THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

by

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INTRODUCTION

Aims of Education

Socialization is an overall process which goes on continuously. But only in so far as it is institutionalized and structured, can it be referred to as education. Broadly speaking, the aims of education are said to be socialization, transmission of skills and knowledge, preparation for adult roles and responsibilities—these in turn involve role perception and identity formation, individuation and development of initiative. By and large, the first three aims of education listed above are very widely recognized and accepted. However, if education is to be purposive in a changing society, then, the development of initiative and individuation would be equally important aims of education. The term 'socialization' indicates the process of the internalization of norms and values relevant to a given social system, so that role performance can be anticipated and ensured.

Interaction amongst the members of a society hinges on the adequate internalization of norms and values by its members. Through socialization, the new generation can become efficient role-incumbents. Obviously, this can be attained in various ways, formal and informal. The formal method of socialization is education. Inevitably, there is a measure of institutionalization whereby the requisite values and norms are both transmitted and internalized by the new generation. Whatever is felt to be worth perpetuating is sought to be transmitted, and steps are taken to ensure that the younger generation internalizes and incorporates these norms and values in their behaviour, interaction, etc.

It is only because of institutionalized procedures and mechanisms that the internalization of values and norms in so

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far as they are reflected in interactive behaviour can be ensured.

There is a very clear enunciation and definition of roles and statuses. For example, the roles and statuses of the teacher and the taught are very clearly defined so that there is no ambiguity at all about these. Then again, the interaction and role behaviour amongst the students will also be quite clearly defined, and is said to be one of equality by and large. On the other hand, there is quite an amount of distance prescribed and maintained between the teacher and the taught. Amongst the teachers again hierarchy is recognized in terms of position, seniority, possession of special skills, etc. This formal aspect of socialization enables the younger generation to internalize the patterns of interaction in terms of maintaining a proper distance between generations, paying due deference, and accepting information, knowledge, skills, etc., without any protest or grudge. Moreover, since formal socialization, that is education, also leads to the preparation of the younger generation so that they can function as efficient members of adult society, a certain measure of gratification is involved. Besides, the transmission of existing skills and knowledge to the younger generation is one of the major aims of education.

Every social system tries to transmit the current skills and knowledge to the younger generation so that they can become effective and competent members of the adult society. In the absence of a mechanism for transmission of skills and knowledge, these skills and knowledge will be lost to the society. Obviously, of all things, emphasis is placed on the utilitarian aspect of knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills are mainly to be utilized for getting things done or for delivering the goods. It should not be forgotten that in every society there is a quantum of knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to another irrespective of the fact that such knowledge cannot be put to any concrete use. For example, the knowledge of cultural traditions and values is transmitted even when it cannot be put to any direct use. However, there is also a great body of knowledge which can be put to direct use, such as methods of sowing and cultivation, manufacture of items of day to day utility, etc. This inevitably introduces a static element in so far as undue emphasis is placed on merely transmitting current skills and knowledge without emphasizing the scientific basis

of these. If knowledge and skills are transmitted and internalized in a mechanical manner, then, the younger generation may not really be able to cope with the changing situations and demands, because they have not understood the how and why of a particular skill or knowledge. Therefore, in transmission of skills and knowledge, adequate care should be taken to discuss the scientific basis of these so as to prepare the younger mind to grapple with the changing situation.

Another aim of education is naturally the preparation of the younger generation for adult roles and responsibilities. It is true that with training their minds, with suitable opportunities for relevant and gradual interaction, the younger generation can be prepared to take upon itself adult roles and responsibilities. The transition from childhood, through adolescence, to youth and adult roles, has to be sharply marked. Different stages of development and transition are envisaged and suitable mechanisms have to be provided for ensuring such developments and transition. There has also to be transition from the child's or adolescent's dependence on the older generation to the evolution of an autonomous personality as an adult. This transition can be smooth for a socializee given a properly thought out and imaginative programme of training and education. Here it must be mentioned that certain cultural systems militate against the smooth and successful evolution of an independent personality. Thus, the dependency pattern is perpetuated in certain cultures. On the other hand, in certain cultures the independent personality is prized and rewarded. All the same, every society endeavours to prepare the younger generation for adult roles and responsibilities through a programme of training and education. One has to remember that this preparation is also conducted by informal agencies, such as the family, but education as a social institution is a very well recognized agency for the task.

The younger generation has to be enabled to perceive adult roles and also to be helped in the process of identity formation. In order to ensure this, it is necessary that the younger generation has active, meaningful and dynamic contact with the older generation. Different situations of interaction must be created and the younger generation should be exposed to these. In fact, it is very necessary that the younger genera-

tion should participate in such situations actively. The process of identity formation is expected to be sufficiently complete when one attains adult status.

Socialization and Individuation

Socialization does not mean a mere replication of personality types. It really means the internalization of the relevant norms in the individual allowing him to develop into a distinct entity. Looked at from this point of view, socialization and individuation are not or would not really be antithetical. It is absolutely necessary that in order to function effectively as a member of adult society, the socializee develop and inculcate an adequate amount of initiative. Initiative can be inculcated only through the process of individuation. In fact, over-socialization would be antithetical to both individuation and the development of initiative. The challenges and demands of the new situation cannot be adequately met without initiative. This necessarily means a certain measure of flexibility and modifiability. Too much structuring of roles and statuses would militate against individuation. In fact, it is deemed to be one of the purposes of education that the human personality be developed in such a manner that every individual can be on his or on her own. Thus, education, though it is a social institution, has implications and significance, both for socialization and individuation.

Meeting the challenge of a situation efficiently and economically is one of the important purposes of education for both the educand and the education system as a whole. Because, then alone can a social system be efficient in its day to day functioning, particularly in respect of adaptive behaviour. The instrumental aspect of knowledge and skills is thus rightly emphasized. The younger generation has to be trained and prepared for meeting changing situations. Coping with new situations and mastering the new situation is one of the main aims of education. This can be attained only through the preparation and training of individuals. Of course, various collectivities would ensure this process through suitable programmes of training and preparation. But one also has to bear in mind the limitations of such programmes in the sense that the situations that will come cannot be completely envisaged. There is bound to be an element of uncertainty or unpredict-

ability. The only way to reduce this element, or rather to make sure that this element would not cause disruption, is by developing the potential capacity of the individuals so that they can meet any new situation.

