UNIT 6: KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND EDUCATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to,

- Understand Mannheim's notion of knowledge, power and education,
- Understand Bernstein's concept of knowledge, power and education,
- Understand Bourdieu's understanding of knowledge, power and education.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge, power and education are interlinked concepts. Several sociologists have worked in understanding the interrelationship between the three concepts in order to understand the power structure in the society. Education for all is as essential as air to breathe, therefore it is important to understand the inequalities present in the education sector and understand why certain groups are not able to attain education like other groups or classes. Sociologists in this regard provide both functional as well as Marxist perspective to put light on the underlying dimensions of knowledge, power and education. This unit tries to grab this view by focusing on the works of Mannheim, Bernstein and Bourdieu and their conceptualizing of knowledge, power and education in the society.

6.3 MANNHEIM ON KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND EDUCATION

Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) was a German sociologist, who was influential in the first half of the 20th century, was a founding father of classical sociology, and was a founder of the sociology of knowledge. He is known for his work *Ideology and Utopia* wherein he argues that ideologies are representative of the true nature of a society, and that, in trying to achieve a utopia, the dogmas of ideology affect the intellectual integrity of theories of philosophy and theories of history.

For Mannheim sociology helps in avoiding abstractions and trace a path to a worldview of a specific society. In explaining sociology of knowledge he tried to underline the importance of identifying the relationship between historical reality and cultural and social roots of ideas and ideologies. His treatise begins with a review and critique of Marxism and proceeds toward a theory of ideology in the broader sense: the mental structure in its totality as it appears in different currents of thought and across different social groups. His notion of ideology examines thought on the structural level, allowing the same object to take on different aspects. This understanding of ideology refers to a person's, groups', or society's way of conceiving things situated within particular historical and social settings. Like ideologies, 'utopias' arise out of particular social and political conditions, but are distinguished by their opposition to the prevailing order. Utopias are the embodiment of 'wish images' in collective action that shatter and transform social worlds. Both concepts form part of Mannheim's broad design of understanding ideology. In doing so, he supersedes the sociohistorical determinism and relativism of Marxism while moving toward a 'relationist' notion of truth. From an analysis of the various and competing social positions of ideologists and utopians, a kind of 'truth' emerges that is grounded in the conditions of intellectual objectivity and detachment from the social conditions that more directly determine ideas. Thus ideology and utopia establishes the criteria for a valid knowledge in opposition to a relational knowledge, of sociohistorical processes.

For Mannheim sociology of knowledge was concerned with the scientific study of the social origins of knowledge so that our knowledge of and in politics may become less ideological and utopian and more "scientific" as a means for diagnosing the ills of present society and for planning and building a just society. Mannheim distinguished the "particular" conception of ideology, involving articulated thoughts, beliefs and deceptions, from the "total" conception of ideology,involving the overall socially conditioned structure of the adversary's world view. Both of these were then distinguished as "special" conceptions of ideology from the "general"conception of ideology, involving the recognition by observers that even their knowledge is ideological and socially rooted. Mannheim's sociology of knowledge dealt with this "general" conception of ideology. He constructed typologies for historical forms of ideological (Bureaucratic conservative, conservative historicist, liberal democratic bourgeois, social communist and fascist) and utopian (Chiliastic, liberal humanitarian, conservative and social communist) collective mental. The main aim for Mannheim was to free such one-sided biases and synthesize the partial truths embedded in each of these political perspectives. For him, the way out of this biasness can be achieved through the agency of the modern "unattached intellectuals" trained in the new discipline of sociology of knowledge who could scientifically and critically synthesize and transcend various partial ideologies and utopias and keep alive the hope and the efforts for a scientific approach to social knowledge and change. The ultimate goal of Mannheim was to contribute to the development of a social science that helps overcome the ideological and utopian distortions in our thinking.

Mannheim was of the view that ideas are socially 'situated' and shaped by world views or 'styles of thought'. These styles of thought were associated with periods, with nations and with generalizations and with social classes. According to him social interests of a particular group make the members of that group sensitive to certain aspects of social life. On this basis they develop a particular 'ideology'. On the contrary, intellectuals are a 'relatively classless stratum'. They are a 'free floating intelligentsia'.

They are relatively detached from the society which allows them to see social trends more clearly than other people can.

