

Unit 4

Thinkers on Education-II

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of major thinkers on education; and
- critically assess the influence and impact of the thinkers on the basic understanding of education on the one hand and policies on education on the other.

4.1 Introduction

After careful reading of the first two Units of this Block, you are familiar with the concept of education, the major sociological theories as also the broad perspective on sociology of education. Against this background, we will now explore the views and intellectual contribution of thinkers on education. The chief purpose here is to understand the development of educational thought from the earliest times to the present day. The critical thinking that marks the intellectual contribution has a profound impact on policy and the practice of education in society. In this Unit, we will study the contribution and influence of prominent thinkers on education in a chronological sequence. We have already familiarized ourselves with the ideas of some thinkers such as Durkheim, Parsons as also a few others in earlier Units hence we will not repeat them in this one.

4.2 Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)

Leo Tolstoy was born at Yasnaya Polyana in the region of Tula, Russia. His parents died when he was still very young. Tolstoy pursued the study of law and Oriental languages at Kazan University. He was not an outstanding student. Most of the teachers found him unable and unwilling to learn. He returned to Yasnaya Polyana without completing studies. Here, he indulged in gambling and incurred a heavy debt. Later, he joined the Russian army. Over a period of time, he developed interest in literature and took to writing himself. He became the doyen of Russian literature in the 19th century. Some of his more widely acclaimed works are, *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *What Then Must We Do* and several others.

Apart from his contribution to the field of literature, Tolstoy is remembered for his dynamic ideas on education. His concern with education found expression, apart from others, in his first book, *The Four Periods of Development* in which he sought to explain the development of human character from the early phase of childhood. He established a child-centered

approach to education wherein children's spiritual growth, feelings, process of learning find a place of significance. This formed the substratum on which his later thought on education was embedded. Tolstoy established a school on his ancestral estate for peasant children in the year 1849 when he was barely 21 years of age. He firmly believed that it was important to do well to those whom one encounters and among whom one leads one's life. He was sure that one's own well-being was not possible till the peasants, and the majority of the people in one's nation, remained poor and unhappy. It was with the sole intention of being able to provide respite to the poor peasants from poverty, ignorance, and superstition through education that he set up a school for them. Over a period of time, he gave up school teaching and joined the armed forces. After the Crimean war between 1853 and 1856, he retired from the army and pursued his passion of teaching peasant children once again. With the objective of drawing from the experience and practice of education in other countries, Tolstoy visited Germany, France, and Switzerland. One identifiable impact of his visit to these countries was a significant rise in his educational activity back in Russia between the years 1859 and 1862. It was in this period that educational reforms were being planned in Russia. Tolstoy was convinced that education in the hands of civil servants could not be used to serve the interests of the country. He suggested that national education should be entrusted to an association that would ably educate the people, establish schools, develop the content of education, train teachers, provide the equipment and infrastructure to schools and contribute to the democratic management of education. He planned an association that would fulfill the above-mentioned objectives.

According to Tolstoy, unequal access to education in Russian society was the root cause of antagonism between the privileged class constituting only a small group and the remaining population. The solution to the rising antagonism and the other social problems (such as despotism, violence, superstition and injustice) lay in providing equal education to all sections of society. More importantly, he expressed that the fruitfulness of education should be measured in terms of its success in serving the needs of the people. His ideas acquired greater social importance in the light of the fact that they were put forth at a time when capitalist development was all set to preside over scientific and technical knowledge that would jeopardize the interests of the masses and generate hostility and antagonism between classes. Tolstoy demanded democratization of education which in effect meant liberating it from the clutches of those who controlled power and harnessing it in favour of the society at large.

Tolstoy argued for freedom in school and in education. He believed that children are inherently innocent and perfect. It was not proper to interfere with the natural development of children in the name of education. But, does this mean that children should be left completely to themselves? How can education be imparted to them? Tolstoy explained that the role of the teacher had to be minimal, limited to guiding them gently and certainly not by force coercion. Freedom in education needed to be treated as a counter practice of authoritarian teaching through which children would develop independent cognitive abilities. Unless this happened, knowledge loaded on children would not bear fruit. He perceived distinct opposition between community activity in the field of national education on the one hand and red tapism and bureaucracy on the other. According to Tolstoy, freedom in education was opposed to authoritarianism in teaching. It was of utmost importance in developing a humane attitude in children and inculcating self-esteem and respect for their dignity as human beings. He believed that since the main concern of education was with children, the study of the child was crucial to formulating strategies for educating them. He experimented with different methods of teaching, reading and writing in terms of their efficacy. Tolstoy, as mentioned earlier, treated the child as the subject of education. He established

that a teacher deals with the entire personality of a child, hence the need of a holistic perspective integrating sociological and psychological aspects. Yegorov (1997:652) expresses this clearly, "Reading Tolstoy's educational writings, one has almost physical perception of a living child, presented not in a frozen photographic pose but in the manifestation and development of its individual characteristics, the unfolding of its personality and in mental states which fluctuate in accordance with the many and varied influences to which he or she is subject".