The School and College as Subsystems

Education has been defined as the social institution for ensuring socialization, training in skills and knowledge, preparation for adult roles, and individuation. Obviously, however important education may be as a social institution, it is a part of the social system. Various other institutions such as family, stratification, property, etc., impinge on education from time to time. A great deal of the success of education depends upon the co-operation between education and the family. Then again, the system of stratification has implications for differential educational institutions. The possession or otherwise of property also has implications for attaining or denying certain types of education. The attitude towards education also has an important bearing on the system of education. On the other hand, education is also a very effective instrument of mobility and social change. Education would enable people to realize the best in themselves, and so overcome initial disadvantages arising from family, system of stratification, etc. Education helps facilitate the development of ideologies pertaining to social justice, equality, etc. There is in fact a continuous interchange between education as an institution and the social system at large.

In this paper an attempt is made to discuss the school and college as a social system at two different levels. In the first section, the discussion would be purely analytical whereas in the second section, an impressionistic account will be given of the functioning of the school and college in the Indian situation. In the second section, stress would be placed on delineating the structural features under which education as a social institution functions. Likewise, the needs of the changing situation would also be highlighted.

THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

Description of the System

Earlier, it has been mentioned that the school plays a very

important role in the formal socialization of the child and the adolescent.,The school not only offers instruction, but it also gradually but surely, weans the children and the adolescents away from the protected life in the family. Children and adolescents are exposed to nonfamilial influences and environments. There is a shift in favour of an impersonal approach. The ascriptive and particularistic bases of family have to be forgotten for the time being while a boy or a girl finds himself or herself in a school. Apart from learning and instruction, there is a great measure of socialization of the children and the adolescents, so that they can internalize adult roles. Moreover, care is taken to see that these roles would be performed with a degree of efficiency. "The school is an agency through which individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles."[1] The school provides training for, and experience of a wider social existence. Of course, the school reflects the hierarchy based on generation. But, there is also a great facility for mixing and growing up with those of a similar age group. Thus, egalitarian relationships are also well nurtured and developed in a school. The teacher on the other hand represents the adult status and point of view. Therefore, training for, and experience of living and working with adults who are more or less strangers is also offered by a school. There is, no denying the fact that children and adolescents carry a backlog of their socio-economic status and position to the school. But, efforts are made in the school to reduce any handicaps of socio-economic status of the students, in terms of their family, class, caste, etc.

In the school, great emphasis is placed on achievement. Achievement can be of different types, in scholastic and academic work, in extra curricular activities, in qualities of leadership, etc. The school has its own system of hierarchy which is largely based on achievement and performance, rather than on ascription and quality. Thus, the school tends to emphasise universalism as against particularism. The school is a prototype of the external world where each person would be judged on his or her own merits. The subjective element is reduced to its minimum. The school opens out avenues for further career and advancement, primarily in terms of achievement.

Thus, the performance in the school would largely decide whether or not a student would go for higher education, such as a college and university education. Naturally, placement in occupation and social position would also depend a great deal on performance in the school. Comradeship and colleagueship amongst equals is also largely developed in the school. Of course, there is a tacit recognition and acceptance of the seniority of some students in terms of age, class (school), attainments, etc. There is also the recognition and acceptance of adult hierarchy. Moreover, in the school the relationships are purely voluntary, in the sense that one has the freedom to choose one's associates and friends. It may be true that considerations like socio-economic status might, to a certain degree, influence the choice. But, by and large the ascriptive basis is reduced to its minimum. There is a gradual weaning away from the family. The teaching-learning situation is a replica of the exchange model. There is also training for acceptance of'authority.

The Social Structural Aspects of Schools

The school as a social system needs to be analysed both from the structural and the functional point of view. It is true that there are types and types of schools, but there are certain basic similarities both on the structural and functional planes. Structurally, the school is a formal agency of socialization, training and instruction. It has its own structure which is as follows :

The school may be governed by the State department of education or a private management body, which may be religious or denominational. At the top of the hierarchy in the school is the headmaster or the principal or the superintendent. Then, there are teachers in charge of various classes and also special teachers to teach certain subjects like mathematics, science, English, social studies., etc., as well as teachers who are put in charge of extra curricular or co-curricular activities, such as games, athletics, the cadet corps, crafts and drawing, etc. There may also be some administrative officials like head clerks, clerks, typists and the lower staff, etc., depending on the nature of the school. The local community may be represented by selected representatives who would be on the governing body

of the school. In other cases, the missionaries may be in charge of the school and would be members of the governing bodies of the school. In some cases, the running of the school is a part and parcel of the jurisdiction of local political authority, such as the Panchayat or the Zilla Parishad.

Then again, as for the curriculæ and the courses and system of examinations, etc., the school is subject to the control of the State education department. Effective control is maintained by the State education department in terms of an elaborate system of inspection of schools from time to time. The purpose of such inspections is to ensure that the requisite standards with respect to academic levels, provision of facilities for teaching and accommodation, etc., are adhered to. Besides, through inspection any kind of indulgence in anti-social or political activities can be effectively eliminated. The appointment of teachers, their terms and conditions of work, transfers, etc., are also very carefully laid down. In structural terms socialization as well as training and instruction to prepare the adolescents to take up adult roles efficiently are ensured by emphasising academic standards, discipline, etc.

The various types of schools, such as the nursery schools, the elementary schools, the middle schools and the high schools, need to be discussed in order to get an idea about the school as a social system. There are, again sub-types of the types of schools mentioned above. For example, the elementary school may be run either by the State department, a Municipal Corporation, or a private body, or a religious organization. It is true that in the case of these sub-types of the elementary school, the structural features mentioned above would be common, but, there will be certain differences which will be described below. Middle schools, too may be either run by more or less the same agencies as mentioned in the case of elementary schools. Some middle schools are incorporated into a high school, in which case there are certain structural differences. High schools would, again, be divided into those with technical and vocational bias and those which provide general courses leading to a college. The structural features of the high schools would depend on the kind of courses they offer. They will also depend on the agency by which the high school is run.

