UNIT 3: AGENTS OF EDUCATION : FAMILY, SCHOOL, RELIGION, PEER GROUP, MEDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- identify the formal and informal agents of education
- understand how learning happens throughout the life span

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Education transforms infants into human asset. Education not only helps to develop individual but it also shapes the society by transmitting its culture to the future generations.Education cannot be gained on its own. Various institutions and bodies help in the dissemination of education. As such, society develops various institutions to impart education, which are named as the agents of education. One can get education directly or indirectly through these sources or agents of education. Family, School, Religion, Peer group, media etc are the key agencies of education. Agents of education can be formal, informal and non-formal. School is an example of formal agent of education. Apart from the formal organizations there are a number of informal organizations which educate individuals and develop

different capabilities is an individual. Through the daily experiences, individual acquire different knowledge, learn different skills through the interactions with different group of people. In informal education, learning is not measured in terms of qualifications. In informal education acquisition of knowledge takes place in different real-life situations.Family, religion and community are the informal agencies of education. Non formal education is also imparted through media. Both formal and informal agencies complement each other and contribute towards the development of a child.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Which are the agencies of education?

Q2. In which form of education learning is not measured in terms of qualifications?

3.3 FAMILY

The family is an inevitable part of any society. The family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating or legal ties (Oxford dictionary of sociology, 2009). The structure of the family varies from society to society along with time, e.g. joint family was predominant in traditional Indian society, but with time it has gradually got replaced with the nuclear family and today, joint family has become the aberration. The family functions for its members and society as a whole.

Family plays a crucial role in imparting education in spite of the fact that family is not designed particularly to impart education. Through various duties and responsibilities, a child learns various things within the family starting from the basic manners. So family can be termed as the first school of a child. It is a world in itself where mother and other members work as teachers or facilitators of teaching the various skills to the child. The child learns how to move, how to speak. Children also experience love and sense of cooperation. Family is the primary agent of socialization. Family members transfer the concept of good and bad, right and wrong and how to be

protected.Family is the basic unit of social organization. The child gets to know the society through family and acquires the values of society from the family. Child's behavior is shaped by the association with the family. He/ she learn discipline, how to adjust and it later help him / her to live in the social space.

Family acts as the primary foundation for moral, ethical values. In the family, no formal set up is there for teaching-learning rather learning is natural here. Neither anyone acts as a teacher to educate the child nor does it have some fixed curriculum. Any place or any time learning takes place in a family. Learning in the family is not pre-planned. It doesn't matter whether a child is in the kitchen or maybe in the garden, the child learns unconsciously and in an informal set up. Through imitation, children learn various aspects of different skills. Unconsciously, the child also may get influenced by the bad behavior or practice exhibited by the family members. Generally, a child is trained to learn appropriate behavior to participate in the larger society. Family helps in the development of personality of a child with warmth, security and support. In a family, everyone cares for each other and later in a wider context individual keep the sense of caring one another. Thus, family contributes towards the maintenance of the social system that the child will enter into.

➢ **Conceptualisation and roles**

The task of the family becomes important here. In traditional societies, joint families existed where children were more exposed to the idea of cooperation and adjustment. But due to industrialization, nuclear family bacame predominant.

Family depends on the economic cooperation from its members. It infuse the idea of work in the children's mind and later through education they try to contribute towards the family.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3: Does a family has a fixed curriculum to teach?

Q4: What the smallest unit of family is termed as?

3.4 SCHOOL

School is the first formal organization of education for a child. After the family, the school takes the charge of socializing the child in a formal way. In some of the ancient societies, schools were not prevalent that much. Education was provided by the family and religious institutions. But in the modern society, the school became a basic need of the human beings. Family alone cannot provide all the required knowledge to a child so that he/she could participate in a highly industrialized /technological world. Here, the need for school arises.But, family provides the foundational base of a child which makes the task of school easier in a formal set up.

The earlier school was open only to the handful of privileged people But today situation has changed. For the progress a nation it is necessary to provide education to everyone irrespective of their caste, class, gender, ethnicity etc. In India, through right to free and compulsory education act, 2009 education has been made compulsory for children upto the age of 14 years. In School children get to know the society better through interaction and develop the understanding and respect for the culture that is different from theirs. School not only teaches to read and write but also teaches discipline, to obey rules and to become a functional member of society i.e. to contribute towards the functioning of the society. Children get the sense of the ideas of equality, fraternity, justice through schools.