The other aspect that Tolstoy emphasized in his doctrine of education was the empowerment and freedom of the people to set up schools for their children that were based on the wishes of the parents and community. This would lead to the development of genuine culture among the people. The agencies for deciding the content and method of education would be the parents and the community at large. Here, children are regarded as the subject of education which calls for developing their individual characteristics, personalities, and mental states (that are known to vary according to situations). Education, therefore, cannot remain divorced from a child's cognitive capacities in different stages of growth. He demonstrated that in the first stage of education, children's thinking and comprehension are guided by pictures, colours, and sound rather than logical thought. Information conveyed through pictures rather than through logical conclusions is better understood and retained by children (see Yegorov 1997). He believed that elementary education laid the foundation for a child's intellectual and moral growth and state of happiness or unhappiness throughout life. Elementary education determined whether a child would enjoy studying or would regard it as a burden, whether he/she would lay more emphasis on spiritual values or on material well-being. Spirituality could be impressed upon the child only in school. The *Primer of Count of Tolstoy* published in 1872, "consisted of a set of teaching materials in four volumes: a) the alphabets proper; b) texts for elementary study; c) Slavonic texts; and d) material for learning arithmetic" (cited from Yegorov 1997: 656-657). It comprised basic concepts of physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology in a way that would be comprehensible to children. Tolstoy's ideas as also his publications triggered debates and controversies when they were first launched. Later, however, his perspective on education was accepted and adopted not only in Russia but in many parts of the world.

Box 4.1: Major works of Leo Tolstoy

The Kingdom of God and the Peace Essays. 1951. London: Oxford University Press

Educational Writings. 1951. Moscow

4.3 John Dewey (1859-1952)

John Dewey was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont. He completed graduation from the University of Vermont in the year 1879 and took to teaching Latin, algebra and sciences in a school located in Pennsylvania. Thereafter, he joined a rural school near Burlington in which he was the only teacher. He pursued research for the award of a doctoral degree. In 1884, the University of Michigan appointed him as instructor in philosophy and psychology. Later, he led the combined department of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy at the University of Chicago as its Chairman. It was around this time (i.e., in the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century) that the economy in the United States was in a phase of transition from agriculture-based to industry-based. Evidently, the shift in the economic situation was accompanied by significant changes in society. Widespread turbulence marked the transition from the

simple agricultural type to the complex urban-industrial type. The Pullman strike, the impact of President Cleveland's decision to send federal troops to support corporate interests, and his association with social activists and educators consolidated Dewey's ideas on progressive reforms. His principal concern was with maintenance and expansion of democracy in all spheres of life (see Apple and Teitelbaum 2001). It is commonly believed that the democratic form of government is successful only when those who elect and those who obey the governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest that can be created only by education.

He sought to enhance the relevance of democracy in society which, he felt, had not to do just with governance but also with the percolation of democratic ideals in the processes of daily life. There is no denying that Dewey's approach was pragmatic and based on real life situations. He upheld that the practical circumstances provided the bases from which ideals, values and social institutions develop and receive legitimation. The worth of an ideal, value, and institution lies in its potential to serve public and personal interests. He accepted that change in societal elements was inevitable; hence it was not appropriate to attach immutable validity or worth to any ideal, value or institution. There could be no absolute criteria for evaluating these. A particular social ideal constitutes a criterion for educational criticism and construction. The worth of a form of social life could be measured in terms of the extent to which the interests of a group were shared by all its members and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. A society which encourages participation of all its members on equal terms for their betterment and allows readjustment of its institutions through interaction of different forms of associated life is, to that extent, democratic. Such a society would develop an education system that makes provision for nurturing individuals' interest in social relationships and control as also dealing with social change in a way that situations of disorder do not occur. It was, however, possible to accept the significance of social experimentation based on objective criteria and rational criticism intended to create a humane and just social order.

One of the means through which these ideas could be instilled in the minds of children was education. He believed that education focused on the improvement of the quality of experience and provided the succor to social life. As societies became more and more complex in terms of structure and resources the need of formal teaching increased. When teaching becomes intentional and formalized, a possibility of split between experience gained by children through direct association as part of daily life and that acquired in schools develops. This is often caused by the rise in knowledge and technical mode of skills. Schooling, therefore, emerges as basic to social progress and democracy. According to Dewey, the ultimate objective of a school and the process of schooling were to foster the growth and expansion of democracy. This objective was particularly important because in the emerging industrial society in which Dewey consolidated his ideas on education, democracy was largely jeopardized. The schools were given to raising children who would follow the dictates of the teachers, undergo repetitious methods of teaching unquestioningly. The understanding was that as adults, they would be able to join the industry as an asset. Dewey opposed both the prevalent perspective and the method of teaching-learning in favour of student's alertness, focusing on their experiences and the ability to determine the course of life themselves. According to Dewey, schools would do well to develop a curriculum that was integrated with social experiences. He strongly criticized public schools for their learning ability that led to disjunction between knowledge and lived experiences.