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(i) THE NURSERY SCHOOL

By and large, the nursery schools are conducted in urban areas such as the bigger towns, cities, etc. Nursery schools are usually run by private agencies or religious denominations or by Public schools. Usually, an effort is made to link the nursery with the elementary school, the middle school, the high school and so on. More often than not the nursery schools cater to the higher strata. Usually, only children belonging to families in the higher strata are admitted to such schools, because the fees charged are usually very high, beyond the reach of the common man. The structure of the school is fairly simple. There is usually a superintendent or a head-mistress with a few assistant teachers. The greatest accent is put on socialization, characterized by the teaching of good manners, etiquette, etc. The instruction imparted is very informal.

The structure of authority is very simple. The superintendent or the principal is at the top of the hierarchy, the assisting teachers being subordinate to her. The children have to accept whatever their teachers want them to do. Of course, children are taught to do things with a personal and intimate approach. Attempts are made to understand each child as an independent personality, taking into account the family background.

(ii) THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The following are the different types of schools, their classification being according to the agencies which manage them.

(a) Schools run by the State department of education,

(b) Schools run by the Municipal Corporation,

(c) Schools run by a Non-religious Private agency,

(d) Schools run by a Religious agency,

(e) Schools which are part of a Public school.

The structural features naturally differ in each of the various types listed above.

(a) Schools run by the State Department of education : Such schools are completely governed and managed by the State department in respect of appointment of teachers, facilities for training and other activities, transfers and promotions of

teachers, disciplinary action both in respect of teachers and students. Usually the teachers appointed in such schools are women. This establishes a kind of continuity between the school and the family. The children do not feel completely cut off from the family because the women teachers can provide the mother image. Of course, the school teachers naturally emphasize achievement and performance rather than the need and inclinations of the children. Nevertheless, the teacher has to take into account the difficulties of the children. Therefore, the personal element is structured in such a situation so that the children do not feel completely cut off from familial environment and treatment. Emphasis is placed on academic performance and there is a differential placement of various children on this score. However, equal emphasis is placed on socialization. The student "both transcends familial identification in favour of a more independent one and comes to occupy a differentiated status within the new system. His personal status is inevitably a direct function of the position he achieves, primarily in the formal school class and secondarily in the formal peer group structure".[2] Of course, there is greater supervision and attention by the teachers in the elementary school. If such schools are run in smaller towns, then there is the possibility of an effective contact between the teachers and the parents, in which case the school becomes an extension of the home and the family in respect of socialization, disciplining, etc.

(b) Schools run by Municipal Corporations : The rest of the structural features are common to those mentioned above, except for the urban influence. Even here, there may be some influences exerted by the elected representatives.

(c) Schools run by private agencies : Such schools may be run either in rural areas or towns or even cities. Such schools are governed by a Board of management. The Board of management may be composed of educationists, teachers, members of professions, locally influential people, etc. Such schools may be sister institutions of middle schools, high schools and even colleges conducted by a private agency, such as an educational society. In such cases, there may be an organic relationship between the various sister institutions in respect of transfers of teachers, continuous growth from one phase to another, etc. Moreover, a certain amount of indoctrination in the sense of

having a body of principles and ideas to which the teachers would be committed, would be possible.

(d) Schools run by religious denominations : The differential structural feature in respect of such schools would obviously be their being confined to a certain religious denomination at least in respect of management of the school and also appointment of teachers, if not admission of the students. Obviously, in the case of such schools, particularistic orientation in the sense of religious indoctrination is stressed. Otherwise, the rest of the structural features are more or less common to those of the types mentioned above.

(e) Schools run as a part of a Public school : Elementary schools which are part of the Public school have distinctive structural characteristics. The most important feature is the distinctive strata for which such schools are meant. Likewise, the accent on the training of the elite is also unmistakably there. Therefore, special care would be taken both in respect of admission of the students, and the appointment of teachers. Then again, the curriculæ and activities of the school would be much more variegated than those in other schools. For example, a great premium would be put on extra curricular activities, inculcation of qualities of leadership, drive, initiative, etc. Such schools prepare their students for holding important positions in society. Obviously enough, there is a great slant on the ascriptive basis, particularly in respect of the admission of the students.

The structure of authority is as follows : The headmaster or the principal is at the top of the hierarchy, the other teachers are subordinate to him or to her. Of course, the headmaster himself may be subject to the authority of the Managing Council, the Municipal Corporation or the Government department. But within the school, the headmaster's authority is supreme. The students have to accept the authority of the teachers and the headmaster in toto. The teacher represents adult society. It has been mentioned earlier that in the school differentiation is made on the basis of achievement. The nature of the achievement is to a large extent determined by the adult image of what is worth achieving. In the elementary school, there is greater emphasis on socialization, discipline, etc. There is a sharp polarisation between the pupil, and the teacher

who represents the adult world. Structurally, there is an equalisation of the initial statuses of the students in so far as every student is treated only in his capacity as a student irrespective of family or status differentials. The school provides an opportunity for association and friendship on a more or less voluntary basis. Structurally speaking, this has consequences for obtaining non-adult approval for certain acts. The importance of peer group relations for socialization is realised only in later life. It is true that "the motivation foundations of character are inevitably laid down through identification with parents, who are generation superiors, and the generation differences is a type example of a hierarchical status difference. But an immense part of the individual's adult role performance will have to be in association with status equals or near equals".[3] "In school the teacher is institutionally defined as superior to any pupil in knowledge of curriculum, subject-matter and in responsibility as a good citizen of the school."[4] Unlike the parents the teacher has to treat every student in terms of his or her performance. This introduces the element of universalism. The teacher emphasises universalistic norms and the differential rewards for achievement. "Above all, she must be the agent of bringing about and legitimising a differentiation of the school class on an achievement axis."[5]

