

CULTURE: MEANING, CHARACTERISTICS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH EDUCATION

Introduction:

Whenever we visit a new place, we encounter so many new things like peoples' dressing styles, food habits, beliefs, rituals, customs, patterns of work, practices, ideologies etc. It makes us say that the people, here, have different culture from ours. So, this small word of seven letters 'culture' encapsulates all things, either material or non-material, representing the way of living or designing of life. **Majumdar and Madan** have rightly said, **"Life of people is their culture."** The concept of culture is among the most widely used ideas in sociology which refers to the ways of life of the members of a society. In order to know a society, it is a prerequisite to understand its culture. It is a well-known fact that society is composite of a group of people who interact with each other, reside in a definable area and share a common culture. This culture is referred to the group's shared values, beliefs and practices. It includes all that is socially transmitted from one generation to another. Culture and society are considered to be the two sides of the same coin. Men acquire culture, being the members of a society. Every society has its own set of beliefs, values, moralities, ideas, etc. That is the reason behind the presence of a variety of culture. It varies from society to society; place to place and nation to nation. Along with culture, education also tends to change. Education and culture cannot be separated from one another as they are inter-dependent. Educational processes and patterns are guided by the society's cultural patterns.

Meaning and Definition of Culture:

From anthropological view, the term culture is used in many senses, but, in general, it is referred to the collective behavioural patterns that are transmitted

socially from one generation to another. According to Ralph Linton (1947), **“Culture is the configuration of learned behaviour whose components and elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.”** Here configuration stands for a sort of pattern (Ottaway). This term cultural pattern is started being commonly used with the publication of R. Benedict’s book ‘Patterns of Culture’ in 1935. In the words of E. A. Hoebel, **“Culture is the sum total of integrated learned behaviour patterns which are characteristics of the members of a society and which is, therefore, not the result of biological inheritance.”** A.F. Walter Paul said, **“Culture is the totality of group ways of thought and action duly accepted and followed by a group of people.”**

Another definition, given by Taylor (1971), says, **“Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morality, law, practice and other capabilities and habits, acquired by man as a member of society.”** A very comprehensive definition adopted by the World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City (1982) considered culture as **“the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group.”** According to Mazumdar, **“Culture is the sum total of human achievements, material as well as non-material, capable of transmission, socially, i.e., by tradition and communication, vertically as well as horizontally.”** These definitions are comprehensive in nature as they emphasize on the true meaning of culture which is distinct, inclusive of material as well as non-material aspects, connected with social values, transmittable and to be acquired and learned by virtue of being member of a society. Material culture includes all tangible man-made things or objects created by human interaction such as clothes, books, tools, vehicles, utensils, TV, radio, etc. whereas non-material culture includes those intangible ideals, attitudes and values which bring modification in behaviour of an individual

such as language, literature, customs, tradition, values, beliefs, etc. Thus, culture can be referred to the system of learned behaviour shared by and transmitted among the member of a group.

Characteristics of Culture:

On the basis of earlier mentioned definitions of culture, its various characteristics are given in the following manner:

- 1. Culture is man-made:** The development or existence of culture is not a natural thing coming directly from sky, but is man-made. **Kimball Young (1939)** rightly said, **“The cultural world is the creation of man himself as he has learned how to manage nature and himself throughout his entire existence.”**In the words of **Taylor**, **“Culture consists of the works of man.”**
- 2. Culture is an acquired trait:**Contrasting to biological heredity, culture can be called as the social heredity (**Ottaway**).Its meaning and definitions say that it is not innate but is acquired and learned by the people through social contacts and interaction, no matter formally or informally. According to **Robertson (1992)**, **“Culture is that which individuals, groups and societies produce and acquire in order to function effectively.”**
- 3. Culture is a distinct entity:** It has distinctiveness which makes it vary from place to place. It varies widely around the globe. Different societies of the world have their distinct cultural patterns which help in establishing different identities of different nations. Every society is characterized by its distinct and unique culture.
- 4. Culture is material as well as non-material:** Culture includes intangible ideas, customs, traditions, beliefs, etc. along with tangible objects and

things created by human interaction. The look at an object gives idea about its culture.

5. **Culture is transmittable:** Cultural traits are transmitted from one generation to another. This transmission is a continuous process. Every generation has freedom to modify cultural heritage and transmit it to coming generations.
6. **Every culture has utility:** A culture is considered to be good if it possesses the quality of being utilized by the individual as well as the entire society. It should be ideal for the group. The decay of any cultural pattern depends upon its level of utility.
7. **Culture is dynamic in nature:** Culture is not static but dynamic. It tends to change according to the changing trends and time. Our own beliefs, ideas, thinking patterns, behaviours, etc. are different from our forefathers'. That's due to the changing nature of culture.
8. **Culture is social, not individual heritage:** Culture is not an individual product, but a social product which is being shared by the members of the group.
9. **Culture is symbolic:** Culture and its transmission are based on symbols which are exclusive to human beings. Symbols are the central component of culture. Symbols refer to anything attached with meaning and used for communication with others. Language is one of the symbols of culture which helps in preservation and creation of culture for retrospective as well as prospective analyses.