School is a formal agent of education, means that learning is pre-planned. Officially appointed teachers are there to educate with fixed syllabus and timing. It has specific aims and objectives. Specific eligibility criteria needs to be Fulfilled to get enrolled in a school Similarly to be a teacher, one should have the required qualifications. Administration, bureaucracy is also involved in the functioning of the school.

The system of school education in India can be divided into primary, secondary and higher secondary. Primary school is the first formal organization for a child which is completely different from their previous kinship experiences. School as an individual educational institution is a system in itself. The system is an organized whole of interrelated parts.

Parsons analyzed the teaching-learning process using the concept of a social system. School is viewed as a social system of interaction among different status-role holders and an educational situation in a network of social relationships. It may be considered as a system or subsystem depending upon the frame of reference. which helps in learning values that are widely shared in the society. The social system of the educational organization of a modern society is a complex web of social relationships. The system ensures some level of uniformity in teaching and evaluation.

On the other hand, scholars like Ivan Illich hold responsible the schools, first, as the root of the problems of modern society. According to him school helps in creating mindless, conforming and easily manipulated citizen. In school, children are trained to obey the authority and forget how to think for themselves. It acts as the agencies of symbolic control. In his, book *Deschooling society*, Illich talks about the abolition of the present education system since schools provide the foundation for all that is to follow, so deschooling lies at the root of human liberation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5: Fill in the blanks

a. School is the first .....organization of education for a child.

b. To get enrolled in school one should have the required…….....……

c. According to Ivan Illich,……..acts as the agencies of symbolic control.

3.5 RELIGION

Religion is a set of beliefs, symbols, and practices which is based on the idea of sacred, and which unites believers into a socio-religious community. Religion is collective rather than individualistic. Durkheim argues that religion is a system of belief and practices related to sacred things which unite people. Sacred things are those which are set apart and

forbidden. Anything can be sacred. It's not merely the spirit or God, but it can be a rock, a tree, a house, anything which is considered sacred in particular society. It is about symbols and rituals. Religious beliefs are closely associated with moral values. It reflects collective conscience. People worship collectively. Integration of society gets strengthened with religion. But Marxian perspective views religion as an instrument of social control and oppression, It acts as the opiate to forget the pain produced by oppression. When people are in inebriated or unconscious situation they lose all the ability of reasoning, logic or scientific temperament. Marxists therefore argue that one should abstain from religion because it takes away the ability to question, to think and be critical.

There has been a close relationship between religion and education.Earlier education was imparted through religious institutions. In traditional societies priests passed their knowledge to students who used to get selected on the basis of kinship criteria, e.g. if someone is king's son, he was eligible to get an education. Education was imparted through oral traditions. With the development of scripts, religion got codified and it became more complex, so the new generation priests were also responsible to impart literacy and expanded religious belief systems. Accordingly education became more formal and structured. Under economic and political pressure education became secular and lost its' elitist character and got expanded gradually to all the sections of society. With colonialism in India, missionary schools become common, especially in the remote areas. Along with industrialization gradually, religion and education were segregated for the developmental purpose.Political forces helped more to segregate the state-run schools from religion.

But education is not all about formal structure getting imparted through formal institutions. With the introduction of secularism, there has been a qualitative change in the relationship between education and religion. More generally, education is all about learning. Religion provides the norms of conduct of a particular society. Religion teaches us to attain peace and education provides a common platform for people from different

background. It teaches us about cooperation and respect for other's culture, and how to be in peace. So religion and education are mutually dependant on each other. But through misinterpretation of religion, some religious leaders try to imbalance the society for their vested interest. Present India is the best example of it, in the name of religion people tend to create violence, riot, conflict etc in different parts of the country.

Religion is a social institution and it has different purpose and structure, so does the formal education system. However, religion is also But the development in education is also having an impact on religion as it contributes towards the acceleration of secularization. It decreases in the direct importance role of religion in non-religious spheres is an offshoot of this impact.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Which perspective views religion as an instrument of oppression?

Q 7: Fill in the blanks:

a. Religion is ……..……..rather than individualistic.

b. In traditional societies ……..or ……..passed their knowledge to students.

c. Religion and education are mutually ……..…..on each other.

3.6 PEER GROUP

Peer group is marked by certain common characteristics like age, occupations, ethnicity etc. It is the group of people which has similar interest. Generally interest of peer group is temporary. According to the age and development of a child, his/ her peer group keeps changing. At one time one can be members of many of such groups, e.g. peer group from neighborhood, from school etc.The members of peer group influence the beliefs and behavior of its' group members. Here learning becomes easy. Without any hesitation and supervision one can learn here from one another.

Peer learning is not only helpful for child but also for elders. As learning is mutual here, all participate actively. Peer group may have bad or good effects. Sometime, members try to violate social norms. Through peers, many a time a child can learn bad habit also for e.g. if one of the members of the group stops going to the school, other members also start imitating that. But more than this, peer education has far-reaching positive impact. Idea of collectivity develops here. Members can be from different socio-economic and cultural background which also helps in intellectual development of a child. It widens the perception of child, especially in modern industrialized society where nuclear families are predominant, Peer group as an agency of education not only contributes towards personality of individual but it also fulfils the social needs. Children's both emotional and intellectual capacity develops with the association of peer groups.

Within the peer group a child learns to be independent. Members of peer group also get access to knowledge which is sometimes treated as taboo in the family, e.g. they share their knowledge about sex etc.

Education is not merely confined to the structural boundary of the school. As already mentioned the idea of education transcends the structural boundary, theoretical/ framework and sociological perspectives. The realization of this world, the understanding of nature, the cognitive capabilities grow naturally and in this context,peer group are the major facilitators. The folk wisdom, the folk games, the folk tales that one learns and experiences from the people around and especially from the peers facilitates the strong foundations of learning and education.

These become pertinent as children or people spend more time am with their peer in a natural set up which makes learning more relatable. With the advent of technology and social networks, peer group are getting more condensed. Thus it provides a platform, wider perspective, mixed spectrum, the latest compass of learning, knowing and disseminating knowledge and information. The famous essayist Francis Bacon rightly says, --"conference maketh a ready man." No matter how knowledgeable you are, unless you interact, your knowledge will not be complete.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What are the common characteristics of a peer group?

Q 9: "Conference maketh a ready man" ---who said?

3.7 MEDIA

Mass media like television, radio, cinema, newspaper, has become popular and easily accessible medium of informal education.

Media dominates the mental life of the modern society. It to a one-way process of teaching-learning. It is a passive agency of education. Through these technologies, information and popular culture is transmitted.

John Dewey rightly said that education cannot be confined to the teacher and the taught. The social environment becomes imperative. Mass media is one such influential force in the social environment of education. With new technologies coming up each day, the need for transforming educational needs and spaces are catered by the means of media. Computer-assisted teaching has been utilized for long. Modern techniques and technologies which encompass media prove that education is not confined to the four walls of the classroom; rather it is comprehensive in terms of time and space. New policies and innovations are applied and executed through the means of mass media. The initiatives by the Government of India such as E-pathsala and swaayam are a testimony to these facts. Mass media is one of the best examples of a conglomeration of modernity with traditional values as it transcends geographical boundaries, cultural spaces, caste and class. One of the major qualities of this agency is the fact that it opens up the wider spectrum of information, knowledge and opportunities. The dream of listening to eminent scholars of respective fields could easily be achieved by a single click on the internet. It has also provided children with tools of learning through multimedia which are being utilized by different institutes of education. Apart from being an agency of education mass media provides a sustainable and accessible

platform for cross-cultural communication, accepting diversity which is an essential component of education in current times. India needs to bring in lots of efforts to make mass media available as an agency of education primarily to the groups, which are on margins.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Fill in the blanks

a.Media is a …….way process of teaching-learning.

b. ……..said that education couldn't be confined within the ……..……and the



3.8 LET US SUM UP

- Family is the first and the foremost agent of education.
- School is the first formal organization of education.
- Apart from teaching and learning the major socialization is facilitated by the school.
- Parsons views school as a social system.
- Religion as a non formal agency of education imparts values and moral teaching.
- Peer group helps learning in a natural set up.
- In contemporary time, media is making education global and accessible.



3.9 FURTHER READING

1. Bottomore, T.B. (1972). Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature. S. Chand.
2. Haralambos, M & R M Heald. (2011). Sociology Themes and Perspective. Oxford University Press.