(iii) THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The middle schools could again be subdivided according to the agencies which run them, as in the case of elementary schools. The structural features would naturally differ according to the sponsorship, as in the case of elementary schools. As against the elementary school, in the middle school greater emphasis is placed on academic achievement, because it is assumed that the requisite amount of socialization has been ensured, and completed at the elementary school level. In the middle school also, there would be an headmaster or principal or the Superintendent assisted by teachers, who are subordinate to him. In many instances, there is a teacher, appointed for each class, who is generally entrusted with the task of teaching all the subjects, except for athletics, extra curricular activities, etc. In terms of teaching, therefore, there is a role diffusion. Differential achievement becomes sharply focussed. Accordingly,

there is a differentiation of the students in the class. Such differentiation has implications for deciding the further progress and career of the students. Thus, those who are not doing well, would not join the high school. In a way, adult roles are more or less decided for such students. Moreover, their status as adults is also largely conditioned.

The structure of authority is very clear, the headmaster or the principal being at the top of the hierarchy with the teachers being subordinate to him. The students have to accept the authority of the teachers completely. The system of having a class teacher facilitates the acceptance of the authority of the teacher, because the teacher knows every student very well in terms of his strengths and weakness. The head-master and the teachers themselves may be subject to other authorities such as the State Department, the Municipal Corporation or the Managing Council, etc., as mentioned in the case of the elementary school. The middle school, structurally, can be either a link with higher education or a point of termination. Thus, it has structural significance for future placement in the occupational hierarchy.

(iv) THE HIGH SCHOOL

The High Schools could again be subdivided into sub-types according to the agencies which run them. There is a further differentiation on the basis of whether the high school has a technical or vocational bias or prepares students for further studies in liberal arts, science, etc. There are high schools which specialize. Naturally, in the case of such high schools, lesser stress would be placed on extra curricular attainments. The structural features of the high school in terms of the types listed above, are more or less the same as those in the case of elementary schools. However, a major common point to all high schools is the greater emphasis on academic attainments and achievements. The high school has a headmaster or principal who is assisted by several teachers. The teachers are specialists in various subjects. There is also an administrative staff. The boarding schools have special structural features, in the sense that, not only are there special facilities made available for students in terms of boarding and lodging facilities, but in that the school also takes upon itself the responsibility

of looking after the students, though, in a way quite different from that of the family. In such schools, provision has to be made for boarding superintendents, wardens, etc., who are responsible for the general behaviour and conduct of the students. As for the teachers in high schools, there is role specificity in respect of teaching. Academic attainment is highly prized and it is on this basis that a clear cut differentiation and even bifurcation is made. Thus, students who do very well academically proceed for further studies to a college. Naturally, this has implications for occupational placements and status differentiation. The greatest stress is on achievement, ascriptive factors being almost absent. There is an increasing measure of association within the peer groups. As students grow in age and attainments, the parents interfere less and less in their associations and friendships. This is reflected even in the territorial widening of the friends' circle. The closer association both in academic activities and extra curricular activities strengthens the peer group bonds. Thus, structurally the high school is a very important stage in the attainment of the adult status in respect of independence.

The structure of authority in the high school is very clear. The headmaster or the principal is responsible for overall supervision, guidance and control. Due to the role specificity of the teachers, the personal element in the teacher-student relationship is reduced considerably. Increasing scope is given to student leaders in the high school. Thus, there are class monitors, as well as group leaders for various extra curricular activities. Gradually the students are trained to take up responsibilities. Of course, they work largely in association with the teachers and in many cases also under their supervision. But, this provides another focus for stratification in the school. Occupying positions of leadership in the high school has implications for occupying higher posts in college and in later life. To a certain extent, this may be guided by the socio-economic status of the students.

The Functional Aspects of Schools

From the functional point of view, the school as a social system has a double focus, (i) socialization, and (ii) adaptive primacy. As mentioned at the outset, the school helps pupils

to internalise "both the commitments and capacities for successful performance of their future adult roles, and secondly to allocate these human resources within the role structure of the adult society".[6] The inculcation of relevant motivation and training of capacities is the main task, functionally speaking, of the school. There is a great emphasis on "commitment to the implementation of the broad values of society and commitment to the performance of a specific type of role within the structure of the society".[7] Thus, there is a great deal of emphasis on being a good, solid citizen, whatever might be the occupational status attained by a person. From the point of view of society, the school is "an agency of man-power allocation". It is in terms of one's educational training and attainments that one comes to occupy status in the occupational sphere. Therefore, from the point of view of performance of adult roles the school as a social system plays a very important role in so far as it enables the incumbents to play the roles with the required degree of efficiency. It is in terms of the degrees of efficiency with which adult roles are performed that a system of stratification is worked out. Therefore, the school has implications for maintenance of the existing system of stratification, particularly with reference to achieving status. In this sense, the school can also be an agency for promoting social mobility. It is from this point of view that the values of social justice, equality, etc., may be implemented. Of course, this presupposes the availability of facilities for educational advancement, irrespective of the socio-economic background. "The school is the first socializing agency in the child's experience which institutionalizes a differentiation of status on a non-biological basis."[8] The school enables students to learn their status.

There are functional differences in terms of the various types of schools ranging from the nursery to the high school.

(i) THE NURSERY SCHOOL

Thus, at the nursery school level, there is a major emphasis on training the children to become less dependent on their parents and siblings. Children are trained to imbibe and practice equality by sharing toys, play material, etc. An attempt is made to initiate the process of personality building. It should

be mentioned here that by and large the children who go to the nursery school belong to the higher socio-economic strata. Therefore, inevitably, the nursery school tends to perpetuate the existing system of stratification by a special type of socialization. It is true that children are taught to operate with their hands and feet. But there is a class bias which creeps into the training and atmosphere in the nursery school.