Culture and Education:

Each characteristic of culture depicts its strong relationship and intimate connection with society and its major unit called education. Culture is an acquired trait which happens through education, be it formal, informal or non-formal. Culture is transmittable from one generation to another with the

powerful tool of education. Importance and utility of culture is known to the individuals through education. Culture is considered to be dynamic because of an important tool called education. Education helps in resolving the cultural conflict. Education conserves as well as renews the culture and its patterns.

Education is a part of culture which works for its preservation, conservation, modifications, creation and re-creation. So, culture and education cannot be kept separately in different boxes but are to walk and grow together to influence each other. Their relationship is reciprocal in the sense that culture influences and shapes education and, simultaneously, is influenced and shaped by education too. Cultural pattern of a society determines its educational system. For instance, a materialistic society's goals of education and processes are different from the society which believes in development of spirituality and morality. Educational system, simultaneously, affects the culture of that society by shaping and influencing the thinking and behaviour of its members. For example, the culture of patriarchal society is changing with awareness and education regarding rights of women being human being and the dynamics of gender roles in current era.

Culture has its influence on education and its institutions by determining and formulating educational aims and objectives, constructing curriculum, organizing co-curricular activities, selecting methods of teaching, textbooks and creating social environment, rich in good teacher-taught relationship. Similarly, education also has its powerful influence on culture and its patterns. Preservation, transmission, development, continuity of a culture, removal of cultural lag is possible through the use of an effective and strong instrument called education. Therefore, undoubtedly, education and culture are mutually interdependent, complementary and supplementary in all their aspects and activities (**Sharma, 2003**).The major evidence regarding the strong relationship

between education and culture is reflected through one of the aims of education which states about educating child about the cultural heritage.

Role of Schools in Preservation and Promotion of Culture:

School is a miniature of society which is a specially designed formal agency which is set up by the society in order to socialize the generations to come. Acquisition of culture is done through the process of socialization. Schools do not only educate the child by following definite curriculum and certain number of subjects and provide grades on completion of courses opted, but also develop social and cultural values, attitudes, norms and morality which remain with them throughout their life. Schools' total activities and programmes are organized, referring to the cultural ideas and values of a particular society in which they exist. So, schools, in various ways, become the center of promoting, reforming and developing the cultural patterns of society. **National Policy on Education (1986)** observed, **“The curricula and process of education will be enriched by cultural content in as many manifestations as possible. Education can and must bring about the fine synthesis between change oriented technologies and the country's continuity of cultural traditions.”** Cultural traits are acquired in the setting of schools, created by different agents such as teachers, peer groups, textbooks, co-curricular activities, methodologies, cultural responsive teaching etc. Teacher-taught relationship and teachers' behaviour towards students put an impact on mindset of students and help in development of cultural values and patterns. Every society's culture is preserved through its education system. Schools are made with the purpose of transmitting cultural heritage and for improving the society by modifying or eliminating the cultural practices which are not found to be beneficial for the society.

In addition, the preservation also includes the process of transmission of culture. Its transmission from one generation to another guarantees the preservation of the same (Sharma, 2003). This transmission is done with the help of schools through social interaction, occurring among different members. In the words of Ottaway, **“Culture is entirely dependent on the interaction of individual with the social environment and has to be learnt from the social group.”** Promotion of culture should be done through schools by imparting the values and morals of the society in which it exists. For promotion of culture, schools should become the effective and useful tools for community integration, community integrated learning, democratic values, etc. There should be respect for diversity through multicultural education instead of monocultural education. According to the **International Conference on Education’s (1992)** recommendation no. 78 regarding contribution of education for cultural development, **“In order to be able to better satisfy the demands of contemporary society and to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, the school must open up to its social, economic and cultural environment and become a place for fruitful dialogue, broadening its horizon to cover the cultures of the world, whether regional, national or local.”**

Conclusion:

On the basis of all the points given on culture and its relationship with education, it can be, undoubtedly, stated that culture is not only one particular aspect of life, but it is the entire way of life which is dynamic and varies from place to place, society to society and nation to nation. Since time immemorial, the precious cultural heritage is preserved and promoted through education system by its reflection in textbooks, teachers’ behaviours, behaviours of peer groups, schools’ norms and policies, etc. Education can be called as the cause of the transformation of culture and cultural transformation is the cause of

education and its institutions. Both are interdependent, complementary and supplementary to each other.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of this module is to acquaint students with the:

- Concept and definition of Culture;
- Characteristics of Culture;
- Relationship of Culture and Education; and
- Role of schools in preservation and promotion of culture.

