

Chapter-4**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

4.1: Introduction:

The present chapter attempts to present a theoretical framework related to the research problem which can provide theoretical insight and conceptual clarity to the study making it sociologically more comprehensive. The dynamics of inequality have been intensely theorized by different social thinkers from time immemorial. We can capture the diversity of problems and perspectives that has attracted the attention of sociologists in India which is also affected by inequalities of diverse nature as portrayed by the social thinkers. Hence the present chapter is undertaken to highlight the theoretical perspectives related to the sociology of education with particular reference to inequalities.

The birth of the sociology of education can be traced from the historical shift of focus in 1963 when the branch officially came up. It got the recognition when the journal of educational sociology published from the U.S.A was renamed and hence became the journal of sociology of education which eventually leads to the renaming of the section on educational sociology in the American sociological association as the sociology of education.

The history of theories on the sociology of education can be traced from the emergence of two distinct theoretical paradigms- structural function theory and conflict theory, which present alternative views on the role of education in society and vice-versa.

Structural function theory:

Structural functionalism, a leading consensus theory, views society as an integrated whole, and social cohesion exists among the people and has to take the responsibility to protect society. Emphasizing such characteristics as integration, stability, and consensus

this perspective asserts the primacy of the whole over the parts and sees the parts as being functional to the whole.

Applying this functionalist approach to education and society, Durkheim views education essentially as an agent of socialization by which individuals are taught the behavioral aspects of the society following the societal norms and customs, and as a socialization process, individuals are molded to behave according to the society's expectation. (Durkheim, 1956: 72-89, 1961).

Parsons insisted that in the advancement of technological society diverse professions have emerged, demanding different knowledge and skills, hence, it is the function of the educational institutes to identify, mold, and guide individuals who are suitable for their respective areas of specialization. Another most important function of education is to identify and segregate the students who have the potentiality to continue their education and go to college or not. Though the academic and vocational program may not take place before high school, persons believe that it starts from the elementary level.

Parsons also justified rewards and the unequal distribution of in the educational institute, as it develops the students' motivation towards the class and every learner will get the opportunity of doing well. Parsons also emphasized the importance of award and grading as one of the most important reinforcements for the students who have done well or got higher grades are considered as a fast learner which will help the teacher to motivate the learner. This type of positive reinforcement is considered as an indirect encouragement to start thinking about selecting the idle professional education and occupation. (Wallace and Wolf, 1986: 27; Johnson, 1975).

Conflict theories of education:

Karl Marx, who is considered as the father of conflict perspective, claims society to be in a state of conflict because of competition for limited resources. He suggests that social order runs through power and domination rather than collective consensus. Karl Marx's

conflict theory focused on two social classes. Society is run by the powerful and dominant class which applies its power and domination over the less powerful class. The powerful class imposes its ideas, policies, values, and subordinates the powerless class to authorize and hold their state of domination and control. The dominant class perpetuates their domination and power through various institutionalized ways and mechanisms, and education is the most significant and vital mechanism among them. The dominant class uses education as a tool to maintain their hierarchy and dominance over the subordinate class.

Education is used as a commodity by the dominant class by manipulating it for maintaining their authority over the subordinates which results in the dehumanization of society. Conflict theorists believe that the status quo will not last long as contradictions will erupt between the classes leading to a revolution to establish a new social order. But education will continue to act as an intermediary in support of the dominant class until a change in social order occurs. Louis Althusser who elaborated on Marx's perspective on education stated that the ideology of the dominant class is transmitted through education to retain their political, cultural, and economic hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony:

Gramsci's idea of civil society is the central concept of Hegemony. Gramsci's idea of hegemony is based on Marx's notion of 'false consciousness' that defines the form of control exercised by a dominant class over subaltern groups in society. He highlighted that the source of the domination of elites who uses the state as well as the popular culture, mass media, education, and religion to reinforce an ideology that supports their position in the relations of force.

Gramsci's dominant class was the bourgeoisie, the modern capitalist owners of the means of social production and employers of waged labor, and the central subordinate class was the proletariat, but also other subaltern groups. People contribute to the continued

dominance of the ruling class, by accepting the dominant cultures, values, and assumptions as to their own.

To establish the modern hegemony of the ruling class according to Gramsci physical force or power is not much required as this process is comparatively more peaceful and nonviolent, as the hegemony is established by dominating the ruled class ideologically. In this ideological dominance, the individuals of the dominated class accept the supremacy of the dominant class and their inferiority and subordination, which made the domination far more nonviolent (Gramsci 1971).

Reproduction theory:

Reproduction theory provides a clear picture of the application of the conflict model to the contemporary educational system especially in the educational institutions of the United States.

Reproduction and correspondence theories are developed by the work of Bowels and Ginits (1976) inspired by the contribution of French structuralist Althusser and Bourdieu. Althusser in his famous article *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1972) challenges the bourgeois notion of the social whole that is fragmented into segments. He stated that education as well as the other social aspects of the socio-cultural whole as an integral part of the practice of ideology and the state. From the arguments of Althusser, Bowel, and Ginits (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America* highlighted the macro and structural dimensions of educational institutions within society. They say that young people are given training according to their current social class position. For example, students of working-class origin take orders and to be obedient and children of professionals are trained using more progressive methods. The future of the people is determined by the economic structure and their position within it. Many scholars during the 1970s adopted reproduction theory. According to Anyon (1980), both the working class and different professional schools expose students to the knowledge needed to stay within the social class they are born. The reproduction theorists oppose the liberal

education theorists who see schools as neutral agencies that focus on the development particularly for the underprivileged. According to reproduction theorists schools are agencies of the dominant class or culture functioning which can be achieved by social stratification.