(ii) THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

As for the elementary school, there is a great emphasis on socialization. Of course, academic training and learning is also emphasised. Cognitive learning of information, skills and frames of reference is certainly there. For example, written language and acquiring of skills in arithmetical knowledge, scientific knowledge, etc., is emphasised. But the major component is what may be called a moral one. Efforts are made to turn students into responsible citizens of the school community. Students are trained to co-operate with fellow-students as well as to take orders ungrudgingly from the teacher. Work habits are also inculcated amongst the students. Likewise, capacities for leadership and initiative are also developed. The teacher represents the adult society. The teacher lays down the standards of achievement. Students are gradually weaned away from the protective family environment and supports. The process of autonomy formation is initiated very clearly in the elementary school. Since achievement is stressed, students are provided with the opportunity of obtaining both adult and non-adult approval on the basis of their performance in both technical and moral areas. It is not only the scholastic performance or excellence which is prized, but also the "moral" performance, in the sense of internalization of norms and values of the school with reference to relationship with students and teachers. The school provides simultaneously, rewarding experience of relationship with the senior generation as well as that with equals. There is on the one hand "an emancipation of the child from primary emotional attachment to the family and internalization of a level of societal values and norms that is a step higher than those he can learn in his family alone".[9] There is also an emphasis on achievement and universalism, which facilitates the process of role allocation for the social

system. The students are trained to accept hierarchy based on achievement. This helps the student to be released from the family status in certain ways. "His personal status is inevitably a direct function of the position he achieves, primarily in the formal school class and secondarily in the formal peer group structure."[10] The acceptance of the system of hierarchy in terms of achievement helps also to integrate the school system in so far as there obtains a congruence between values of the family and those of the society. Exposure to a non-familial environment facilitates the process of autonomy formation as well as identity formation. Universalistic standards and criteria are made available. This analysis would by and large hold good for all the types of elementary schools mentioned earlier. Of course, the process of socialization would be specific to the type of school; for example, in the elementary school which is a part of a public school, there would be a certain socio-economic bias in the process of socialization.

(iii) THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

As for the middle school, there is an increasing emphasis on academic attainments and the inculcation of discipline. While the middle school is a stage, in the process of education, leading to the high school, it is also a stage at which many students terminate their education. The school has to prepare students for either of these two courses. It is in the middle school that extra curricular activities are introduced. This provides the next step in the process of personality building. In the case of the middle school too there are various types which have functional differentials, as mentioned in the case of the elementary school.

(iv) THE HIGH SCHOOL

In the high school great stress is placed on academic achievement. Of course, extra curricular activities are also stressed. Great importance is attached to the development of the qualities of initiative, leadership, etc. The high school performs the function of selection and differentiation among the students on the basis of their scholastic and other attainments. This has implications for future training, career, and occupational placement. Great premium is put on autonomy formation. "The

focus is on the differentiation of qualitative types of achievement."[11] There is also a bifurcation in terms of high schools which have a vocational or technical bias and those which prepare students for admission to general arts and science colleges. Thus, the vocational commitment is also ensured in schools with a vocational bias. This naturally has implications for the process of identity formation. The academic achievement and attainments in extra curricular activities are very much stressed. The cultural aspect of education is certainly present though it is subordinate to the other aspects. The primacy of the adaptive focus is thus highlighted. Naturally, this has implications for future placement in society.

It is quite true that the school has its own system of values and norms which have to be internalized by the students. In fact, it has been mentioned earlier that the students have to internalize the values and norms so that they can become good citizens of the school community. However, particularly at the elementary school level, the social norms are clearly reflected in the school as a social system. Adaptive behaviour depends naturally on the commitment of both the teachers and the students to these. As for the teachers, their performance and participation would depend on (i) competence, (ii) interest, and (iii) facilities provided for them. The competence of a teacher is not restricted only to academic attainments. A great deal depends on his role-perception. Likewise, his commitment would depend on the interest he continues to take in the vocation. Of course, the teacher in his turn must be provided with adequate facilities for effective functioning in the shape of good working environment and atmosphere—the essence of colleagueship—rather than relationships of a superordinate and subordinate character, adequate emoluments, bearable workload, freedom to innovate in respect of teaching, vacations, etc.

The students also must have the requisite commitment. At the elementary school level, interest is more important than competence, while at the high school level, where there is already a selection and differentiation amongst students on the basis of academic excellence and achievement, competence is very important. Of course, sustained interest is equally important, and this again depends on proper motivation. In order

that students perform efficiently, they should be given adequate social structural supports, for example, the family should provide the requisite facilities, encouragement, etc. Moreover, it is equally important that the family should take an informal and intelligent interest in the growth of the student. There has to be a co-ordination between agencies such as the family and the school.

The product of the school has to be ultimately absorbed in the society through the process of socialization and of imparting instruction and training. Students are prepared to be absorbed in the occupational structure of the society, of course, it is presupposed that the society would provide such opportunities. There are many students who would like to go to college for further training and instruction. It is very important to ensure that such students acquire the requisite competence and commitment, so that they can benefit most out of college experience.

THE COLLEGE AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

A Description of the System

The college as a social system is a much more selective and autonomous system than the school. There is already considerable selection and differentiation in respect of the admission of the students. The process of socialization is said to be considerably advanced when a student reaches the college stage, particularly with reference to the weaning away from the family. The greater autonomy of the college can be explained in the following terms : It is true that the college has to function as a part of the university to which it is affiliated and it is also subjected to the examination system. But, the kind of training which is imparted in the college is such that it prepares, or it is at least supposed to prepare, the students to take up occupational roles in the wider society. Consequently, the college is connected with the wider social system via the occupational structure. The social system also depends on the college to provide trained personnel. Naturally, the college enjoys a degree of autonomy, in respect of the laying down of standards of attainment. The adaptive focus is emphasised in the college, because immediately after finishing