GLOSSARY:

- i. **Society:** A group of people, who interact with one another, reside in a definable area and share a culture.
- ii. **Culture:** Culture is a collective term used for the way of living by a society which includes belief, ideas, traditions, customs, behaviors, etc which are transmitted socially from one generation to another. It is also called as the 'design of life'.
- iii. **Culture as man-made:** The development or existence of culture is not a natural thing coming directly from sky, but is man-made. Kimball Young (1939) rightly said, "The cultural world is the creation of man himself as he has learned how to manage nature and himself throughout his entire existence."
- iv. **Culture as an acquired trait:** Contrasting to biological heredity, culture can be called as the social heredity. Its meaning and definitions say that it is not innate but is acquired and learned by the people through social contacts and interaction, no matter formally or informally.
- v. **Culture as a distinct entity:** It has distinctiveness which makes it vary from place to place. It varies widely around the globe. Different societies of the world have their distinct cultural patterns which help

in establishing different identities of different nations. Every society is characterized by its distinct and unique culture.

- vi. **Culture as dynamic:** Culture is not static but dynamic. It tends to change according to the changing trends and time. Our own beliefs, ideas, thinking patterns, behaviours, etc. are different from our forefathers'. That's due to the changing nature of culture.
- vii. **Material and non-material culture:** Material culture includes all tangible man-made things or objects created by human interaction such as clothes, books, tools, vehicles, utensils, TV, radio, etc. whereas non-material culture includes those intangible ideals, attitudes and values which bring modification in behaviour of an individual such as language, literature, customs, tradition, values, beliefs, etc.
- viii. **Education:** Education is a process of overall development of person. It helps in developing and enhancing the cultivation of physical, mental, emotional and moral powers of the child.
- ix. **Culture and education:** Culture is transmittable from one generation to another with the powerful tool of education. Importance and utility of culture is known to the individuals through education. Culture is considered to be dynamic because of an important tool called education. Education helps in resolving the cultural conflict. Education conserves as well as renews the culture and its patterns. Education is a part of culture which works for its preservation, conservation, modifications, creation and re-creation.
- x. **Schools for preservation and promotion of culture:** School is a miniature of society which is a specially designed formal agency which is set up by the society in order to socialize the generations to come. Schools do not only educate the child by following definite curriculum and provide grades on completion of courses opted, but also develop social and cultural values, attitudes, norms and morality

which remain with them throughout their life. Every society's culture is preserved and promoted through its education system. Schools are made with the purpose of transmitting cultural heritage.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. Define society.

Answer: Society is a group of people, who interact with one another, reside in a definable area and share a culture.

2. What do you understand by culture?

Answer: Culture is a collective term used for the way of living by a society which includes belief, ideas, traditions, customs, behaviors, etc which are transmitted socially from one generation to another. It is also called as the 'design of life'.

3. What is meant by material culture?

Answer: Material culture includes all tangible man-made things or objects created by human interaction such as clothes, books, tools, vehicles, utensils, TV, radio, etc.

4. What is meant by non-material culture?

Answer: non-material culture includes those intangible ideals, attitudes and values which bring modification in behaviour of an individual such as language, literature, customs, tradition, values, beliefs, etc.

5. Discuss culture as an acquired trait.

Answer: Contrasting to biological heredity, culture can be called as the social heredity. It is not innate but is acquired and learned by the people through social contacts and interaction, no matter formally or informally.

6. What makes culture dynamic in nature?

Answer: Culture, by nature, is not static but dynamic. It tends to change according to the changing trends and time. Our own beliefs, ideas, thinking

patterns, behaviours, etc. are different from our forefathers'. That's due to the changing nature of culture.

7. What are the characteristic of culture?

Answer:Culture is man-made, acquired, a distinct entity, social heredity, transmittable, material and no-material and dynamic in nature.

8. What is the relationship between culture and education?

Answer:Culture is transmittable from one generation to another with the powerful tool of education. Importance and utility of culture is known to the individuals through education. Culture is considered to be dynamic because of an important tool called education. Education helps in resolving the cultural conflict. Education conserves as well as renews the culture and its patterns. Education is a part of culture which works for its preservation, conservation, modifications, creation and re-creation.

9. What is the meaning of school?

Answer:School is a miniature of society which is a specially designed formal agency which is set up by the society in order to socialize the generations to come. In schools, teachers, peer groups, textbooks, curricular and extra-curricular activities, etc. facilitate socialization of the students.

10.What is the role of school in preservation and promotion of culture?

Answer: Schools develop social and cultural values, attitudes, norms and morality which help in socialization of students. Every society's culture is preserved and promoted through its education system. Schools are made with the purpose of transmitting and preserving cultural heritage. Schools' total activities and programmes are organized, referring to the cultural ideas and values of a particular society in which they exist. So, schools, in various ways, become the center of promoting, reforming and developing the cultural patterns of society.

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