective knowledge that social sciences may achieve is precariously limited. Overall, Weber supported the goal of objective science, but he noted that it is an unreachable goal, although one definitely worth striving for (Kim: 2007).

Karl Marx Perspective on Education

Karl Marx never wrote anything directly on education – yet his influence on writers, academics, intellectuals and educators who came after him has been profound. The power of his ideas has changed the way we look at the world. Whether you accept his analysis of society or whether you oppose it, he cannot be ignored. As Karl Popper, a fierce opponent of Marxism has claimed ‘all modern writers are indebted to Marx, even if they do not know it’ (Burke: 2000).

Traditional Marxists see the education system as working in the interests of ruling class elites. According to the Marxist perspective on education, the system performs three functions for these elites: (a) Reproduces class inequality, (b) Legitimates class inequality, (c) It works in the interests of capitalist employers.

In school, the middle classes use their material and cultural capital to ensure that their children get into the best schools and the top sets. This means that the wealthier pupils tend to get the best education and then go onto to get middle-class jobs. Meanwhile, working-class children are more likely to get a poorer standard of education and end up in working-class jobs. In this way, class inequality is reproduced.

Talcott Parsons’ Perspective on Education

The American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1961) outlined what is commonly accepted as the Functionalist view of education as it relates to modern societies in the late 1950s.
Parsons argued that, after primary socialization within the family, the school takes over as the focal socializing-agency: school acts as a bridge between family and society as a whole, preparing children for their adult roles in society (Adams and Sydie: 2001).

Within the family, the child is judged by particularistic standards. Parents treat the child as their own, unique, special child, rather than judging him or her by universal standards that are applied to every individual.

However, in the wider society, the individual is treated and judged in terms of universalistic standards, which are applied to all members, regardless of their kinship ties (Adams and Sydie: 2001).

Within the family, the child’s status is ascribed: it is fixed by birth. However, in advanced industrial society, status in adult life is largely achieved: for example individuals achieve their occupational skills. Thus it is necessary that the child moves from the particularistic standards and ascribed status of the family to the universalistic standards and achieved the status of adult society.

The school prepares people for this transition. It establishes universalistic standards, in terms of which all pupils achieve their status. Their conduct is assessed against the yardstick of the school rules; their achievement is measured by performance in examinations. The same standards are applied to all pupils regardless of ascribed characteristics such as sex, race, family background or class of origin. Schools operated on meritocratic principles: status is achieved on the basis of merit (Adams and Sydie: 2001).

Like Durkheim, Parsons argued that the school represents society in miniature. Modern industrial society is increasingly based on achievement rather than ascription, on universalistic rather than particularistic standards, on meritocratic principles which apply to all its members. By reflecting the operation of society as a whole, the school prepares young people for their adult roles.
Indian Scholars on Education

Gandhi Perspective on Education

By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning.” –M. K. Gandhi (Kishorelal: 1952).

Education certainly is a means to the all-round progress of man. In other words, the pathway to human-development goes through the lanes of education. Moreover, true education is the sole basis of achieving one’s purpose in life. It is education, which can ascertain ultimate peace for a human being.

Needless to say, the importance of education in man’s life cannot be described in words. In addition, the essence of all the ancient scriptures, messages of scholars and thinkers of repute have always categorically expounded the significance of education in human life. By illustrating the mutual relationship between the education and peace, they have also declared education as the means and the basis of peace. Furthermore, they enlighten people of the importance of education in all walks of life, in particular, its role in making life prosperous and peaceful under the prevailing circumstances. Further, the implications in the absence of true education, especially in creating an atmosphere of disharmony and conflict are examined. In this regard the following Shloka from an oldest Hindu scripture is worth quoting here: “माता शत्रु पिता वैरी येन बालो न पाठित: न शोभते सभा मध्ये हंस मध्ये वाको यथा” Mata Shatru Pita Vairi Yen Balo Na Pathitah, Na Shobhate Sabha Madhye Hans Madhye Vako Yatha (Meaning thereby: The parent who does not facilitate and guide their child for studies is like the greatest enemy of the child. The presence of an uneducated person in the company of educated people is like a goose in the company of swans.)