college, the students attain adult status by performing occupational roles. Students are continuously exposed to adult roles. The selection and differentiation of the students is primarily on the achievement axis. Of course, there may be a few cases where ascriptive factors influence selection. There are a variety of colleges, for example, the arts and science colleges which can accommodate students who do not have very high achievement. The nature of the instruction imparted in the college is quite different, qualitatively, from that in the school. Great emphasis is placed on the development of a critical faculty amongst the students. As Whitehead has observed, students in the college are supposed to stand up (intellectually) and look around for themselves. The relationship between the college teachers and the students is primarily based on guidance rather than straight teaching. The teachers are expected to inculcate and sharpen thinking habits amongst the students. The students are likewise expected to be on their own in respect of collecting information necessary for studies. Thus, the task of a college teacher is not to dole out factual information and material, but to point out the generalities which emerge from such material. While socialization is emphasised in the school, individuation is emphasised in the college. Of course, the college student has to be a good, but a discerning and discriminating citizen of the college community. The college as a social system encourages different points of view, not only in intellectual matters but also in social and political affairs. College students are supposed to be exposed to various points of view. The college students are increasingly expected to be responsible for their decisions. The dependence on the parents is considerably reduced, if not altogether eliminated. In addition to academic excellence, overall development of personality is prized in the college. The college promotes the development of autonomy and thus facilitates the process of identity formation. The process of identity formation is considerably facilitated by the direct link which the college has with the occupational structure. Of course, it is presupposed that (i) the college would provide requisite training which would be directly useful in occupational placement, and (ii) that there would be enough occupational opportunities provided by the economy. A growing economy thus would ensure the future

career of the college students, making it possible for them to more or less complete the process of identity formation. Completion of the college and placement in occupation is a very major step in the completion of the process of identity formation. The process of identity formation is said to be complete when a person gets married and establishes his own family. In this respect also, the college as a social system may contribute by throwing open opportunities for knowing and selecting life partners.

The Social Structure of the College

Structurally, the college is a part of the university. The affairs of the college may be guided by the governing council but in its day to day function the college enjoys a great deal of autonomy. The college has, of course, to operate in relation to the system of examinations, awarding of degrees, diplomas, etc. because, otherwise those who complete college education would not be acceptable in the occupational structure. The course and curriculae, should thus bear relationship to the requirements of the occupational system. This naturally necessitates revision and modification of the course. Besides, routine training and instruction has to be minimized in favour of imaginative and analytical training. The college provides, structurally, facilities for such training by emphasising the highest standards of attainment in respect of analytical ability. This can be attained only by the appointment of good teachers and also by selecting good students. The structure of authority in the college is composed of the principal, the professors, tutors and the administrative staff. The council of management exercises an overall authority on the working of the college. But, in day to day working the authority of the principal and the professors matters a great deal.

Students are naturally a vital part of the social structure of the college. Students could be subdivided into day scholars and hostelites. Life in hostels promotes meaningful and lasting associations and friendships.

The college provides facilities for academic excellence and participation in extra curricular activities. The extra curricular activities should again be subdivided into those pertaining to academic work, for example, study circles, debating unions,

discussion groups, etc.; and sports and recreation or social service—auxiliary cadet corps, etc. Both academic excellence and leadership in extra curricular activities are thus emphasised and suitable facilities are provided for attainment in both the fields. The students' associations are considerably autonomous. This helps development of the qualities of initiative and leadership amongst the students. Students can inculcate a sense of adult responsibility and capacity through the functioning of such associations.

The hierarchy in the college entirely depends on achievement. As mentioned earlier, achievement can be either in the academic field or in the field of extra curricular activities. Of course, a certain standard of attainment in the academic field is absolutely essential. There are what are called prestige colleges where the overall development is stressed. On the other hand, there are other colleges where academic excellence is stressed and excellence in other areas is not emphasised, so that they may not even provide facilities for extra curricular activities. Of course, there is an increasing emphasis on extra curricular activities in the colleges. The college provides facilities for recreation, atheletics, sports, etc. Thus, the mechanism of tension management is built in the structure of the college.

It must be mentioned that there are various types of colleges, for example, colleges in rural and urban areas, arts and science colleges, colleges with a professional vocational bias, such as law, medicine, engineering, education, technology, agriculture, commerce, etc. There are certain distinctive structural features of these various types of colleges. In the professional and vocational colleges, there is greater specificity of goals and commitment on the part of the students. There is also naturally greater emphasis on completion of tasks by the students. Theoretical training as well as considerable practical experience are naturally emphasised in these colleges. On the other hand, in arts and science colleges emphasis is placed on the general training of the students, which may not have a direct bearing on their occupational roles. The relative emphasis on extra curricular activities also differs from institutions of one type to another. There are structural differences between colleges in the rural and urban areas. These differences stem from the type of students and the quality of teachers in these colleges.

Moreover, there may be a great deal of difference in terms of facilities available, interference in the college affairs, etc.

The Functional Aspect of the College

In functional terms there is a very clear adaptive focus in the college as a social system. Because of selection and differentiation of the students on the basis of achievement, the adaptive focus can be adequately implemented. Of course, it would naturally depend on the types of colleges. For example, in arts colleges, the selection of the students may not be so rigorous. Then again, a great deal depends on the competence and commitment of both teachers and students. Likewise, the provision or absence of facilities such as libraries, laboratories, etc., would either promote or hinder the implementation of the the adaptive focus.

The college puts a premium on academic excellence. It also emphasises and promotes overall development through exposure to and participation in various activities from sports and recreation to study circles. The college promotes the development of a critical faculty, likewise responsibility for decision is also developed. Students have to be largely on their own. The college professors are only to provide requisite guidance. The critical faculty of the students is developed enabling them to analyse any situation. Participation in various activities promotes qualities of initiative and leadership. There is a development of autonomy. The process of identity formation is also facilitated through the development of such autonomy and through the link between the college and the occupational structure, which would ensure not only a future career, but also social status. Further, the college provides opportunities for meaningful friendships between the two sexes, whereby it may be possible to choose life partners. Thus, in functional terms the college provides the facilities for identity formation.