It is important to note that there is no one form of reproduction (Willis 1981). Although reproduction theories have been largely criticized but still these are widely used in the interpretation of social inequalities imposed through schooling as well as the production and distribution of knowledge (Anyon, 1980; Weis, 1990; McLeod, 2004). Social reproduction and cultural reproduction theories usually go hand in hand to maintain the status quo. The misconception lies in that different forms of reproduction can't be used together. But in this case, both can be used together as both have relations with each other for schools are not merely institutions of reproduction; it is the way to develop students to fit in different societies.

The Critical Theory of Education:

In the new sociology of education, the theory of education has gained its popularity delinquently. It is a sociological perspective that is dynamic. It is inspired by the writing of Marx, but it does not follow orthodox Marxism .this theory is also inspired by the Frankfurt school ideologies and it accommodates the views of both Freud and neo-Freudians. Critical theory of education engages itself practically with the real problems, describes the problems, explains these problems, and tries to resolve the problems. Fundamentally, it questions general assumptions, challenging other typical practices, ideas, and ideals.

Instead of blaming the victims, the critical theory tries to find out the base or root (structural) of the problems while discussing a problem. It promotes basic questions related to the field of education. For example (i) the reasons for children's failure in school, (ii) the reasons behind students not being enthusiastic or being demotivated (iii) the reasons for organizations of the system as it is, etc. Finding out the answers to such

questions which are mostly taken for granted in the society, aims towards finding out the solution to the problem. (Gibson, 1980)

Turner and Hopper (1971) and Blackledge and Hunt (1985) have their great contribution towards the new introspection on the issue, questioning education and its system of selection. According to these authors, the system of education is selective, they differ in the process of selection, time of selection, reasons for selection, and the people to be selected. (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985;76). Hopper believes that the major function of education is selection. He observes that within the industrial societies the structure of the educational system can be understood and seen in terms of the structure of the selective process (Hopper 1971). It is also argued that the ideologies of legitimation are generated by education and it draws the classification of people as most valued by the society and a direct bearing on the type of selection is imposed on the same. Therefore, in education, the selection process accounts for the unequal distribution of providing opportunity. In a wider sense of education, selection results in providing the network with inequalities.

Other sources of the new problem are introduced by Turner while repeating functionalist arguments, he asserted that “Every society must cope with the problem of maintaining loyalty to its social system and does so in the part through norms and values, the most conspicuous control problem is that of ensuring loyalty in the disadvantaged classes” (Turner and Hopper, 1971)

Again, relating how the loyalty of the social system is linked and legitimized. Turner mentions, “The masses are trained to see themselves as incomplete and to view the elite with a sense of mystery” (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985). According to him the phenomenon works and behaves almost like a folk norm among the group of people.

The Technical- Functional Theory:

The technical functional theory is one of the important theories of education in modern society. It serves society through the development of skills required in different fields. Its

basic proportions are found in different sources which imply that it helps to increase the skill in the students and consequently it results in the higher requirements of skills comparing to jobs that need low skill requirements. It can be given through formal training either in specific skills or in general capacities as its necessary for the more highly skilled jobs. As a result, longer proportions of the population are required to spend more time in schools as educational requirements for employment constantly rise. The stratification theory by Davis and Moore gives two premises, implies that the occupational positions require particular kinds of skilled performance and that positions must be filled with persons who have either the native ability of acquired, necessary for the performance of the given occupational role.

Resistance theory:

Resistance theory which is a neo-Marxist framework from its time of origination at the hand of Willis (1977) in his important study tries to analyze the tension between students and the schooling process. This kind of oppositional behavior between the students and institutions leads to academic failure. In the last 15 years since its inception resistance theory have witnessed various scientific descriptions of people and culture with their customs, habits, and mutual difference within its purview. This theory categorizes school as an institution which reproduces social inequalities rather than equalization.

The working-class students develop an aversion to the working-class future which in turn gives rise to a new class. Paul Willis in his book “Learning and Labor” tries to explain the authoritative response of working-class students towards the capitalist schooling system. School tries to teach the ways of facing society in a certain particular fashion may it be how to dress, aesthetic styles, values, and manners and so on which leads to a particular status culture. This status of culture becomes the basis of inequality in society.

After a detailed understanding of the diverse theoretical perspective on education and its role towards society, we can conclude that in the present contemporary society particularly in an underdeveloped country as India, education has an institution has failed

to cater to the needs of the people equally and act as an agent of positive change in society (structural-functional theory), in reality rather education is used to protect the interest of dominant elite class in the society by legitimizing and reproducing the exploitative norms favoring the dominant elite class (conflict, hegemony, resistance reproduction theory). Therefore, the present study will take more a critical theory approach to understand the different patterns and the reasons behind the existence of such an unequal form of educational institutions creating an unequally equipped human resource.