If we analyze education from the Indian viewpoint, education (Shiksha) is one of the six Vedangas. Clarity of understanding and systematic method or the orders, which are the basics for the all-round development of one’s personality, are within its domain. Hence, the educational process is fully dedicated to continuity; it is for growth or for accumulation; it is the means to lead a human being on the pathway to
prosperity in prevailing circumstances on the basis of knowledge and accomplishments.

Gandhian View: According to Mahatma Gandhi, education is an unending exercise (filled with devotion-Sadhana) till death. For him, only education can act as a means to a successful life. Likewise, “education can help mold and shape the human body, mind, and character in such a manner that they may act as the means to achieve joy and efficiency (Kumar: 1999).”

Categorically, education as expounded through Gandhi’s imagination and explanation is a means to guide and lead a human-being from his birth to death. It helps a man achieve his goal. The goal, however, according to many philosophies including the Vedic-Hindu, could be the attainment of the Mukti or Moksha, or Nirvana [liberation] that it is considered as the highest stage of peace.

“Work for the all-round growth of man right from the beginning till the end. Its ultimate aim is to turn human knowledge into his ability. It is for the purpose of making his life worthy and meaningful, and it is not only for earning his livelihood (Kumar: 1999).”

Mahatma Gandhi wrote many articles on education from time-to-time. On several occasions, besides addressing students and teachers, he issued worthy statements regarding its meaning, purpose, and importance in life. We can draw the following viewpoint particularly for the purpose of this short article: (a) The prime aim of education is to make a man self-dependent; (b) The purpose of education is to make the one efficient and skilful; and (c) The objective of education is to guide and lead him to the pathway to progress in the prevailing situation of space and as per the demand of time so that he could ascertain his physical and mental development to achieve a goal in life for himself on the one hand and he could equally contribute to the society, nation and the globe on the other.

**Ambedkar's Perspective on Education**

Dr. Ambedkar considered education to be essential for all men and women irrespective of their social and economic status. All men and women must get at least the minimum education so that they may know how to read and write. The primary
education caters to the minimum essential need of educating the masses. According to Dr. Ambedkar, "the object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate throughout the rest of his life. But if we take the statistics we find that out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard, the rest of them, that is to say, eighty-two out of every one hundred replace into the state of illiteracy. He said that the Government should spend sufficient amount of money so that "every child who enters a primary school reaches the fourth standard." (Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches: 1982).

Dr. Ambedkar always advised the down-trodden masses, to develop their condition themselves and to make progress in all the spheres of life. He was of the opinion that unless Primary Education was made obligatory and strictly enforced, conditions for the educational progress of the Backward classes would not come into existence.

According to him, unless the 'Compulsory Primary Education Act' was established, and the transfer of primary education to the school boards was stopped, the education of the depressed classes would achieve a great set back. He viewed that the entry in the public service should be secured to the depressed classes otherwise there would be no inducement for them to take to education. He thought that some special provisions should be made for the education of the Backward classes in the form of a few hostels and a few scholarships for higher education by the government. But he was aware of the fact that it was useless to make provision for the higher education of the Depressed Classes unless steps were taken to ensure the growth of primary education.

According to him separate schools for Backward Class Students is not advisable as this, in turn, would widen the gap between the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. He thought that books should be published in simple language, circulating libraries should be provided tonight schools, special bonus and prizes should be given by the Government to teachers who were educating the backward class pupils.

He was aware of the fact that only primary education was not enough for the upliftment of the downtrodden masses, so he encouraged them to take higher education.
Swami Vivekananda Perspective on Education

Swami Vivekananda was a patriot saint and seer of highest realization which our country has ever known. His prime concern had been the welfare and the uplift of man. He was a great luminary who could not only explain grand spiritual truths in a lucid manner but could also expound on several subjects—be it science, music, arts or society and education. His thoughts and words remain a perennial source of inspiration for policy makers, teachers, administrators, and practitioners.

Vivekananda says, “Education is not the amount of information that is put into the brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.” Education should unveil the divinity of man/woman and this divinity should be seen in treating lunatics, in punishing criminals and in everything that is connected with human life (Avinashilingam: 2014).