The degree of efficiency with which the college would fulfil the functional requirements mentioned above, depends on a variety of factors, such as the location of the college and the availability of the facilities, the social background of teachers, as well as students, the working of the institutions such as the family, caste, class, age grades, cultural factors, etc. A great

deal would also depend on the autonomy enjoyed by the college. Moreover, if the economy is stagnant then the college trained persons would not get any scope for the development of their future career, giving rise to frustrations and even cynicism so that there would be no faith in the efficacy of a college. In order to be efficient, the college should choose both students and teachers. A situation where there is on the one hand a great demand for college education and a consequent proliferation of colleges, without adherence to standards is fraught with grave consequences for efficiency. In fact, the entire adaptive focus would be hampered.

THE SCHOOL AND THE COLLEGE AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

The Social Structural Features in India

The problem of education assumes special significance in view of the unbroken continuity of Indian culture and India's desire to modernize herself in the context of a democratic framework. It is necessary to bear in mind some of the cultural and social structural features of the Indian society. At the cultural level, one can mention the enormous importance given to education, for its own sake, irrespective of its utility. Character formation and discipline have been the main aims of education. Abstract and theoretical knowledge is emphasised and practical knowledge is underrated. Moreover, the social system in India puts a premium on pattern maintenance, relatively speaking, while adaptation is not properly emphasised. This is reflected in the outmoded syllabi, methods of instruction, etc. Professor Shils has perceptively made the point that amongst Indian intellectuals, there is an overemphasis on theoretical and abstract learning. It may be argued that the favour with which the medical and engineering courses are chosen, goes against such observation. However, barring a few institutions which provide training in engineering and medicine, by and large, there is a great deal of bias in favour of theoretical training even in such institutions. In fact, many a time both the students undergoing such education as well as their prospective employers are heard to complain about the undue theoretical bias in such training at the cost of practical training. Moreover, there is

a great gulf between the educated persons and the illiterate masses. The caste system which is a very important feature of the Indian social system has militated against the spread of education in many sections and layers of the population, in spite of the positive help offered to members of respective castes, by caste organizations. The system of stratification is also reflected in some of the different types of educational institutions. For example, the Public schools, where a great deal of premium is put on ascription rather than on achievement, and quality rather than performance stressed. The admission to a public school is largely a function of the social stratum to which one belongs. The principle of age grades is a very important one in the Indian set up. Reverence for the elder generation is reflected even in matters of educational policies and decisions. Moreover, the notions of hierarchy also work against the development of proper relations amongst colleagues. Likewise, an undue amount of distance is maintained between the teachers and the taught, making it difficult to establish a smooth and meaningful working relationship between the two. On the one hand, education and the vocation of a teacher are highly eulogized while on the other, the teacher is not given adequate scope for the development of his functions. Then again, the distrust for higher education and higher educated persons also makes education ineffective. The institution of family gives a better start to some in matters of education. On the other hand, due to lack of education in the family, even intelligent students are withheld of the facility of higher education. The institution of property obviously militates against equal access to education, particularly in its higher reaches.

The School as a Social System in India

At the outset, it must be mentioned that the various types of schools mentioned in the earlier section may not necessarily be operating in India as far as the entire population is concerned. Thus, the Nursery schools are simply not there in the innumerable villages in India. Likewise, the Public schools are also very few in number and are usually located in important cities. Besides, Public schools would not offer access to the poorer and the disadvantaged sections of the population. In fact, Public schools are usually attended by the children of the

well-to-do classes. There are certain prestige colleges in India which too, by and large, cannot be attended by the poorer sections of the population. Even technical and professional training becomes a matter of limited facilities. Of course, it is true that the Union and State Government have instituted scholarships for higher training which enable really meritorious students from the poorer sections of the population to attain higher education. But, even the awareness of the availability of such facilities may not be there among these groups.

(i) THE NURSERY SCHOOL

The structure of the Nursery school is fairly simple. There is usually a principal or superintendent and a few teachers to assist her. In its functioning a great deal of emphasis is placed on socialization. Learning of skills, more social than academic, is emphasized. A great deal of emphasis is placed on enabling children to develop social skills and the ability to mix with others. By and large the children who attend Nurseries are from small families, which are also nuclear in character. A great deal of importance is attached to weaning the child from the family. Due to personal observation and attention, it is possible to make a note of the attitudes, interests and abilities of the children who attend Nursery schools. In many a case, there is an active and meaningful contact between the teachers and the parents. The main emphasis obviously is on socializtion. Of course, children are also helped to be on their own in various small ways. This encourages the process of autonomy formation.

(ii) THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary schools are situated all over India, and in many of its villages. Naturally, according to the environment, there will be certain differences in the structure of the Primary school. But, by and large the structure of the Primary school is as follows : There is a principal, who is assisted by a number of teachers and some administrative staff. At the functional level, emphasis is placed on imparting education to children at a very elementary level. In fact, for the majority of the children in India, the primary school is their first experience of a school, if not the last. The three R's are, of course, taught in addition to disciplining. In many a case the class teacher in Pri-

mary school teaches all the subjects. Naturally, there is a continuous contact between the teacher and the taught. Attending a primary school also necessitates staying away from parents at least during ·school hours. Therefore, an impersonal but firm mechanism is provided for socializing children. There is a meaningful contact with the teacher who represents the adult world and its standards. There is also a possibility of developing peer group relationships which are largely voluntary in character. In the Indian context however, due to the operation of the caste system there are likely to be various limitations to the choice of one's peer group. Particularly when it comes to visiting each others' house, the permission of the parents has to be tacitly obtained. Due to the proliferation of the primary schools in the numerous villages of India and also because of the teacher-student ratio and the lack of education in family, there may not be a meaningful interaction between the teachers and the parents. In fact, there may not be any contact at all. Thus, there is no feedback mechanism to ensure efficiency in education. At the primary school level, socialization and formal education are stressed.

(iii) THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The structure of a middle school is also fairly simple : the headmaster or the principal at the top is assisted by a number of teachers and an administrative staff. In some cases, the middle schools form a part of the high school, in such cases, the kinds of students who are admitted, and the training programme, have some continuity. On the other hand, in a middle school proper there is no looking into the future as far as most of the students are concerned. Most of the students stop their education after completing the middle schools. In the middle school too the emphasis is placed on socialization, inculcation of discipline, and imparting of education. There are some middle schools with a technical bias which ensure continuity. The students who go only upto the middle school, usually belong to poorer sections of the population. Naturally, the middle school does not offer any openings for the future development of a career. At this level the peer group relationships are more meaningful. Accordingly, there also takes place a lessening of the influence of the family.

