UNIT 10 TEACHING PROFESSION

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

The whole area of education from the pre-school to the doctoral level is generally covered under the definition of education. When we talk of teaching profession we having in mind all those who are involved in the process of teaching across various levels of education. As we discuss it will be realized that the competencies and expectations required from personnel involved in imparting education to various learner groups across levels would be different. At one level, it may be that more of skills are required rather than knowledge of a particular disciple, but at a different level more of discipline knowledge and less of skill in imparting education may be required.

As learners interested in the teaching profession you must be interested in knowing how teaching profession evolved and how are the roles defined for various professionals imparting education to various groups. In this unit, we will discuss some of the issues involving teaching profession.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you would be able to:

- explain the similarities and differences between teachers at different levels and sectors and expectations from them;
- define roles and responsibilities of teaching professionals at various levels of education; and
- explain the relationship between socio-economic developments and objectives of education.

10.3 LOCATING EDUCATION

Children have a natural tendency to learn. At the very young age, therefore, they have to be provided opportunities to play with materials and situations; and enable them to learn. At this stage learning is more of socialization through experiences in
family and other surroundings. This process of learning and education starts even before schooling begins. Later, when stages of education are created through schooling, more organized education is carried out. In the present schooling it is guided by the framework of curriculum which largely determines the role of teachers, and the skills and competencies required on their part to perform effectively.

Teacher’s role may take different forms at various stages of education as the abilities of child develop as age increases. Knowledge of such development stages of children which the discipline of Psychology provides, help the teacher to understand children’s growing abilities across age. This understanding is relevant for deciding preparation of teachers at various stages, and also systemic requirements for organizing education process.

Systemic requirements in education are of varied kind like planning, teacher preparation programmes, evaluation and assessment, management and organizational structures and community support.

In addition to the knowledge of psychology as mentioned above knowledge of other disciplines like philosophy, sociology, political process, economic conditions and social and cultural aspects are necessary to understand the domain of education, its process and more importantly its significance for society.

This requires knowledge of different areas as mentioned earlier. Of course, it has to be select disciplinary knowledge which facilities understanding of education. For understanding education, it is necessary to recognize that education is futurist. It aims at developing individuals and thereby transform society. In other words education seeks to identify human aspirations and lasting values in society. It is these determinants that decide what form education should take. Thus, the ‘vision’ of education and its development becomes a necessity to conceptualize education and its processes.

10.3.1 Major Components of Education

Education has primarily two main segments; one is: vision of education and its development; this should reflect the kind of people we like to have in the future society and what form the society should have tomorrow. Thus, vision of education and its development visualizes the social transformation of present society. Such a vision of education needs to be visualized and conceptualized collectively; and not individually.

The second segment of education is the process of education. This is the operational part of education of which teaching-learning is central. For organizing teaching-learning process, the role of teacher and participation of students is crucial. The role of teacher in this process is determined by the ‘developmental considerations’ that are visualized in the vision of education. For this purpose the teacher has to act as a professional to recognize his role as a facilitator of learning. The teacher has to create such teaching situations that the learner (student) participate in the process of teaching-learning in a way that he/she can create meaning of the situation and thereby learn. This should be an experience for the student, such that he/she feels that he/she is creating a meaning from this experience. In that sense, he/she is put to the path of learning through his/her own participatory efforts. Success of the teacher in making the student see a meaning in teaching is ‘teaching profession’ in which the teacher facilitates learning rather than transmitting knowledge to the student.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) What qualifies one to be called a ‘professional’?

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2) What is the ‘vision’ of education?

DEFINING PROFESSION

Professionals require some sort of specialized knowledge and also skills which the group of people must possess to qualify them as distinctly different from others. Such knowledge/skills may depend on the type of activities they are required to perform. Such people who do not possess such specialized knowledge/skills would not be able to perform the expected job with refinement and expected levels of outcome. Normally, engineers, doctors, teachers, managers are called professionals. Now if we look at the definition we have given above of profession and contrast them with the job requirement and expectation of the professionals we have mentioned it can clearly be understood that the engineers, doctors, teachers, managers possess some specialized knowledge which will be a must for performing their tasks in a professional manner.

To look at more precisely at teachers teaching at the pre-primary or primary level we will find that they may engage the children for the given time but if he/she is not properly trained and qualified to manage children of this age group, he/she may not be able to inculcate the levels of learning, expected of such children in a given period of time. Quite often, it may not be very simple or easy to find the outcome to define professionals because those with knowledge and experiences may also be able to do similar job but in the long run perhaps the learners may not be able to conduct themselves in the manner expected of graduates of that system.

It may now be clearly understood that professionals are those who have specialized knowledge to carry out the assignment in a skilled manner with the expected levels of outcome. The professionals may acquire the relevant and desired knowledge and skills from more than one area but the consolidated outcome would clearly be of a different nature from all the areas from where the professional acquired acknowledge. To explain it further it may be said that the sum total of information acquire by professionals from various areas would be much larger than the total information acquired by them in terms of performance. This speaks of their potential to deal with varied tasks and challenges with confidence and competence. That is why they are called professionals.
Check Your Progress 2

4) Why is education known as a process of change?

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5) How are concepts and theories of sociology relevant to education?

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6) What is 'Pedagogical knowledge'?

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10.5 EDUCATION STRUCTURES

Presently in India, as is the case of most other countries, education is organized in stages: Pre-School education, elementary, secondary and higher secondary and higher education (tertiary). At all these stages, there is a network of educational institutions which provide ‘schooling’ to learner groups. The substance and the process of schooling, are determined in the light of certain ‘normative’ dimensions and other aspects of development. And, by nature ‘schooling; or education as such is society specific; and it evolves through time depending upon development needs, emerging individual aspirations and numerous factors and conditions that obtain in the society.

It may be helpful if we present some specific reference in the context our country, as to how:

i) Education was largely through socialization in the family and the community. Even occupational skills and other attributes of social and personal life were acquired by individuals through socialization.

ii) Also education got associated with factors like caste system, religion, economic status of family, etc.,

iii) Gradually education spread to wider sections of society; yet it remained confined to private initiatives by individuals. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, education acquired a more structured form with its organization.
iv) And, now we find it in the form of network of educational institutions at various stages of education.

v) Attempts to universalize education has been aspired for a long time. Of late, the State has been entrusted the responsibility of reaching education to all through legislation known as the 'Right to Education Act'.

Moreover, education is provided not only in the form described above, from pre-school through secondary stage to higher education, which learners receive as formal education. There are other channels of education or schooling like distance education, open learning systems and other forms of non-formal education. These alternative channels of education have brought in several other structures of education. These structures have introduced greater flexibility in the organization of education in terms of its availability and other conditions like age of the learner and attendance in class room by him/her to entitle him/her to receive instruction and certification. We will discuss the Open Distance Learning (ODL) in detail in the following sections.

Also, due to developmental needs of individuals in their personal life and work situations, education has become more differentiated process and pursuit.

These characterizations of education have significantly shifted the focus of determining the substance of education, its structures and organization towards wider considerations that emerge from factors that operate at societal level. That is how, sociology as science of society has become a dominant area of knowledge in social science that contributes to understanding of education and its processes in socially relevant ways.

It is for the perspective outlines above with which education is to be viewed, that the concepts and theories in sociology become relevant knowledge components in education. However, for proper placement of these and their utilization in studies of pedagogy and education in general, it may be relevant to consider the following:

i) Concepts in sociology, viz., equality, equity, acculturation, organizational structures etc are relevant; and they help in deconstructing educational situations and conditions therein. Similarly, theories of sociology offer explanations to educational process at macro level. These provide a broader framework in which micro situations in education can be viewed and conceptualized, and thus understood.

ii) It is with the help of knowledge in sociology we recognize that learning ‘mind’ must not be separated from experience. Theoretical need is to connect thought, action, feelings and belief systems of the learners. Knowledge that emerges from this perspective is pedagogical knowledge. This offers a framework to view pedagogical process in a context of ‘situated’ learning. Such knowledge emerges when multiple knowledge components are meaningfully connected. In this endeavor sociological knowledge components are of great relevance. In that sense these are basic or foundational to knowledge in education. However, knowledge has a local as well as global character. ‘Accularation’ through education has been discussed in detail in Unit 6 already.

iii) It is for the knowledge context in education delineated under (i) and (ii) above ‘sociology of knowledge’ as an area of study has emerged distinctly. It helps us to understand the relationship between ‘thought’ and ‘society’. The knowledge components in this area are of significance to understand educational situations and their processes.

iv) However, we need to recognize that knowledge in sociology is just one component that informs educational practice and its understanding. There are several other knowledge components that informs practice in education and
even pave the way for innovative practices to reconstruct education and its processes. Such knowledge components are drawn from psychology, epistemology, normative studies, political and economic consideration, etc. All these and many more knowledge considerations are brought to bear upon educational situations and their structures to view them collectively. It is such a collective understanding that is knowledge in education. Thus, it needs to be emphasized in instructional material that sociological knowledge like any other disciplinary knowledge component has its due role in generating knowledge in education. But it is only a part of the latter, and therefore limited.

v) As a corollary of what is stated under (iv) above, theories relevant to education, are to be integrated with practice in education and collective conceptualization sought. In that sense endeavour of education needs to be taken with education perspective to offer meaningful understanding of ‘actions’ decision and process creations in education.

Further, it is due to this integral relationship between theory and practice, education is not unidirectional; instead it is bidirectional. While theories can be useful to reconstruct practice, practice in education can also help reconstructing theor-(ies). All studies in education, thus, have to be made in multidisciplinary framework which is determined by educational perspective of which ‘action’ is central.

vi) Knowledge from sociology offers explanation and understanding of social phenomena related to education occurring at macro level. They provide framework for understanding educational process as it operates at micro level. Sociological concepts and theories, therefore, have to be rendered further to provide emerging ‘implications’ to understand educational practices and theories since sociology does not directly provide knowledge in education. Never needs to be recognized that ‘implications’ are important educationally as they provide conceptual support towards understanding educational process. But they must not be taken to be ‘complete knowledge’ in education. Knowledge in education is composite and collective of which sociological knowledge related to educational process is just a part, though quite relevant.

vii) Education as an area of study has wide domain which has varied forms of knowledge and understanding. They manifest as knowledge, skills and insights. Their composite operation provides education an ‘integrated domain of knowledge’.

10.6 UNDERSTAND EDUCATION VIS-À-VIS LEVELS

Let us first try to understand how similar or different is teaching at various levels of education. As has been often mentioned teaching to pre-school, primary, elementary, secondary, senior secondary or at the tertiary level and further than that supervising, research will definitely required different skills and competencies in the teachers. However, if we closely look at the process, it will be found that there is something common across sectors and levels of teaching. This commonality makes the profession of teaching cohesive group of professionals.

10.6.1 Teaching to Infants

We may begin by looking closely at the teachers who are involved in teaching/minding, pre-school/early school children. To our understanding such professionals may perhaps be required to understand child psychology and learning behaviour more than knowledge of any particular discipline and/or area. As young children at this stage explore the outside world and very quickly try to understand the system
and accordingly develop their own systems. They are perhaps more keen observers than grown ups.

In the earliest stage of child - called infant, there is no schooling as such. Yet, due to his natural tendency to learn, the child starts learning from environment with which he/she interacts innately. This learning is natural on learner’s part. But others around him/her, namely, family members particularly mother, and other community members start their efforts to mould the child’s learning towards chosen behaviour. This preference of behavior is determined largely by traditions of social life and other cultural practices. Thus, the child in his early stage starts learning naturally; yet he/she is molded to learn social practices by the family members and others. This process of making the learner acquire social behaviour and pick up relevant skills and practices, is educative in nature. It may be noted here that though the child starts with natural learning, the child is exposed to social learning from the earliest stage. The child, thus, in his/her early age receives education - ‘socially preferred behaviour’, through ‘socialization’. In this process of education, created through socialization by mother and other caretakers of the child perform teaching role. This form of education is pre-school education. In this sense, this education is different from other forms of education provided through ‘schooling’.

Let us try to understand this concept further. Young children’ as we normally say are ‘clean slate’ and any script can be written on their slate. They keenly watch adults and quickly imbibe what adults do. Let us take the example of language. When children are born they are not able to speak any language but within no time they develop some sort of language to convey to their mother the message of hunger, uncomfortable feeling and so on. Soon they form other habits and develop a system of their own. The teacher at this stage perhaps requires in teachers more than anything else very refined habits to present a role model before children. Children would automatically internalize the habits and information the teachers present to them. This may not be considered teaching by some if we go by the process at higher level but this is also teaching keeping the learner group and expected output from the learners.

10.6.2 Teaching School Children

Later, education is provided in a more formal and organized way through ‘schooling’. For this purpose ‘schooling systems’ have been created. There are visible in the form of schools - primary and upper primary (both together called elementary education), secondary and higher secondary, and higher education (also called tertiary). School systems are organized generally according to age levels of learners. While this is physical indicator, there are other criteria which determine the levels of education at these levels. These relate to mental development stages of children as their age increases; knowledge and skill development with increasing awareness and understanding; and social and cultural awareness, and formulation of their own ideas by learners. The school systems have been organized in consideration to the developmental stages of children and other purposive dimensions of their behavioural and competence related learning. It is these considerations that determined the formulation of the systems as well as their operational aspects, the systemic organization.

Also, the levels or stage of education thus created have certain differences and the similarities in terms of learner development, purposive aims of education, and the systemic roles and challenges faced in education process which have been briefly stated in the sections to follow. These are intended to lead to explication of professional aspect of educative process and its varied dimensions need conceptualization and understanding of professionalism required on the part of teachers to play their pedagogical role at different levels of education. Teaching profession may be viewed
in two main contexts. One relates to the curricular inputs to be provided to students through teaching. This refers to the suitability of curriculum at each stage of education. Second context of teaching profession relates to how the curricular inputs at each stage be dealt with through teaching-learning. This refers to the pedagogic inputs and the process of teaching learning created. The major concern here is to offer such pedagogic inputs that are most suitable to create teaching-learning environment for the stage of education. For this purpose, it is essential that those in teaching profession, namely, teachers should possess conceptual understanding of pedagogical approach and the potential of the inputting into teaching learning. Towards this understanding the teachers are provided pre-service teacher training; through which they are provided conceptual understanding of teaching – learning; role of the teacher therein; and learner participation in learning. This conceptual (theoretical) understanding is to be developed simultaneously with pedagogic experiences in real conditions. Such a process is expected to prepare a teacher in the making as a professional who has developed composite understanding of pedagogy; and, he/she is able to take pedagogic action decisions, and create appropriate situations to engage the learners to participate in the teaching-learning process. Through such engagements, the learners (students) should be able to make meaning of experiences they participate in.

This should result in learning which is his own creation as he engaged in relevant experiences, and made meaning from those. It is this outcome of ‘meaningful experience’ that is ‘learning’.

10.6.3 Creating Learning Experience

It may be recognized here that such an understanding of pedagogical process is interdisciplinary in nature. For greater understanding of this interdisciplinary process, a few observations under the following section may be relevant.

‘Learning’ is an individual attribute. The student learns everything individually. Also, as stated earlier the child has natural tendency to learn. However, the learning abilities of the child increase with age. Piaget’s theory of cognitive development in children from infant to adult is distinctly identified in four universal and consecutive stages:

- Sensory motor; at this stage between 0-2 years of age the child experiences his own world through senses and movement.
- At 2-7 years of age, the child is in pre-operational stage; has not mastered the ability of mental operations.
- At 7-11, the child learns concrete operations; learns best through hands – on ‘discovery learning’ while working with tangible objects.
- During 11 years of age to adulthood the child is able to think abstractly; develops hypothetical thinking skills such as induction and deduction abilities. He/she is able to solve problems and engage in complex thinking.

The theory of cognitive development in children clearly suggest the nature of abilities and the level of cognition at which learning activities can be pitched in pedagogical process for different age levels. Obviously it helps in organizing education process. Those in teaching profession need to understand the mental development stages of children, and utilize these development attributes in theme for organizing pedagogical process to ensure visioned development in them.

It needs to be appreciated here that Piaget’s cognitive theory is formulated on psychological premises mainly. However, the pedagogical premises also require other considerations as well. One important consideration is that of ‘social process’ which brings in the social components.
Vygotsky viewed thinking as a characteristic not only of the child but of the child-in-social activities. He introduced the ‘Zone of proximal development’. He suggests that the learner’s meaning making is influenced by social context. Thus, it becomes necessary to see ‘schooling’ with a significant role to create the social context. Thus, it becomes necessary to see ‘schooling’ with a significant role to create the social context. This role is mainly performed by the teacher who facilitates cognitive learning by appropriate use of mental representations and problem-solving abilities. This needs to be practiced by the teacher through the use of information resources including inputs from other individuals. However, it needs to be appreciated that cognitive learning of this type will be developed in the children at appropriate stage when ‘problem solving’ and ‘thinking about thinking’ abilities are developed in them. It is for these features of pedagogy, that the professionals in teaching need to understand teaching learning on the part of learners (students) in the context of individual behaviour as well as social and cultural context; and, these be major considerations to determine his (teacher) role of facilitating learning.

It may be appreciated from what is discussed in earlier points, that the curriculum structures and the pedagogical activities and other engagements at different stages are determined by the very abilities of the students at the level of education, and the teachers’ role that should facilitate student’s learning. In this connection a few more observations are made below. Hopefully, these would help you to view knowledge and awareness, and skills and competence, as well as value orientation as objectives of teaching which are placed in the perspective of education and its epistemological context.

i) At the pre-school stage, children are provided opportunities, mainly in the form of play-way activities, which nourish their natural tendency to learn about whatever is around them. The mother, and others in the family act as promoter of child’s learning and developmental growth. In a way the child at this stage is cared more for his physical and mental growth through senses and movements. The caretaker has to sensitise about the child’s developmental stage, and accordingly he/she has to organize his activities such that the child is helped.

ii) At elementary stage the child is prepared for mental operations and discovery learning. In this context, it may be noted that our teacher preparation programmes do not show sufficient sensitivity to make distinction between teaching at middle stage (upper primary) and secondary. Teaching community should be prepared to organize pedagogical process distinctly at two stages mentioned above.

At secondary stage, children are offered varied courses compulsorily. The whole purpose is to develop children in respect of knowledge and other competence in such a way that they get a wider context of knowledge and awareness. This is expected to prepare the child to develop his mental potential in a wider context.

In contrast to this wider context of knowledge at the higher secondary stage the knowledge and other competencies are provided through teaching in a more specialized way. Disciplinary knowledge and its learning are the main concerns pedagogically.

These distinctions are clearly made in the curricula. However, this distinction and pedagogical sensitivity for this purpose is not reflected through teacher training programmes. In fact there is a common training programme for teachers at middle school stage, secondary and higher secondary stage. Teaching profession programmes should take care of such academic differences in knowledge components; and the teacher preparation programmes be developed with corresponding changes. Such an approach may prepare more competent and effective teaching professionals.
10.6.4 Teaching at Tertiary Level

At Higher Education stage, the approach to pedagogical attempts have to be still different for the following features of knowledge and competencies. The studies at higher education are specialized no doubt. Teaching has to ensure it. For this purpose more attempts have to be made for engaging students in self-efforts with a view to enabling them in sharpening their view of knowledge. Activities like those which would make them ‘think about thinking’, reflect about knowledge, and seeking connectivity’s in knowledge domains in varied disciplines and other areas.

For such purpose, it may be a good idea to review teaching programmes and assess the teaching potential of current programmes for teachers. In fact, at present there is no pre-service programmes for teachers at tertiary levels. These are in-service programme for teacher development. Review for such assessment, perhaps should involve the teachers who organize these programmes and those who have participated in them.

10.6.5 Open Distance Learning

As discussed earlier, education has been organized at different levels - from Primary - Upper Primary - Secondary, Higher Secondary, to the Tertiary. These stages of education have been organized according to age levels of children. Also, education at all these stages have been organized as formal systems for which regular full-time attendance in school has been obligatory on the part of students and teachers. In fact, there has been a belief that the children could learn and be educated only under direct supervision by the teachers; and the knowledge be transmitted to them by the teachers personally.