In his widely known book, *Democracy* (1916) Dewey wrote that the measure of the worth of the administration, curriculum, and methods of instruction of the schools is the extent to which these are animated by a social spirit. In the first place, “the school must itself be a community life in all which that implies” (pp.358). He believed that social perceptions and interests could be developed only when there is give and take in the building up of a common experience. Education becomes effective through constructive activities that integrate study, growth, and shared experience. The perception of connections and social adherence is nurtured in playgrounds, schools, workrooms and laboratories. Here, natural, active tendencies of youth find full expression. Dewey maintained that learning in school should not be separated from that outside the school. The continuity in learning within and outside school can be maintained when there are numerous points of contact between their social interests. A school should safeguard and perpetuate the spirit of companionship and shared activity. Now, while a school may take upon itself the responsibility of developing social concern and understanding among children, it cannot be said with certainty that these would be available outside it. Yet, it may be accepted that till such time as learning which accrues in the regular course of study affects character, it is not appropriate to posit moral end as the unifying and culminating point of education. An educational scheme in which learning is accompanied with activities or occupations that have a social aim is worthwhile. When this happens, the school becomes a form of miniature community which remains in close interaction with other modes of associated experience beyond its four walls. Education which develops the ability to share in social life makes for continuous readjustment which is essential for growth.

Box 4.2: Major Works of John Dewey

The School and Society. 1899. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

The Child and The Curriculum 1902. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

How We Think. 1910. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Democracy and Education. 1916. New York: Macmillan

The Public and Its Problems. 1927. New York: Henry Holt

Experience and Education. 1938. New York: Macmillan

4.4 Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Antonio Gramsci was born in the region of Sardinia, Italy. He joined the university for higher studies in Turin (from which he had to withdraw later because of severe health problems and want of money). Turin was the hub of growth and development of industries, hence also of the Italian working class. For this reason, Gramsci witnessed the first industrial and economic development of Italy from close quarters early in life. His political and educational career began with the position of journalist and theatre reporter during the First World War. After the war, he launched two journals, *Ordine Nuovo* and *Uinta* with the sole purpose of educating the new working class that had emerged as fallout of industrialization and the war. Under the new fascist government, the Italian school system was re-framed in the year 1923. This time the emphasis was on perceived dichotomy between preparation for work (entailing technical and vocational training) and preparation for spiritual development and political leadership (entailing inculcation of cultural and scientific temper). Gramsci did not agree with this kind of dualism nor did he commit himself to accepting that science and technology afforded a solution to human problems or that intellectual and cultural affairs were independent of economic and political concerns. He proposed the idea of ‘professional culture’ to refer to “the new technical and vocational preparation needed by manpower (from the skilled worker to the manager) to control and to lead industrial development, as well

When the fascist regime gripped Italy between 1922 and 1943, and Mussolini dissolved the Italian Parliament, Gramsci (who was a member of the Parliament and Secretary of the Italian communist Party) was jailed. It is interesting to note that in the period of confinement, Gramsci planned to explore the relationship between education and politics under the broader framework of hegemony. His writings, *Letters from Prison* and *Prison Notebooks* remain the major source from which several ideas on education and state have been developed by later thinkers. The core idea in Gramsci's writing was the role of intellectuals in society viz., providing technical and political leadership to a group which is in a dominant position or is near it. According to him each person is an intellectual but not all the people perform the role of an intellectual in society. He identified different kinds of intellectuals. The first kind referred to as 'organic intellectuals' comprise capitalist entrepreneurs equipped with managerial and technical skills under whose leadership industrial technicians, specialists in political economy, in a new legal system develop. Organic intellectuals combine technical and political leadership. They are known to develop from the dominant social political group. Organic intellectuals serve the interests of the ruling class and in doing so reinforce their hegemony over the masses. The second kind are the 'intellectuals of the traditional type' who comprise administrators, scholars, scientists, theorists, and others who represent historical continuity that is unfazed even by radical political and social changes. They regard themselves and are regarded by a vast majority of population as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. Gramsci maintained that the role of informal educators was comparable with that of an intellectual in society for the simple reason that both strive for inculcation of awareness on critical issues and human well-being in totality. The educators in local communities have an advantage in that often they have much in common with the people, are able to develop relationships with them easily, and are regarded as part of the community. This facilitates acceptance of what they seek to educate and develop in the people.

The question that assumes significance at this stage is, what distinguishes intellectual work from manual work? In fact, this distinction is crucial to Gramsci's ideas on education. He maintained that the distinction between intellectual work and manual work is largely ideological. Classical education catering to the pursuits of the dominant classes raised individuals given to undertaking intellectual work while vocational, technical education for the working classes raised individuals given to performing manual labour. Gramsci rejected the dichotomy outright. He advocated that there was no human activity from which intellectual activity would be pulled out completely. This is to say that intellectual activity pervades all the actions of human beings. He, however, added that new intellectuals belonging to the working class needed to participate in practical life actively and develop socialist consciousness that could effectively counter hegemony. In his words (cited here from Monasta 1997: 602), "The mode of being the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence... but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator...; from technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception in history, without which one remains 'specialized' and does not become 'directive' (specialized and political)." The social division between intellectual and manual work seems to be reflected in classical and technical education respectively. The real division is, however, between 'directive' and 'subaltern' rules in society notwithstanding the nature of the job i.e., whether it is intellectual or manual. In a strict sense, the basis of the new type of intellectual should be technical education that was closely bound to industrial labour even of the most unskilled kind. One implication of this assertion is the understanding of close links between school and work, and between technical and humanistic education.

