UNIT 5: MARXIAN PERSPECTIVE TO UNDERSTAND EDUCATION: KARL MARX, GRAMSCI AND ALTHUSSER.

UNIT STRUCTURE

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit we will be able to

- Understand the views of karl marx about education.
- Understand the relation between hegemony and education.
- Understand how education works as an Ideological State Apparatus.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Marxian perspective is based on the ideas of Karl Marx. His idea on society is also known as the theory of conflict, because it states that societies are always in conflict with one another. This conflict is between the rich and the poor. Capitalism is an economic system based on private ownership of means of production. Society is controlled by group of few people, who own factories, business shops etc. These corporations are not owned by the people who work for it. The work in factories are cumbersome and often dangerous but the pay was very low. Proper wages are not paid as it would render less profit to the factory owners. This created two groups, the factory owners, termed as bourgeoisie by Marx and the working class termed as the proletariat. According to him, the system works in such a manner that the rich get richer and the poor remain deprived. This system

belongs to the capitalist model. So Marx believed that capitalism widens the gap of inequality. Marx believed that it is only through revolution, radical change can come to the society and that will be the time people will be treated equally where properties will be owned communally. Marx called this system communism.

In this unit we will learn about Maxian views on education in detail.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. What is Capitalism?

Q2. Through his writings, who did Marx ideologically gave support to?

5.3 KARL MARX

Karl Heinrich Marx was born on May 5, 1818, in the Rhensih city of Trier in Germany. At Trier, he received his early education. In 1836 he received his law degree from the University of Berlin and in 1841 he received his doctorate from the same university.This institute was heavily influenced by Hegel and young Hegelians. After his graduation, he joined a liberal radical newspaper. The works which were published during this period influenced Marx profusely as these works reflected the democratic principles, idealism and humanism. His intellectual orientation was shaped by combinations of Hegelianism, socialism and political economy. Marx soon after his marriage left Germany for the liberal atmosphere of Paris. There he met Friedrich Engels who became his lifelong friend, benefactor and collaborator. Marx's compassion for the misery of working class developed from his exposure to Engels and his ideas. Apart from the similarities there existed various differences in their theoretical orientations.

Marx viewed education as part of the superstructure. It serves the needs of the economic base. The base shapes the superstructure while superstructure maintains and justifies the base. Education reproduces the inequalities of capitalist society. It justifies inequalities through the myth of meritocracy. Liberalists view that school gives everyone equal opportunity,

and our achievement depends on our efforts and ability. So if we fail it's our fault. But our ability is decided previously by our position in the economic ladder. By adopting this education system it actually legitimizes class inequality and reproduces it continuously. This education system indirectly becomes the means of dominance. Since it is reproduced by the hands bourgeoisie, the proletariat is subject to such ideas and is exploited by it.

Marx viewed that education system works in the interest of the ruling class. In Communist Manifesto along with Engels, he talked about free education for all children in public schools and abolition of child labour. They did not talk about education directly but made plenty of references while discussing capitalism, how the education system helps to maintain the class system. Marxist perspective views education as a tool to maintain inequality. The bourgeoisie uses their material and cultural capital so that they could retain power and dominance. Educational institute perpetuates status quo, teaches lower and middle class to be obedient. Conflict theorists do not see education as a benefit rather a powerful means to maintain the power structure and creating a docile workforce for capitalism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Where was Karl Marx born?

Q 4:In which book Marx talked about free education for all children?

5.4 ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Antonio Francesco Gramsci, an Italian Marxist was born in Sardinia in 1891.

Apart from Marx he was also influenced by Nietzsche, Machiavelli etc. Gramsci viewed that education along with other ideological farcls create a cultural hegemony for ruling class. In his early life, Gramsci had a closer view of industrial and economic development of Italy. Until 1919, industries of Turin faced numerous strikes and demonstrations by the organized

workers to set up factory council for them. Like Marx, he also talked about consciousness of masses. If the masses are conscious about their situation and the nature of their system that they live in, then only revolution can be there in the society. In his essay the Revolution against Capital, he has made it clear that in order to bring a social revolution, masses have to act. Only economy cannot lead them to success, but they need revolutionary ideology as well. Such ideologies cannot be developed on its' own. They cannot be conscious without the help from the social intellectuals. The ideas have to be generated by the intellectuals and disseminated across so that it becomes part of their practice. Once they are influenced by these ideas, they will take action to revolt. Thus Gramsci, rather than looking at economic factors only, also added the notion of collective ideas.

The ruling class also exercises cultural leadership. Gramsci termed it as hegemony, It is an essential instrument of dominance, which legitimates material or physical dominance of the ruling class. So, according to Gramsci revolution can lead not only to control over economy but it will bestow cultural leadership as well (Ritzer, 2011).