Vivekananda suggests that education should lay proper emphasis on creativity, originality, and excellence. To him, a good education is only that which unfolds all the hidden powers in man. Real education requires the cultivation of a sense of humility. This sense of humility is the basis of a man’s character, the true mark of a balanced personality.

Rabindranath Tagore Perspective on Education

As one of the earliest educators to think in terms of the global village, Rabindranath Tagore’s educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance. Kathleen M. O’Connell explores Rabindranath Tagore’s contribution.

Tagore’s ideas for creating a system of education aimed at promoting international cooperation and creating global citizens. Tagore envisioned an education that was deeply rooted in one’s immediate surroundings but connected to the cultures of the wider world, predicated upon pleasurable learning and individualized to the personality of the child. He felt that the curriculum should revolve organically around
nature, with flexible schedules to allow for shifts in weather, and with special
attention to natural phenomena and seasonal festivities (Tagore: 1917).

Rabindranath did not write a central educational treatise, and his ideas must be
gleaned through his various writings and educational experiments at Santiniketan In
general, he envisioned an education that was deeply rooted in one’s immediate
surroundings but connected to the cultures of the wider world, predicated upon
pleasurable learning and individualized to the personality of the child. He felt that a
curriculum should revolve organically around nature with classes held in the open air
under the trees to provide for a spontaneous appreciation of the fluidity of the plant
and animal kingdoms, and seasonal changes. Children sat on hand-woven mats
beneath the trees, which they were allowed to climb and run beneath between classes
(Tagore: 1929).

Sri Aurobindo’s Perspective on Education

Sri Aurobindo’s (1956) concept of ‘education’ is not only acquiring information, but
“the acquiring of various kinds of information”, he points out, “is only one and not
the chief of the means and necessities of education: its central aim is the building of
the powers of the human mind and spirit” (Aurobindo: 1990).

Shri Aurobindo emphasized that education should be in accordance with the needs of
our real modern life. In other words, education should create dynamic citizen so that
they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. According to him, physical
development and holiness are the chief aims of education. As such, he not only
emphasized mere physical development but physical purity also without which no
spiritual development is possible. In this sense, physical development and purification
are the two bases on which the spiritual development is built. The second important
aim of education is to train all the senses hearing, speaking, listening, touching,
smelling and tasting. According to him, these senses can be fully trained when the
nerve, chitta, and manas are pure. Hence, through education purity of senses is to be
achieved before any development is possible. The third aim of education is to achieve
mental development of the child. This mental development means the enhancement of
all mental faculties’ namely-memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination, and
discrimination etc. education should develop them fully and harmoniously. Another
important aim of education is the development of morality. Shri Aurobindo has emphasized that without moral and emotional development only, mental development becomes harmful to human process. According to him, every human being has some fragment of divine existence within himself and education can scan it from each individual to its full extent (Aurobindo: 1972).

These are some eminent scholars and their perspective on education. Every scholar is talk about the social perspective of education directly or indirectly. But Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar is one of the scholars whose writings on education are directly linked with society and its relevance. He talks about education in reference to caste, class, and gender. In this chapter, it is trying to highlight the education and its social linkages.

Conclusions

A sociological perspective on education is an attempt to trace the development of sociological theory from the classical to Indian thinkers. The review has shown that, in the developing world today, there is a great concern for universal elementary education and that everywhere some progress has indeed been made, although there is still a large gap between the developed and the developing countries. Great Scholar Ambedkar argues that some measures should be taken otherwise the education of the depressed classes would achieve a great set back. He viewed that the entry in the public service should be secured to the depressed classes otherwise there would be no inducement for them to take to education. But he was aware of the fact that it was useless to make provision for the higher education of the Depressed Classes unless steps were taken to ensure the growth of primary education.

A country like India, are groping in the dark in very many areas of elementary education and most importantly in enrolment, provision of teachers in appropriate numbers, infrastructures, and others. It appears there is not only a gender gap; there is, in addition, a rural-urban (spatial) gap that has to be bridged. Elementary Education can be improved only by the effort of all likewise government, institution, community, students, teachers and parents.
References


Kishorlal, M. 1952. A freedom fighter, Gandhian scholar and thinker was the editor of Harijan weekly started by the Mahatma.