The new type of intellectuals may easily be identified among administrators and managers of industry and services; in upper rungs of state administration, central and local bureaucracy; within teaching profession and the growing sector of vocational and occupational training. Traditional 'academic' intellectuals still seem to be opinion leaders through whom political and cultural operations are effected (see Monasta 1997).

He believed that the school system prevalent in Italy at that time was given to reinforcing the ideological foundations of hegemony and in this way perpetuating the current social and political domination of the ruling class. He critiqued the increasing specialization afforded in the Italian school system and proposed a more comprehensive form of education. Gramsci felt that it would be appropriate to develop a school system that would be committed to imparting common basic education, balancing the inculcation of capacity for working manually and the capacity for intellectual work. This would prepare the students adequately to engage in productive work or pursue education in specialized schools. He explained that modernizing education should chiefly consist of creating a simple type of formative school (primary-secondary) which would take the children up to the threshold of their choice of job, forming them during this time as a persons equipped with the faculty capable of thinking, studying and ruling or controlling those who rule. In order that this type of school achieves its objectives, it was important that it related with the daily lives of the people so that more and more students participate in it with vigour. The student had to be an active participant and not a passive recipient in the teaching - learning process. Gramsci challenged the notion of spontaneous development of the child. He maintained that right from birth, the child is 'educated' to conform to the environment; the school represents only a small part of life. Education, in effect, is the struggle against the basic instincts (i.e., those related with biological functions); and against nature, to dominate it and create the 'actual' human being. He used the term 'conformity' to refer to the instrument for interpretation of those processes through which the people follow tradition and adhere to the rules. Education, therefore, consists of a struggle for one or the other type of conformity (e.g., socialization) proposed or imposed within a society. Monasta (1997:609) sums up Gramsci's basic approach to education in the following words, "Finally, as far as the visible education system is concerned, Gramsci's approach does not mean that school and university education are irrelevant within the strategy of educating for critical thought. It suggests that innovations in methods, content and organization of study which should be consistent with the following main points tighten links between school and work, as well as between theory and practice; a growing attention to the history of the organization of work and of the organization of culture, and therefore, more interest towards the study of 'fortune' namely, the different interpretations, of classics and theories; and, last but not least, an open debate on the aims of education and the values on which educational action is based in a given society." Education has to be set free from the clutches of both conformity and hegemony so that children who undergo it are able to achieve personal independence.

Box 4.3: Major Works of Antonio Gramsci

Lettere dal carcere [*Letters from Prison*] edited by S. Caprioglio and E. Fubini. 1965. Turin: Einaudi

Quaderni dalcarcere [*Prison Notebooks*] edited by Valentino Gerratana 1975. Turin: Einaudi

4.5 Paulo Freire (1921-1997)

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born to a Catholic middle class family in Recife (the capital of north-eastern province in Brazil). His father was a military officer who brought up his children with both authority and understanding. Freire first received education in the traditional Catholic way from his mother.

The family lived in one of the most impoverished regions of the nation and often encountered difficulty in making both ends meet. His parents did, however, try hard to maintain the standard of living that characterized the middle class families of that time. Paulo Freire studied law following which he taught Portuguese language in a secondary school in Brazil. He also served as a trade-union lawyer. He would inform trade-union members on legal matters. Freire was engaged in a wide variety of activities that included teaching a language course, and lecturing on legal matters to trade union workers. The experience of dealing and with illiteracy among Brazilian poor peasants and workers moved him. He came to realize that educational policies and practices had far-reaching implications.

In 1989, Freire was appointed Secretary of Education. He took this opportunity to initiate several programmes for educating the adults, and re-casting the curriculum. According to Freire, as society becomes excessively technology oriented with emphasis on specialization, people become increasingly passive, dehumanized, and fearful. While mass production of commodities does call for extensive participation of people, it reduces their capacity for critical assessment. The way out, then, is not to reject the use of machine but to humanize people, to bring them out of the alienation of routine, of repeating things bureaucratically and taking lives into their own hands, at their own risk and responsibility, and exercising control. Freire was once asked how he thought it was possible to talk about the cultural appropriation of the dominant culture by the dominated people. He replied that those who dominate seek to lull the self-consciousness of those they dominate and instill in them a sense of inferiority about their own culture. When the dominated people come to realize the strategy of the dominators, they mobilize themselves with tremendous rigour. They unite, grow, struggle to overthrow the indoctrination, and liberate themselves (see Freire 1985). Those who champion the cause of liberation are, unfortunately, gripped by the banking concept of education because of which they are not able to understand its dehumanizing influence. You may read Box 5.2 in Unit 5 to understand Freire's banking concept of education. The seekers of liberation need to adopt the concept of people as conscious beings. This consists of devising learning situations based on dialogical relations in which the duality between the teacher (as the repository of knowledge) and the student (as completely ignorant and bereft of knowledge) is snapped. Teaching and learning then becomes a two-way process in which teachers and students engage on equal terms.

Box 4.4: Freire's Method of Literary Training

Freire's method of literacy training chiefly consisted of the following steps (cited here from Gerhardt 1997:445).

"The educators observe the participants in order to 'line in' to the universe of their vocabulary.

An arduous search for generative words and themes takes place at two levels: Syllabic richness and high degree of experiential involvement.