Hegemony is the ideal representation of the interest of the ruling class as the universal interest (Oxford Dictionary, 2009). Gramsci also stated that in the capitalist society, it is the principal means to maintain social order.According to Gramsci state dominates in two ways- coercion or violence and consent or ideology. Most of the time both of these two are used. Through hegemony, the masses give consent to the domination of the bourgeoisie. In his *prison notebook*, he discussed about hegemony. The way to power is constructed with the control of a person's loyalty. Power comes from consent. People don't control ideas rather ideas control people. Our ideas on religion, education, politics all these decide our action. He said newspaper whether public or private, are nevertheless hegemonic apparatus.

Gramsci also focused on schooling. According to him is one of the parts of hegemony. Individuals are socialized through schooling to maintain the status quo. More than formal education he was talking about inclusive education, Gramsci's view of education is not only limited to formal

institutions. In Gramsci's own words,every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship. Education is viewed as the fundamental for the functioning of hegemony.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. Fill in the blanks

a. Gramsci was born in …….....……

b. Gramsci, rather than looking at …...……factors only, also added the notion of …….....…….ideas.

c. Individuals are socialized through ……..to maintain the…….....……

5.5 LOUIS ALTHUSSER

Louis Pierre Althusser is considered as the founder of structural Marxism. Althusser was born in 1918 in Algeria. He had a prosperous childhood, but only till he stayed in Algeria. In 1930, he along with his parents moved to France.In 1939 he joined French army but he was captured by the German troops in 1940 and spent the rest of the wartime as a prisoner of the war in war camp in Germany. He received higher education in Paris and later joined the French Communist Party. There he was influenced by the Catholic Professors and joined Catholic youth movement. He was profoundly Catholic believing in universal fraternity. He was also influenced by communism. He thought inside the party there were more adequate means to realize this fraternity. He finished his study in philosophy in 1948.He contributed predominantly towards women's movement, to realize their capabilities. He believed social change is possible through the religion and communism. Communism- where there will be no relations of economic exploitation, political domination or ideological enslavement and only respect for humankind will be there. His works are cersidered to be significant for the analysis of education.

Althusser argued that education works as the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). It means that state controls our values and beliefs through

education. The education system also reproduces inequality by transmitting what we can and cannot do. It also legitimates inequality and teaches the proletariat to accept their subordinate position. Education is the part of ISA, transmitting the state's ideas; Schools transmit the ideology that capitalism is reasonable through the hidden curriculum,

Reproduction of labour power can be through submission to the ruling class. Educational apparatus replaces religion in terms of many functions. School tries to teach proper way of behaving, talking etc. which is dependent on ruling ideology.

Althusser analyzed education from the Marxian point of view. But he wanted to deal with Marx's work in a right and specific manner. The heart of Marxism lies in the structure of society. According to Marx social formation is based on the infrastructure and superstructure. But Althusser and redefined it and said that the basic elements of social formation are economy, polity and ideology (Choudhary, 2006).

The education system is a part of the superstructure and it is shaped by the infrastructure and reflects the relations of production It serves the interest of the ruling class. For the ruling class to survive and prosper, the reproduction of labour power is essential. Reproduction of skills and reproduction of ruling dogmas and its socialization is necessary for the reproduction of labour power. It produces technically competent as well as the docile workforce. Capitalism depends on this reproduction to create profits.

With mere use of force no class can grasp power for long time. Ideologies and dogmatic control are more important to retain such power. If members of the working class find their situation typical and inevitable and are unable to realize the real nature of their circumstances, they will not be able to challenge such supremacy. Apart from reproduction of skills, reproduction of submission to the established order (ruling ideology) is required for reproduction of labor power. This submission is reproduced by education, religion, media etc; these are called Ideological State Apparatus. All these transfers beliefs and ideologies of the ruling classes.

These create false consciousness.These are formally outside the state control but transmit the values of state and helps in reproduction of capitalism (Oxford dictionary, 2009). ISA include a whole range of institutions, political party, trade union etc. ISAs are very important structure for domination of one class.

Education not only reproduces the attitudinal and behavioral prerequisites but it also carries forward a general ruling class ideology justifying and legitimizing the capitalist system. Education instills the sense of submission among the workers for their subjugation. It also becomes a tool for the agents of exploitation and repression to practice the craft of ruling the working class. According to Althusser, educational system creates a chute which produces individuals with ideologies that fits into the social role that one has to play. (Haralambos, 2011)

Education socializes the working class to accept their subordinate position. Education works as the agency of social control. Althusser analyzed school as one of the ideological state apparatuses.

The ultimate condition of production is the reproduction of the condition of production. Reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression. Submission to the practice of that ideology. According to Althusser Ideology is a form for all social formations and it will never die, it is immortal.

He emphasized that change of thinking will bring change in the way of thinking and change in the way of action.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6. In which year Althusser joined the French army?

Q7.According to Althusser, apart from the use of force which are the important factors to remain in power?