(iv) THE HIGH SCHOOL

The structure of authority of a high school is quite clear. The high school may be run by the Department of Education of a State, by a private educational society, or by a religious, denominational one. The structure of authority varies with the type of the school and the management. However, the headmaster or the principal is at the head of the hierarchy in so far as the school is concerned, with a number of teachers and the requisite administrative staff to assist. The courses of study are prescribed by the Education Department. An examination system is also laid down by the State Department as well as a periodical inspection to ensure standards. At the functional level, there is an increasing emphasis on imparting education which becomes more and more complex. There is also a slant on the preparation of adolescents to become more and more responsible agents. At the high school level, the class teacher does not usually teach all the subjects. Various subjects are taught by different teachers, which gives rise to a comparison of the students on the part of teachers. This situation also ensures role specificity both on the part of the teachers and the students. The high school provides training in such a manner that it can be a terminal point or provide an avenue for further training and career. In the high school, the greatest premium is put on achievement, both scholastic and extra-curricular. The ascriptive basis of society is underscored. Students develop various skills and aptitudes which may enable them to chart their future life. Of course, there are various types of high schools. For instance, the Public schools have quite a different atmosphere. In Public schools emphasis is placed on selecting students from the higher middle classes. Besides, a great deal of emphasis is placed on excellence in extra curricular activities. The kind of personality which they want to develop is an all round one. The various facilities offered in a Public school make it possible for the students to inculcate and develop qualities of leadership. The peer group relations are very much emphasised, in the high school. The denominational schools are also by and large open to well-to-do sections of society. The system of stratification is thus represented in Public

schools and denominational schools. There is a gradual reduction in the influence of the family, and a building up of voluntary relationships. Imparting of education and development of adaptive skills is emphasised. Further training and opportunities are in many cases determined by one's place in the class hierarchy. Because of the slant on adaptive skills the process of individuation is facilitated.

The College As a Social System in India

The college as a social system is characteristically different from the high school in various ways. In the first place, in the college there is a great measure of emphasis on self-reliance. It is true that education is imparted in the college, but there is neither spoon-feeding nor an active contact between the teachers and the taught. Students are expected to read on their own on the basis of the discussions in class, and the guidance offered by the teachers. Then again, the structure of authority in a college is quite different from that in a high school. It is true that in a college also, there is a principal who is assisted by various professors, lecturers, tutors and an administrative staff. However, by and large the relationships between the principal and the various teachers etc., is one of colleagueship. The age at which the students are admitted in the college has some bearing on the autonomy they can exercise. In India, it is customary for students to enter college at the young age of fifteen to eighteen. Therefore, many students are not very mature intellectually or emotionally, to be on their own. This also has implications for the kind and method of teaching. Thus, one comes across cases of spoon-feeding as exemplified by dictation of notes in the class in some colleges. Then again, the competence and the interest of the students have an important bearing on their development and the kind of teaching and training imparted in the college. There are types and types of colleges, such as the arts and science colleges, the commerce colleges, the law colleges, the training colleges and professional colleges such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, etc. In an arts and science college, a great deal of emphasis is placed on imparting general education. On the other hand, in a professional college, technical and professional knowledge is imparted with

a view to ensure a high degree of competence and preparation for professional role behaviour in future. The atmosphere in a college also varies from one type to another. In a professional college, a great premium is put on hard and systematic work in a sustained manner all through. On the other hand, in an arts or science college not much emphasis is put on continuous hard work. The training imparted in various types of colleges also has implications for placement in the occupational sphere. Those who get training in a professional college, naturally feel secure and assured about their future career and placement. On the other hand, those in an arts or science college do not enjoy such security and experience frustration which may result in unruly and undisciplined behaviour. The college offers the maximum scope for peer group relationships and increasing independence from the family. Particularistic loyalties such as those of the caste and class can also be transcended in the college. Due to the method of teaching, autonomy formation is encouraged. Students in the college are supposed to be prepared to meet any situation in future life in terms of the cultivation of their mind. The process of individuation and autonomy formation would ensure successful handling on the part of students of any situation. However, there are various assumptions underlying such a proposition. In the first place, the students who join a college must have both competence and interest. Secondly, the college teachers must also impart the training with a view to cultivate the minds of students and prepare them for independent thinking and judgment. There should be no structural constraints which would stand in the way of autonomy formation such as those of family and kinship, caste, class etc. On a realistic appraisal of the situation, one has to admit that the assumptions mentioned above cannot be taken for granted.

The Needs of Education in Changing India and the Implications of Change

In India there is a great desire both on the part of the elite and the masses to modernize its social system with a view the light of such aims, the school and college as social systems to ensure greater prosperity, social, justice, equality, etc. In

will need a great deal of reform and change. The purpose of schools and colleges will have to be more clearly spelt out under the changed circumstances. Not only is there an increasing pressure of larger and larger numbers who want to attend schools and colleges, but the system of education also warrants a fresh look. Increasing emphasis will have to be placed on a meaningful approach to problems of education. Thus, education must be a meaningful and purposive activity. Adaptive behaviour must be stressed. Standards will have to be enhanced. Individuation and autonomy formation should be encouraged.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing analysis, the school and the college as a social system have been described in purely analytical terms without any reference to the factual situation. Of course, a section dealing with the Indian situation is there. An effort has been made to work out the implications of the existing situation for the process of socialization and adaptive behaviour, the twin aims of education. The school and the college subserve these aims, though, of course, with differing emphasis. It has been further pointed out that though one may postulate the school and college as a social system, it is a part and parcel of the wider social system. Any change or improvement in the school and college as a social system would necessitate a careful analysis of the wider social system and also a measure of change in the same.

FOOT NOTES

1. Talcott Parsons : 1959, The School Class as a Social System : Some of Its Functions in American Society, Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 29,
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.