On similar line therefore, education was an important concept for Mannheim that helped in shaping these intelligentsia. He highlights the importance of passive and active learning ranging from instinct to habit, from expressing oneself through language to the understanding of cultural symbols. Mannheim also focuses on the system of relationship emerging between educational agencies, between teacher and pupils, among students, between class and school. It underlines the importance of structuring institutional times and relationships through the organization of the school system. Education for him cannot lead to the approval of thought nor can reproduce social inequality. The relationship between education and democracy is very close in Mannheim's vision. Democracy needs a dynamic society therefore it is crucial to communicate to the people the possibility of combining cultures as a precondition in order to affirm the tolerance of different and coexisting ideals. In contrast, a static society crystallizes the ideas and runs the risk of fanaticism and conformism.

Thus knowledge, power and education are interrelated concepts in Mannheim's understanding of an equal society. By freeing oneself from the clutches of ideologies and utopias, and creating a synthesis between all ideas, one can create a society free from oppression and inequality. The intelligentsia is the agency through which one can expect such a change in society. Thus education becomes an important tool for Mannheim to create a democratic society.

6.4 BERNSTEIN ON KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND EDUCATION

Basil Bernard Bernstein (1924-2000) was a British sociologist known for his work in the sociology of education he worked on socio-linguistics and the connection between the manner of speaking and social organization. The main theme in Berstein's understanding of knowledge, power and education is that knowledge is unequally distributed according to hierarchies in society. In Berstein's theory, the concept of code is central and overarching.

Code operates according to division of labor in society, shaping who we are, who we think we can become and what we think we can do. The relationship that code defines is between the inner worlds of individuals and the outer world of social structures and systems. The mechanism for embedding code is differential distribution of knowledge in society, which result in different forms of human consciousness. All forms of knowledge in all societies create a specific relationship between the immaterial inner self and the material outer world. The main issue for social justice is the extent to which people have access to the capacity to be agents who can change the inner/outer relationship so that ' an alternative society and an alternative power relation' might be imagined and realized. Formal and informal educational practices are vehicles for the production and reproduction of code through 'pedagogic device'.

Bernstein differentiated between two types of code: restricted and elaborated code. Restricted code is a kind of short hand speech, which he claimed is used by the working class. In restricted code, speakers draw on background knowledge and shared understanding. It creates a sense of includedness, a feeling of belonging to a certain group. On the other hand, elaborated code spells everything out, so that everyone can understand it because the circumstances do not allow the speaker to condense. It is used in situations where there is no prior or shared understanding and knowledge, where more thorough explanation is required. This code theory of Bernstein was later developed into a social theory examining the relationships between social class, family and the reproduction of meaning systems. For him, there are social class differences in the communication codes of working class and middle class children; differences that reflect the class and power relations in the social division of labour, family and schools. Based upon empirical research, Bernstein distinguished between the restricted code of the working class and elaborated code of the middle class. Restricted codes are context dependent and particularistic, whereas elaborated codes are context indepenedent and universalistic.

Restricted codes are not deficient, but rather are functionally related to the social division of labour, where context dependent language is necessary

in the context of production. Likewise, the elaborated code of the middle classes represents functional changes necessitated by changes in the division of labour and the middle classes' new position in reproduction, rather than production. That schools require an elaborated code for success means that the working class children are disadvantaged by the dominant code of schooling, not that their language is deficit. For Bernstein, difference became deficit in the context of macro-power relations. Taking from the code theory, Bernstein tried to understand the processes of schooling and how they related to social class reproduction. He analysed the differences between two types of educational transmission and suggested that the differences in classification and framing rules of each pedagogic practice (visible- strong classification and strong framing; invisible- weak classification and weak framing) relate to social class position and assumptions of the families served by the schools.

The concept of classification is at the heart of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and practice. Classification refers to 'the degree of boundary maintenance between contents' and is concerned with the insulation or boundaries between curricular categories (areas of knowledge and subjects). Strong classification refers to a curriculum that is highly differentiated and separated into traditional subjects; weak classification refers to a curriculum that is integrated and in which the boundaries between subjects are fragile. Using the concept of classification, Bernstein outlined two types of curriculum codes; collection and integrated codes. The first refers to a strongly classified curriculum and the latter to a weakly classified curriculum.

Whereas classification is related to organization of knowledge into curriculum, framing is related to the transmission of knowledge through pedagogic practices. Framing refers to the location of control over the rules of communication and according to Bernstein, if classification regulates the voice of a category than framing regulates the form of its legitimate message. Strong framing refers to limited options between teacher and student while weak framing implies more freedom. For Bernstein curriculum and pedagogy are considered message system and with a third system

namely, evaluation, they constitute the structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice. Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of the knowledge on the part of the taught. Thus Bernstein's theory of education must be understood in terms of the concepts of classification, framing and evaluation, and their relationship to his sociological project.