A first codification of these words into visual images, which stimulated people 'submerged' in the culture of silence to 'emerge' as conscious markers of their own culture. Introduction of the 'anthropological concept of culture' with its differentiation between man and animal.

The decodification of the generative words and themes by a 'culture circle' under the self-effacing stimuli of a coordinator who is not a 'teacher' in the conventional sense, but who has become an educator-educatee in dialogue with educatees- educators.

A creative new codification, which is explicitly critical and aimed at action, wherein those who were formally illiterate now began to reject their role as mere 'objects' in nature and social history. They undertake to become 'subjects' of their own destiny."

More importantly, he invited participation of the community in educational programmes that led to decentralization of control and democratization of schools. What came out clearly was the thrust on praxis in education that refers to developing a sense of critical reflexive action and critical reflection based on action.

This assumes greater relevance in the light of the fact that Freire believed that capitalist societies might be identified with oppression that pervades all social relations and social processes including education. More specifically, Brazil was plagued with intense political, social, and economic inequalities. The stark opposition between the affluent and the impoverished, the oppressor and the oppressed, deeply influenced Freire's thought. The oppressed or the dispossessed were deliberately kept 'submerged' in ignorance and in situations that would curtail their critical awareness and active response to their condition of social, economic, and political domination by the oppressors. Freire described this as the 'culture of silence.' He believed that those who are oppressed, dispossessed, and marginalized tend to remain ignorant and lethargic because of the overpowering social, economic, and political domination. The educational system supports and maintains the domination.

He came to realize that the then current system of education would continue to perpetuate the divide. The alternative before him was to present a conception of education in which the culture, knowledge, and social, economic, and political conditions of the oppressed were in the forefront. His book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was born out of the urge to empower the oppressed through education. He believed that often the process of education gets reduced to deposition of knowledge by the teachers in the students who patiently receive, memorize, and repeat from the deposits. This is the banking concept of education proposed by Freire. In the banking concept of education, teachers treat themselves as knowledgeable and bestow the gift of knowledge to the students whom they treat as completely ignorant. Evidently, such students are given to adapting to the social situation in whatever form it appears before them. The solution lies in humanizing pedagogy in which a permanent dialogue between revolutionary leadership and the oppressed is established. Here the critical consciousness and the awareness of the students are ignited. The oppressed are encouraged to transform their destiny by way of struggle for their liberation. Freire's basic assumption was "that man's ontological vocation (as he calls it) is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively" (Shaul 1972:12). Here, 'world' may be understood as consisting of dynamic and ever-changing social order. It is, hence, possible to look at the world critically with the ambition to overthrow the oppression. What is required, however, is appropriate outlook and training which education can impart. When an illiterate peasant or oppressed sections of society are initiated into critical thinking and the process of transformation, it takes upon itself the task of changing the oppressive structures of society. Freire believed that education either serves as an instrument that integrates the younger generation into the existing social system and makes them conform to it or else it serves as an instrument through which freedom is achieved. He accepted that those who profess the notion of freedom through education are often influenced by the banking concept and give in to its dehumanizing power. Unfortunately, they use this very instrument of alienation in an effort to liberate the masses. They tend to brand those who challenge them on this count as innocent, dreamer or reactionary. The truly committed have to reject the banking concept of education in its entirety. Instead of furthering the goal of deposit-making in education, they have to pursue problem-posing education (i.e., posing of the problems of people in their relations with the world) that would put teacher and student contradiction to rest so that teacher-of-the student and student-of-the-teacher cease to exist. New terminology viz., teacher-student and students-teachers emerges in which

authority is on the side of freedom, not against it. People teach each other. The process is mediated by the world, by cognizable objects.

Box 4.5: Major Works of Paulo Freire

Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 1970. [trans. M.B. Ramos, 1982]. New York: Seabury Press

Cultural Action for Freedom. 1970. Cambridge, M.A: The Harvard Educational Review Monograph Series, no. 1.

Education for Critical Consciousness. 1973. New York: Seabury Press

Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau [trans. C. St. John Hurter]. 1978. New York: Seabury Press

The Politics of Education. [trans. H. A. Giroux] 1985. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey

Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 1994. [trans R.R. Barr]. New York: Continuum

Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those who Dare Teach. 1998. Boulder, Co: Westview Press

4.6 Basil Bernstein (1925-2000)

Basil Bernstein was the son of a Jewish immigrant family in London's East End. He served as an underage bombardier in Africa in the Second World War following which he worked in the Stepey settlement boys' club for underprivileged Jewish children. As a child, Bernstein's mind was occupied with simple, basic questions the answers to which were not part of the curriculum. The questions that filled his mind related to issues that were talked about at home. In his own words, "Why did my father work so hard? Why did I not see him in the mornings, or until late in the evening? Why did my mother go to work 'to support me'? Why were all the fields I played in being developed by more and larger council estates? Why did we have to walk (or later, ride) more than three miles to school? Why were the children from my village treated differently from the children from the immediate school locality" (1995, cited here from Goodson 2001: 162). After completing 11+ Bernstein joined the grammar school in which he felt completely alienated because he could not relate with the structure of content. He found the content dull and the form of its transmission as excessively bewildering. His own experience of learning in school laid the foundation for his ideas on education. Bernstein studied sociology at the London School of Economics which at that time encouraged students to explore the influence of social inequality on education, health, and welfare. He chose to focus on education. For a period of about six years, he taught in the City Day College. His students were people who had remained unsuccessful in the formal school system. Later, he developed interest in the use of language and its relationship to social class. He explored this domain in the course of a two-year stay in the Department of Phonetics, University College, London. He was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Education some time in 1963 and spent the rest of his life conducting research, and supervising doctoral and post-doctoral research (see Goodson 2001).

Bernstein is widely acclaimed for his contribution to the theory of education. He distinguished between two forms of speech patterns: the restricted code; and the elaborated code. Restricted codes, as the term itself suggests are a kind of shortened speech characterized by short, grammatically simple, often unfinished sentences. One may wonder how communication is possible through restricted codes. Despite the fact that, apart from others, one of the features of restricted codes is unfinished sentences. Communication is made possible because the conversing parties have shared-experiences which make detailed

explication of meanings and intentions redundant. Meaning and intention, however, are conveyed through gestures, voice intonation, and context in which the communication takes place. There is no denying that communication through restricted codes is (i) limited to those who are largely familiar with each other; (ii) confined to a specific social group and specific social context.

An elaborated code, is based on verbalization of meanings and details (many of which are taken for granted in the restricted code). Here, meanings are not delimited to a specific social content, rather, they are universalistic and available to all. This is possible because the principles and operations are, in large part, made explicit. Bernstein explained the relationship between speech codes and social class with an example of stories told by two five-year-old children one belonging to the working class whom we will refer to here as A and the other belonging to the middle class whom we will refer to here as B. Both A and B were given four pictures based on which they were asked to develop a story. Out of these, the first picture depicted several boys playing football; the second picture depicted the ball breaking a window; the third picture depicted a woman looking out of the window and a man making a threatening gesture to the boys; and the fourth picture depicted boys retreating from the scene. It was found that A used restricted code to narrate the story. The children left many meanings unspoken so that the story was tied to a particular context shown in the picture. In fact, the story could not be understood without the help of the picture. Bernstein explained that this was so because in the working class families (to which A belonged) position of members was clearly defined in terms of age, gender, and relationships within the family. There was no need for verbal elaboration. By virtue of their authority in the family, the fathers would give a command such as 'shut up' which others would obey. B, on the other hand, used elaborated code to describe and analyze the relationship between events in an integrated way. The story was comprehensible without the aid of the pictures. Bernstein explained that in contrast to the working class, in middle class families (to which B belonged) decisions are negotiable and less rigid. Consequently, it was crucial that meaning and intentions were made explicit. He contrasted the working class and middle class in terms of skill set and participation in decision making. According to Bernstein the use of restricted code by people of working class is also because most of them are engaged in occupations that demand precision in manual rather than verbal skills. They are often not engaged in making decision. The manual worker is discouraged from developing an elaborated code. This contrasts sharply with the position of the middle class people many of whom are involved in white-collar jobs that entail decision making, expertise in verbal skills. Hence, they are able to develop elaborated speech code.

Reflection and Action 4.2

What are the major differences between restricted code and elaborate code?

It is pertinent to understand that formal education is conducted through an elaborated code in which universalistic orders of meaning are transmitted to many students at the same time. This works out to the disadvantage of children belonging to working class families who are given to communicating through restricted code. Bernstein did accept that the restricted code has 'warmth and vitality' and 'simplicity and directness', but it is not compatible with the formal education system. According to Bernstein (1973), the way in which a society classifies, distributes, transmits, and evaluates educational knowledge that it considers to be public, i.e., available to the masses reflects the distribution of power as also the principles of social control. Formal educational knowledge may be considered to be passed on through curriculum (which defines what knowledge is considered valid and appropriate for transmission), pedagogy (which defines what counts as a valid transmission of

knowledge), and evaluation (which counts as a valid realization of this knowledge code' to refer to the principles that shape curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation).

Goodson (2001) explained Bernstein's coding theory stating that strong classification (i.e. rigid boundaries between curriculum categories) denotes a curriculum that is differentiated and separated into traditional knowledge subject to whereas weak classification denotes an integrated curriculum with weak boundaries. These two types of curriculum are characterized as collection code and integrated code. Framing is the transmission of what is identified as valid school knowledge through pedagogic practices. Frame, in effect, is employed to refer to the specific pedagogical relationship of the teacher and the pupil. It refers to the strength of the boundary that separates what may be transmitted from what may not be transmitted in the pedagogical relationship. Strong framing implies the presence of sharp boundary; weak framing implies the presence of blurred boundary. Bernstein analysed the interrelationship between educational codes and the structure of power and principles of social control.

Bernstein (1973, rpt. 1985: 279) maintained "The stronger the classification and the framing, the more the educational relationship tends to be hierarchical and ritualized, the educant seem as ignorant, with little status and few rights. These are things that one earns, rather like spurs and are used for the purpose of encouraging and sustaining the motivation of pupils. Depending upon the strength of frames, knowledge is transmitted in a context in which the teacher has maximal control or surveillance, as in hierarchical secondary school relationships". Further, in early childhood, the frames of the collection code socialize children into knowledge frames that overlook connection with everyday realities. What happens as a consequence is that educational knowledge comes to be treated as esoteric, away from the mundane and the ordinary. Those who possess it, therefore, are accorded special significance. It is only when this frame is relaxed to incorporate the everyday realities will educational knowledge cease to be a signifier of power and prestige.

Box 4.7: Major Works of Bernstein

Class, Codes and Control: Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language. 1971, Vol. 1. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Class, Codes and Control: Applied Studies towards a Sociology of Language. 1973, Vol. 2. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Class, Codes and Control: Towards a Theory of Education Transmission. 1975, vol. 3. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Class, Codes and Control: The structuring of Pedagogic Discourse. 1990, vol. 4. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity: Theory, Research, and Critique. 1996. London and Washington: Taylor & Francis

4.7 Ivan Illich (1926-2002)

Ivan Illich was born in Vienna, Austria, in the year 1926. In the early years of life Illich was served by different governesses from whom he learnt many languages. He read extensively from his grandmother's library and got the opportunity to interact with intellectuals many of whom were friends of his parents. This kind of exposure in the formative years sharpened his intellectual skills. He studied theology and philosophy at the Gregorian University, Rome. Later, he pursued doctoral research in the philosophy of history at the University of Salzburg. He served as a parish priest (to a New York church with an Irish and Puerto Rican congregation), administrator and professor at Fordham University. Illich founded the Centre for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC)

in Cuernavaca, Mexico which provided a platform for American and Latin American intellectuals to discuss and debate on issues of education and culture. He is known for radical ideas (apart from those on Church and its reform, medicine, and transport in modern societies) on education that ignited several controversies. He condemned the school as a system for not being able to keep pace with social change and for reinforcing the *status quo* and protecting the structure of society from which they are born and within which it functions.

His book, *Deschooling Society* is perhaps one of the most widely read works in the disciplines of education in general and sociology of education in particular. He explained that universal education cannot be imparted through the process of schooling. He believed that often the people's right to learn is curtailed by the obligation to attend school. Illich saw an opposition between schooling and education. He denounced institutionalized education as also the institution of school on the ground that it raised people as, "producers of merchandise with a specific exchange value in a society where those who already possess a certain cultural capital derive the most benefit" (Gajardo 1997:714). He maintained that the prestige of a school rested on the myth of (i) institutionalized values which is rooted in the conviction that schooling produces learning which is of value. According to Illich meaningful learning is not dependent on manipulation by others or on instruction but derives from participation of learners in meaningful settings that are least provided in schools; (ii) measurement of values based on the understanding that the values imparted in schools are quantifiable. Illich, however, upheld that personal growth cannot be measured in terms of schooling. Those who employ personal growth tend to constrain themselves a great deal in order to match those standards; (iii) packaging values emphasizing the clear-cut curriculum produced as a modern staple product. This finished product is presented to the students by the teachers and modified subsequently on the basis of their reactions and responses. The entire process simulates the production and delivery of an object; and (iv) self-perpetuating progress assessed in terms of the degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Larger number of these generates larger confidence of the possibility of securing a good job. Pupils (who are treated like consumers) are taught to conform their aspirations and desires in accordance with marketable values. It may be appreciated that people's perception of reality is not determined solely by the schools but also by the family, media, informal, socialization networks and society at large.

Reflection and Action 4.1

In your opinion what is the role of school in society? Discuss with your co-learners at the study centre.

It was possible to undertake the mission of universal education successfully through alternative institutions that could be developed on the style of the present schools. Further, the need was to (i) expand and enlarge the responsibility of the teacher in a way that it extended beyond the teaching-learning engagement in institutions to enwrap the lifetimes of pupils; (ii) enhance opportunities for learning, sharing, and caring in the course of education; and (iii) deschool the ethos as also the institutions. Illich argued vehemently against institutionalised education as also the institution of the school for privileging those who already possess some measure of cultural capital. He explained that schooling, in essence, is the production and marketing of knowledge. The people are made to believe that knowledge that is taught in schools is respectable and worthwhile. This implies that those who are self taught but do not or have not been able to attend school are discriminated against. The fact of the matter, however, is that the institutionalised values instilled in schools constitute the yardstick for measuring personal growth. People try hard to follow the standards laid down before them in schools. For Illich, personal growth could not be measured by the yardstick of schooling.

It may be understood that Illich did not argue for elimination of schools. Rather, he asked for their disestablishment. The difference between the two situations is that while the former calls for closing down of the school system as such, the latter calls for plugging the use of public funds to support schools. He believed that schooling should be treated as an auxiliary item. Schools should be made to pay taxes. When that happened, those who had not undergone schooling would not be discriminated against or despised. Schools and state need to get de-linked much like the Church and the state under the U.S. Constitution. A crucial outcome would be that schooling would no longer be compulsory. In such a situation, teachers would impart education with more passion and students would pursue it without any ulterior motive (Gabbard and Stuchul 2001).

Ivan Illich has been criticized for his radical ideas on schooling. It has often been said that his ideas and assertion were based on intuition and remained far from socio-educational or learning research. Illich has debated with Freire on education, schooling, and awareness. He has also discussed basic issues with other thinkers engaged in search for ways and means of transforming life into a learning experience outside the school system. Notwithstanding the criticism, Illich will be remembered for initiating a debate on education and schooling in which several thinkers participated with tremendous sense of commitment. There is no denying that his ideas do exhibit universal validity and have influenced a large number of educators.

Box 4.6: Major Works of Ivan Illich

Deschooling Society. 1970. New York: Harper & Row

Tools for conviviality. 1973. New York: Harper and Row

In the Vineyard of the Text. 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

4.8 Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

Pierre Bourdieu was born in Denguin, France. His father was a sharecropper. Later, he joined the position of postman. He studied philosophy in Paris and later worked as a teacher for about a year. Bourdieu served in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence between 1958 and 1962 in the course of which he undertook ethnographic research. From the year 1964 he held the position of Director of Studies at the E'cole des Hautes E'tudes en Sciences Sociales; in 1968 he founded the research center, Centre de Sociologie Europeenne; in 1975 he launched an interdisciplinary journal through which he revisited the well established canons of sociology; in 1981 he held the Chair of Sociology at the College de France. It is evident that Bourdieu sought to integrate theoretical ideas with empirical research grounded in everyday life. Bourdieu is known for his theoretical and empirical contributions in the fields of anthropology and cultural studies, education, politics, and sociology. The core idea in his writings revolves around the means by which the educated social groups employ cultural capital as a social strategy to distinguish themselves in society by acquiring status and respect. He explained the concept of social strategy in terms of conscious rational choices that people make in order that their own beliefs come true. Social strategies may be consciously or unconsciously adopted. Bourdieu's ideas are rooted in empirical research that he carried out in France for about four decades. He also used the concept of social strategy in order to explain the way in which individuals engage themselves in the struggle over symbolic capital. He explored the relationship between the relative autonomy of the educational system and its dependence on the structure of class relations. Much like Marx, Bourdieu accepted that the relationship between the ruling class and the subordinate working class is one of conflict and hostility. He agreed that the gap or the difference between the two classes derives from inequities in the possession of capital. For

Bourdieu, capital lies in the group's or an individual's potential to fit into society through shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and virtues. The role of education assumes significance in that it serves as a source from which the privileged and the elite draw not only academic credentials but also propagate an ideology that constitutes the rules of society most of which are to their own advantage. He maintained that intellectuals spread their knowledge judiciously and allow the people to compete for cultural capital within the framework of rules in society. There is no denying that this competition for cultural capital perpetuates class distinctions (Brimi 2005).

According to Bourdieu, education serves to perpetuate the culture of the dominant classes— a phenomenon often referred to as 'cultural reproduction'. The dominant classes tend to project their own culture as superior and worthwhile to an extent that they establish it as the basis of knowledge in the educational system. Bourdieu referred to 'cultural capital' in the framework of culture of the dominant classes more so because through the agency of the educational system it can be translated into wealth and power (meaning that those who pass through the educational system which derives largely from the culture of the dominant classes are able to acquire both wealth and power in society). What is interesting to note is the fact that diversity in educational achievements of students belonging to different classes emanates from uneven distribution of cultural capital in the class structure. This means that students who belong to the upper classes find themselves in a familiar educational environment (because they are socialized into the culture and have internalized the skills and knowledge from which the educational system is derived) while students belonging to lower classes find themselves alienated from the educational environment. Students belonging to the middle class are able to perform better than those of lower classes because their culture is close to the culture of the dominant class.

The performance of the students, therefore, depends on their access to cultural capital. Bourdieu explained that in operational terms, children of the upper classes are able to comprehend the content of knowledge better than their counterparts belonging to lower classes for the simple reason that the range of meanings, the grammar, tone, and delivery of the content is more comprehensible to them. Furthermore, they are able to articulate and present the knowledge in a way that is appreciated and rewarded by the teacher-evaluator. The students of lower classes fall short on this count. Often, they are penalized when their style of presentation does not conform to that of the dominant culture. Now, while the former are inherently in an advantageous situation, the latter are at a loss right from the beginning. One consequence of this practice is the systematic elimination of people of the working class from the area of education. Elimination of those belonging to the working class takes place because of the failure in the educational system and an understanding of their own position vis-à-vis those belonging to the ruling class. This, in turn, leads to social reproduction— perpetuation of the power of the ruling class.

Box 4.8: Major Works of Pierre Bourdieu

Outline of Theory of Practice. 1977. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Homo Academicus. 1988. Cambridge: Polity Press

The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power. 1966. Cambridge: Polity Press

4.9 Conclusion

In this unit we have familiarized ourselves with the basic viewpoints of seven major thinkers on education. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that they were born and brought up at different places at different times, they seem to converge on the fundamental understanding that meaningful education was not one that was based on transmission of information in schools but one that led to personal growth and development. Several of them believed that the scope of education needs to be broadened to address issues of social and political hegemony. They argued for setting education free from the state and dominant sections of society. They envisaged the purpose of education as self-enrichment and, more importantly, liberation from the clutches of domination and hegemony. What comes out clearly from their writings is the vast potential of education to usher in and sustain social transformation.

4.10 Further Reading

Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. England: Penguin Books

Illich, I. 1970. *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row

Morsy, Z. (ed). 1997. *Thinkers on Education*. Vol. 1-4. New Delhi: UNESCO Publishing/Oxford & IBH Publishing