However, as the demand for education increased innovative ideas which could generate alternative system for providing education became a felt need in India specially after Independence (1947). Such a devised system was ‘correspondence’ education. Written Learning Material was sent to the students by post. Students could read that and attempt to learn through self-efforts. Additional help was provided by the organizing agency to arrange lecture, discussion and other assistance like library facility. The correspondence Education System though instituted in 1960’s, remained questionable for its organitional viability and pedagogy quality. Main reasons for this suspect systemic components were: one, traditional mode of imparting education to which both students and guardians were used to for long; second reason was the quality of resources that were available to run the system particularly to meet the learning requirements. These requirements for providing appropriate learning environment following measures were effected to evolve the system in progressive developmental ways:

- Correspondence courses were stared in universities first.
- Select courses like humanities were offered initially.
- Policy documents like NPE and Planning Commission emphasized increased use of educational technologies.
- Most significantly, correspondence system of education received serious attention to assess its potential and social relevance. Reviews of these evolving systems of education and other development research scrutiny of this system resulted into creation of discourse which led to deliberations at various levels.

Gradually the correspondence education systems were turned into Open and Distance Learning system. To support the ODL system national level institutions like the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), State Open Universities, Institutions to promote use of technology in teaching-learning became continuous and sustained endeavor to develop education in India. Concurrently, corresponding efforts were
made to develop open learning systems for school education. This endeavor started with Open School in 1979 as part of Central Board of Secondary Education. Gradually, the system developed through a nation wide network of institutions, namely, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and the counter parts of State Level Open Schools.

Now the Open and Distance Education Systems is spread out nation wide with coverage of all stages of education. Against this background, it may be relevant to make a few observations which have significance in respect of teaching-profession in the context of national development.  

i) Learners in ODL systems are comparatively older than those in formal system. Mostly they are adults. Therefore, teaching-profession for the learners in ODL has to be viewed mainly in the context of 'adult learning for developing and offering learning inputs to learners'.

ii) Learners in ODL are already either employed or looking for the same. The main purpose of their education is their own development in terms of work skills and competence. The curriculum and teaching profession in ODL therefore should be geared to life related and work oriented skills and their utilization aiming at competence development. Also, the learners in ODL have comparatively greater perceptual understanding due to their age and experience, of their problems of life and living in social and cultural contexts. The role of the Teaching-professionals' or tutors and other personnel in this system accordingly is different to the traditional system.

iii) The curricular and pedagogic features in ODL system as above observations would suggest are geared to competence development as required in individual's life situations. Also, this system more directly addresses to macro level social issues like ‘learning society' to promote national development. This system (ODL) is more directly concerned with these issues of national and social development. Therefore, this system should develop its own teaching-profession personnel' and their role with its own standards and criteria rather than comparing ODL system with systems of formal education. It may be recalled that such comparisons were made initially (1970s) to prove the worth of open system. Now, it is not required. On the contrary such a comparison may hinder development of ODL.

Check Your Progress 3

7) What is most important in creating a teaching learning environment?

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8) What considerations should determine teacher’s roles?

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9) What components do you think should comprise pre-service training of teachers at tertiary level?

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10.7 LET'S SUM UP

People belonging to various areas where specialized knowledge and skills are required are known as professionals. These professionals in turn, through personal interaction and demonstration develop in new entrants to the profession similar skills. In the teaching profession, major expectations are understanding of the learning capabilities of learners with different backgrounds which affect their abilities and also behaviour.

The teacher also has the added responsibility of changing the society with the future in mind. Most often, individuals as well as societies like to maintain status-quo but it is the job of the teaching professionals to keep striving for change, rather change for the better. In the process of change teaching professionals have to face challenges of varied types - academic and organization for which they have to be prepared.

At times the personal understanding of teachers may not match with the law of the land. In such situations teachers have to strike a balance between personal understanding and national agenda. However, teaching profession is full of challenges and responsibilities, as discussed in this unit.

10.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