Following from the above discussion, Bernstein's work on pedagogic discourse was concerned with the production, distribution and reproduction of official knowledge and how this knowledge is related to structurally determined power relations. What is critical is that Bernstein was concerned with more than the description of the production and transmission of knowledge; he was concerned with its consequences for different groups. His analysis of pedagogic practice looked at the process and content of what occurs inside schools. His theory of pedagogic practice examined a series of rules, considered both how these rules affect the content to be transmitted and, more importantly how they act selectively on those who can successfully acquire it. From an analysis of these rules, Bernstein examined the social class assumptions and consequences of forms of pedagogic practices. Finally he applied this theory to conservative/traditional versus progressive/child-centered practices. He differentiated between a pedagogic practice that is dependent on the economic market and another that is independent and autonomous of the market- that is legitimated by the autonomy of knowledge. Bernstein concluded that both, despite their claims to the contrary, would not eliminate the reproduction of class inequalities.

Thus from his early work to his more recent works, Bernstein tries to understand the relationship between knowledge, power and education. It tried to link micro processes like language, transmission and pedagogy to macro processes of how cultural and educational codes and the content and process of education are related to social class and power relations.

6.5 BOURDIEU ON KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND EDUCATION

Pierre Bourdieu was born to a working-class family in a small village in southern France called Denguin. Bourdieu's father was a small farmer turned postal worker with little formal education. Bourdieu got admitted to one of France's most prestigious universities, the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris, where he studied philosophy under the famous Marxist thinker, Louis Althusser. After receiving his doctorate, Bourdieu took a teaching position in Algiers, Algeria in 1958. Algeria was at that time a French colony, but a war was underway between France and Algerian Independence movement. During this time, Bourdieu undertook ethnographic fieldwork among the Kabyle, Algeria's largest indigenous group. Based on his fieldwork, Bourdieu published his first book, the Algerians. Later, Bourdieu used his fieldwork to write Outline of a Theory of Practice, one of his first and most influential theoretical statements. The following concepts discussed below will help one to understand the relationship between knowledge, power and education.

In the 'Forms of Capital' Bourdieu expands the notion of capital beyond its economic conception which emphasises material exchanges, to include "immaterial" and "non economic" forms of capital, specifically cultural and social capital. He explains how the different types of capital can be acquired, exchanged, and converted into other forms. Because the structure and distribution of capital also represent the inherent structure and the social world, Bourdieu argues that an understanding of the multiple forms of capital will help elucidate the structure and functioning of the social world.

The term *cultural capital* represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources etc. which influence academic success. Bourdieu distinguishes three forms of cultural capital. The embodied state is directly linked to and incorporated within the individual and represents what they know and can do. Embodied capital can be

increased by investing time into self improvement in the form of learning. As embodied capital becomes integrated into the individual, it becomes a type of habitus and therefore cannot be transmitted instantaneously. The objectified state of cultural capital is represented by cultural goods, material objects such as books, paintings, instruments, or machines. They can be appropriated both materially with economic capital and symbolically via embodied capital. Finally, cultural capital in its institutionalised state consists of academic credentials and qualifications which create a "certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power." These academic qualifications can then be used as a rate of conversion between cultural and economic capital.

Throughout his discussion of cultural capital, Bourdieu favors a nurture rather than a nature argument. He states that the ability and talent of an individual is primarily determined by the time and cultural capital invested in them by their parents. Similarly, Bourdieu argues that 'the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family' and 'the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital.' Based upon these assertions, it appears that cultural capital regulates and reproduces itself in a similar fashion as habitus. According to this model, families of a given cultural capital could only produce offspring with an equal amount of cultural capital. Through this Bourdieu contributed to the reproductionist model.

Bourdieu defines *social capital* as, "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." An individual's social capital is determined by the size or their relationship network, the sum of its cumulated resources (both cultural and economic), and how successfully the individual can set them in motion.

According to Bourdieu, social networks must be continuously maintained and fostered over time in order for them to be called upon quickly in future. Finally, in his discussion of conversions between different types of capital, Bourdieu recognises that all types of capital can be derived from economic capital through varying efforts of transformation. Bourdieu also states that cultural and social capital are fundamentally rooted in economic capital but they can never be completely reduced to an economic form. Rather, social and cultural capital remains effective because they conceal their relationship to economic capital.

The above discussion provides a broad framework to understand Bourdieu's notion of capital and its various components other than the economic capital. Let us now understand the concept of social capital in a broad sense. In 1973 a discussion on how professionals secure their position and that of their children, Bourdieu defined social capital as "A capital of social relationships which will provide, if necessary, useful 'supports': a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensible if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance in a political career". He later refined his position in 1992 in defining social capital as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Bourdieu suggested that in order for social capital to maintain its value, people had to work at it. He viewed the concept as an adjunct or dimension of cultural capital. His main idea was concerned with understanding of social hierarchy and inequality. Through his concepts of social, cultural and economic capital and their combinations Bourdieu tried to understand how inequality is created and reproduced. He illustrated the interplay between connections, cultural and economic capital by drawing examples from professions such as lawyer or doctors who exploit their social capital - namely, 'a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability' to win the confidence of a clientele in high society, or even make a career in politics. By contrast, those who rely primarily on their educational qualification are, the most vulnerable in the event of 'credential

deflation', not only because they lack connections but also because their weak cultural capital reduces their knowledge about fluctuations in the market for credentials.

The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act of institution, represented, in the case of the family group. It is the product of an endless effort at institutions which produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits. In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies. The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed.

HABITUS

According to Bourdieu, power is culturally and symbolically created, and constantly relegitimised through interplay of agency and structure. The main way this happens is through what he calls 'habitus' or socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinant ways, which then guide them'. Habitus is created through a social, rather than individual processes leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but that also shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. Habitus 'is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period. Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these. In this sense, habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration'.

Related to this concept is the idea of 'fields', which are the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their

dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital. A field is a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural etc. People often experience power differently depending which field they are in at a given moment thus having influence on the habitus.

Let us broadly look at habitus as a theoretical concept as defined by Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, habitus are systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor. The habitus- embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history - is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects 'without inertia' in rationalist theories. Thus all the above mentioned concepts given by Bourdieu helps in understanding the relationship between knowledge, power and education. It is the interplay between capital, habitus and field that produces, reproduces and transmits knowledge. Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure. This happens through habitus or socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking. It is in the field that people express and reproduce their dispositions.

The different forms of capital shapes education and how various classes attain education while habitus and the field guides in producing and reproducing such ideas and behavior.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) According to Mannheim, who would dismantle the biasness in ideologies?

Q2) Name the codes put forward by Bernstein.

Q3) Name the types of capital given by Bourdieu.



6.6 LET US SUM UP

- Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) was a German sociologist, who was influential in the first half of the 20th century, was a founding father of classical sociology, and was a founder of the sociology of knowledge.
- For Mannheim sociology of knowledge was concerned with the scientific student check of the social origins of knowledge so that our knowledge of and in politics may become less ideological and utopian and more "scientific" as a means for diagnosing the ills of present society and for planning and building a just society.
- The main aim for Mannheim was to free such one-sided biases and synthesize the partial truths embedded in political perspectives.
- For him, the way out of this biasness can be achieved through the agency of the modern "unattached intellectuals" trained in the new discipline of sociology of knowledge who could scientifically and critically synthesize and transcend various partial ideologies and utopias and keep alive the hope and the efforts for a scientific approach to social knowledge and change.
- The ultimate goal of Mannheim was to contribute to the development of a social science that helps overcome the ideological and utopian distortions in our thinking.

- Basil Bernard Bernstein (1924-2000) was a British sociologist known for his work in the sociology of education he worked on socio-linguistics and the connection between the manner of speaking and social organization.
- The main theme in Berstein's understanding of knowledge, power and education is that knowledge is unequally distributed according to hierarchies in society.
- Bernstein differentiated between two types of code: restricted and elaborated code. Restricted code is a kind of shorthand speech, which he claimed is used by the working class. On the other hand, elaborated code spells everything out, so that everyone can understand it because the circumstances do not allow the speaker to condense.
- The concept of classification is at the heart of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and practice. Classification refers to 'the degree of boundary maintenance between contents' and is concerned with the insulation or boundaries between curricular categories (areas of knowledge and subjects).
- For Bernstein curriculum and pedagogy are considered message system and with a third system namely, evaluation, they constitute the structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice.
- Pierre Bourdieu was born to a working-class family in a small village in southern France called Denguin. Bourdieu's father was a small farmer turned postal worker with little formal education.
- It is the interplay between capital, habitus and field that produces, reproduces and transmits knowledge.
- Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure.